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## FROM THE BOOK TO TELEVISION AND TO THE WHOLE WORLD. MAYA THE BEE IN BASQUE

### VOM BUCH INS FERNSEHEN UND IN DIE GANZE WELT. DIE BIENE MAJA AUF BASKISCH

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#### Abstract

The aim of this article is to show how the Maya the Bee franchise entered the Basque cultural system and, more specifically, how the audiovisual translation (AVT) into Basque was conducted. Maya the Bee is a character from a book written by the German author Waldemar Bonsels in 1912. Yet, her origins are not that well known, as she made her entrance into the public consciousness more recently through audiovisual media. The first two sections of the article delve both into the origins and the multimedia character of Maya the Bee. The third section of the article focuses on the introduction of the Maya franchise into the Basque cultural system, the fourth section explains the methodology used and the fifth section presents the results of an analysis of the AVT. The analysis focuses on the dubbing of the 3D series (English into Basque) and looks at whether both nature-related terms are simplified and offensive language and wordplay have been retained.

**Keywords:** Waldemar Bonsels. Maya the Bee. Children's literature. Audiovisual translation (AVT). Translation techniques.



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## Zusammenfassung

Ziel dieses Artikels ist es, darzustellen, wie das Produkt der Biene Maja in das baskische Kultursystem gelangte und wie die audiovisuelle Übersetzung ins Baskische durchgeführt wurde. Die kleine Biene hat ihren Ursprung in dem Buch des deutschen Schriftstellers Waldemar Bonsels aus dem Jahr 1912. Allerdings ist dieser Ursprung heute nicht mehr bekannt, da die Biene Maja den Sprung in die audiovisuellen Medien geschafft hat und es das audiovisuelle Produkt gewesen ist, das sie weltweit bekannt gemacht hat. Die ersten zwei Kapitel dieses Artikels befassen sich daher mit dem Ursprung, aber auch mit dem multimedialen Charakter der Biene Maja. Das dritte Kapitel des Artikels befasst sich mit der spezifischen Rezeption des Produkts Biene Maja im baskischen Kultursystem, das vierte Kapitel erklärt die für diese Studie verwendete Methodologie und das fünfte Kapitel präsentiert die Resultate der Analyse der audiovisuellen Übersetzung. Diese Analyse konzentrierte sich auf die Übersetzung der Synchronisation der 3D-Serie vom Englischen ins Baskische und beobachtete, ob es eine Vereinfachung von Begriffen in Bezug auf die Natur gab und ob offensive Sprache und Wortspiele beibehalten wurden.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Waldemar Bonsels, Die Biene Maja, Kinder- und Jugendliteratur (KJL), audiovisuelle Übersetzung (AVT), Übersetzungstechniken.

## 1. Introduction

In 1912, the Berlin-based publishing house Schuster und Loeffler published the novel *Die Biene Maja und ihre Abenteuer*, by the renowned writer Waldemar Bonsels. The publication was advertised with an emphasis on the author, Bonsels, whose name was a guarantee of quality due to the success of his previous publications (Weiß 2014a: 8). According to the advertising at the time, it was a work written both for adults and children (Kümmerling-Meibauer 2014: 46). Today, more than a hundred years after its publication, and considering the current international reception of the Maya franchise, it is likely that little, if any, of Maya's audience knows who the original author of the little bee was. It is, probably, a great example of a character outliving its author. Furthermore, the Maya franchise, as we know it today, might be aimed particularly at children, in contrast to the audience of the original book.

In order to assess how the Maya franchise has changed an examination of its origins is essential, as these appear to have been erased from its literary history.

Born in 1880 in Ahrenburg, near Hamburg, Waldemar Bonsels was the second of five children. After having received training as a merchant, he worked in various printing and publishing houses until 1903, when he was given the opportunity to go on a religious mission to India. He stayed there for six months and, on his return, he founded the publishing house E.W. Bonsels & Co. with other colleagues where, in addition to publishing other people's works, he also published his own. Nevertheless, in the same year that *Maya the Bee* was published, one of his colleagues and partner in the publishing house left the business, as did Bonsels himself in order to devote himself to writing. According to Weiß (2014c: 21-43), Waldemar Bonsels was not a man of close relationships. Just like the character he created, he wanted to feel free and unattached. Bonsels travelled extensively in Europe and Asia. As far as relationships are concerned, he had numerous friendships, but they always came to an end. According to Weiß (2014c: 24-25), "it seems that it was always Bonsels who provoked the separation"<sup>1</sup>. He married three times, the last time in 1950, two years before his death. It is worth noting that Bonsels was a well-known, famous writer at the time, especially in the 1920s, when *Die Biene Maja* was one of the best-selling novels in Germany alongside Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* and Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* (Krischke 2012). In addition to *Die Biene Maja und ihre Abenteuer* (1912), other works by the author include *Himmelsvolk* (1915) and *Indienfahrt* (1916).

Even if the adventures of the little bee were published before the outbreak of World War I, sales did not increase significantly until the end of the war. The German author wrote works that people wanted to read in the post-war period: the places and characters he wrote about were not specifically German, and Bonsels gave the reader the opportunity to dream (Weiß 2014c: 35-36). In the specific case of *Maya the Bee*, the work reveals characteristics of a *Bildungsroman* or coming-of-age novel, as the little bee

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1. Own translation. Original quote in German: "Und es scheint so, als sei es immer Bonsels, der die Trennung provoziert".

has to form her character and make a place for herself in society. The novel also includes characteristics of a *Backfischroman* (novel for adolescent girls), as Maya is a heroine, or main character, who moves from childhood to adulthood (Lévêque 2013). Lévêque recognizes a direct relationship between Bonsels' novel and *Heidis Lehr- und Wanderjahre* (1881), traditionally considered a *Bildungsroman*, or *Der Trotzkopf: Eine Pensionsgeschichte für erwachsene Mädchen* (1885), considered one of the first novels of the *Backfischroman* genre.

Yet, the fame enjoyed by Bonsels shrank largely due to his political convictions. Although the author did not express his political views during the 1920s, after World War I, and notably in 1933, he was a supporter of the national socialist anti-Semitic ideology (Weiß 2014c: 38-39). These political views seem to be obvious in the introduction to his last book *Der Grieche Dositos* (1943), which is why it was difficult for him to publish it after World War II. As a consequence of his political beliefs, he went from being a famous, well-known author in the 1920s to a forgotten one. However, this did not happen to his bee, since Maya, as was pointed out at the beginning of this section, outlived her author in such a way that the audiovisual medium transformed her into an international multimedia commodity.

The adaptation of *Maya the Bee* to the audiovisual medium did not happen overnight: it took 64 years after the book was published for Maya to make her leap (or *flight*) to television in 1976.

The first audiovisual version of the work was made in 1926. Yet, it was made with real insects, and it was not a product intended for children (Weiß 2014b: 109). By the early 1940s, Bonsels had already written several drafts of a screenplay and the production company of the National Socialist Government at the time, Deutsche Zeichenfilm GmbH, had approved them. Nevertheless, this production company, which had been founded in 1941 with the ambition to produce Disney-style movies, could no longer finance itself and closed down in 1944 (Weiß 2014b). Later, the screenwriter Thea von Harbou wrote a script in 1952, but she died two years later. No realistic opportunities arose for an audiovisual production until Japan started to look to European literature to increase its range of cartoons, when a co-production between Germany, Austria and Japan was set up and both costs and profits were shared. The first series was *Wickie und die starken Männer*, with

78 episodes, followed by *Die Biene Maja*, with 104 episodes (Göhlen 2014: 137). The series began airing on Japanese television in April 1975. It should be noted that many of the characters that appear in the series do not appear in Bonsels' book, such as Willy or Flip, among others, who were introduced so that the series could be continued (Göhlen 2014: 138).

The series *Maya the Bee* was not well received by the anti-authoritarian cultural movement in Germany, although it was popular with children, as was the case in several other countries. It should be noted, however, that it was heavily criticized by the German educationalists and cultural agents of the time. This is how Göhlen (2014: 141), the producer of the series, explained it:

In *Maya the Bee* and my other programs, the demands of the anti-authoritarian movement were not represented. Topics such as sexuality, social inequality, capitalist property relations or war were not addressed *expressis verbis*, and the values and habits of the bourgeoisie were not questioned with enlightened contributions. My programs were not intended to follow any educational doctrine, no matter how well-intentioned, that obeyed the spirit of the times. It was not their task to enlighten, but to stimulate children's imagination. That is why, I believe, the programs have survived. And they can be brought out and repurposed when needed.<sup>2</sup>

Later, in 2013, the German channel ZDF began broadcasting a new version of *Maya in 3D*, with episodes lasting 15 minutes, aimed more specifically at children (*ibid.*: 141). Since 2015, the Basque children's channel ETB3 schedules the 3D *Maya the Bee* series for an audience of 0-4 years old. According to Yébenes (2002: 128), productions aimed at children differ from those aimed at adult audiences insofar as they make no use of irony or sarcasm.

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2. Own translation. Original quote in German: "In *Biene Maja* und meinen anderen Programmen waren die Forderungen der antiautoritären Bewegung nicht vertreten. Themen wie Sexualität, soziale Ungleichheit, kapitalistische Besitzverhältnisse oder Krieg wurden nicht *expressis verbis* thematisiert, Werte und Gewohnheiten des Bürgertums nicht mit aufklärerischen Beiträgen infrage gestellt. Meine Programme sollten keiner vielleicht noch so gut gemeinten, dem Zeitgeist gehorchenden Bildungsdoktrin folgen. Denn sie hatten nicht die Aufgabe, Aufklärung zu betreiben, sondern sollten die kindliche Phantasie anregen. Deshalb, so meine ich, haben die Programme überlebt. Und sie können, wenn man sie braucht, hervorgeholt und neu eingesetzt werden."

Within the products aimed at children, Yébenes distinguishes three different age groups (one to three years old, three to nine years old and ten to sixteen years old). *Maya* would be placed between the first and second age group. The audiovisual product for this age group should be didactic but attractive, as young children are particularly attracted to colors (Yébenes 2002: 130).

The audiovisual products aimed at this age group are mostly dubbed, even in countries with a long tradition of subtitling, as children that age normally lack the necessary reading skills (Chaume 2013). In the specific case of *Maya the Bee*, an exception was made in the Valencian Community, where in 2011 the Valencian channel *Canal Nou* decided to subtitle rather than dub some series into Valencian.<sup>3</sup> This was part of the Valencian Government's educational strategy to promote multilingualism. The aim, therefore, was educational, namely the acquisition of English from early ages. Yet, after subtitling and broadcasting 94 episodes, the channel itself closed down in 2013.

Having reviewed the history and evolution of *Maya the Bee* in the introduction, section two will focus now on the multimedia nature of the product. Section three will explain how the product was introduced into the Basque system and also mention previous studies on dubbing in minority languages which were taken as reference for this case study. The methodology used for this study will be explained in section four, and the results and discussion derived from the results will be presented in section five. The last section outlines some concluding remarks.

## 2. *Maya the Bee*: a multimedia franchise

It is undeniable that we live in the age of audiovisual technologies. Technology has forced us to change our lives, and the field of children's literature is no exception. Indeed, the youngest ones have been the first to adopt and accept the innovations that emerge in society. Therefore, it is key to consider the relationship between literature and audiovisual media when undertaking any research on children's literature. In addition to radio and television, children now have computers and access to the internet. As a consequence, many of the products aimed at child audiences are designed to be multimedia-based

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3. Subtitling was entrusted to lecturers of Universitat Jaume I (UJI) in Castelló de la Plana (A. Marzá, A. Prats, G. Torralba, personal communication, February 17-18, 2021).

from the outset: not only is the book published, but the series, movies, corresponding website and advertizing merchandise are produced at the same time. According to Hengst (2014: 145), this phenomenon is referred to in Japanese culture as “media mix”, i.e., when several channels use the same product with none of them overlapping with the others.

In the case of *Maya the Bee*, the offer today is multimodal, but it is clearly hierarchical or vertical, as the toys and commercial products that are produced depend clearly on the TV series (Hengst 2014: 150).

Ewers (2006: 305) differentiates the guide product or version and the reception product or version. The guide version would be the one from which the other products start or develop, while the reception version would be the one that allows us to get to know the product. The author refers to *Harry Potter*, where the *guide* version is the book, but the *reception* version would be the movies for the new generations. Very often, the reception version is superimposed on the guide version, which casts doubt on the originality of the product.

Consequently, the film or television versions of a media network have a “natural” right to the role of the guide medium in receptive terms, thanks to the incomparably greater formative power of their imagery<sup>4</sup> (Ewers 2006: 306-307).

In the case of *Maya the Bee*, the guide version would be the book written by Bonsels and the reception products would be all those derived from the book. In this case, Ewers’ argument holds true in that one of the reception versions (the series) has imposed itself on the guide version (Bonsels’ book published in 1912) and has taken over the book’s role. Thus, it could be said that the series produced in 1975 has become the guide version and has given rise to further reception versions: the 3D series, websites, merchandise, etc.

The details of how the Basque version was received will be shared in the next section. Yet, it is interesting to note how the multimodal introduction was carried out in Basque. Until now, the original book has never been

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4. Own translation. Original quote in German: “Die Film- bzw. Fernsehversionen eines Medienverbundangebots, so ließe sich daraus folgen, haben gewissermaßen ein “natürliches” Anrecht auf die Rolle des Leitmediums in rezeptiver Hinsicht dank der ungleich größeren prägenden Macht ihrer Bildlichkeit.”

translated into Basque; the books about Maya in Basque are those derived from the cartoon series and, therefore, they are book adaptations of the audiovisual product. Thus, children in the Basque Country know Maya from the cartoon series, not the book, but there are also differences depending on the age of the audience: those who are now adults got to know Maya the Bee in Spanish from the Spanish television channel (TVE1). By contrast, children today can follow the adventures of the little bee in her new 3D series format in Basque, as well as the movies made subsequently.

There is a well-known example in Spain that shows the reverse situation: the cartoon series *Dragon Ball* was first broadcast in 1990 on regional televisions (on February 8 on TVG in Galician, on February 21 on ETB in Basque and on February 26 on TV3 in Catalan), and then began to be broadcast in Spanish in 1991 (Aspuru 2019). The generation that started watching this series in Basque agreed that it was strange hearing your favorite characters speak another language. Furthermore, and continuing with the example of *Dragon Ball* in Basque, it has very often been suggested that the series dubbed into Basque boosted the use of Basque among the youngest, especially the use of the *hika*<sup>5</sup> form, a colloquial verb form the use of which is being phased out (Hach Embarek 2019). Nevertheless, according to a recent study conducted around the influence of the consumption of this particular series, “the impact *Dragon Ball* had on its viewers seems to be more substantial in terms of attitudes than of use” (Muguruza & Bereziartua in press).

It seems that there is no clear direct cause-effect relationship between viewers’ consumption of media and their language use (Muguruza & Bereziartua in press), but the language used in children’s products contributes to creating references and a certain linguistic memory. To that end, the 3D Maya series began to be dubbed into Basque (not only the series, but also the movies) in order to give a continuation to the linguistic reference created by *Maya erlea* in Basque.

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5. The second-person singular personal pronoun *hi-* is used instead of the more formal *zu-* and the addressee’s gender is also encoded in the verb inflection. The neutral and formal sentence *liburu bat eman dizut* (I have given you a book) would be *liburu bat eman dinat* (*dinat*, with a female addressee) and *liburu bat eman diat* (*diat*, with a male addressee) in the more colloquial *hika* verb forms.



In the following section, the product dubbed into Basque and the implications of dubbing into a minority language will be analyzed in more detail.

### 3. The adventures of Maya the Bee in Basque

Though the adventures of Maya the Bee have reached the Basque cultural system, they came first through Spanish, bearing in mind that there is more than one cultural system in the Basque region: Basque coexists with Spanish in the Spanish Basque Country and with French in the French Basque Country. Thus, Basque readers or viewers can access the books and series either in Basque and Spanish or in Basque and French. The definition of Basque literature differs across the culture i.e., for some it may be literature or culture exclusively produced in Basque, but for others it may be the one produced by people born in the Basque Autonomous Community, regardless of the language used (Manterola 2012: 32-35). It is not, however, the focus of the present paper to enter this type of debate.

Basque-speaking children first discovered Maya the Bee in Spanish through the series broadcast on Spanish television in 1976.<sup>6</sup> The product was introduced through the audiovisual medium, as the original book had not been translated. The texts published were those based on the animated series, both in Spanish by the publishing house Bruguera and in Catalan by Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat in 1978. It was not until 2019 that the publisher Nórdica Libros published the Spanish translation of Bonsels' original work, translated by Isabel Hernández and illustrated by Ester García. In French, however, the original work was translated in 1926 by Librairie Stock (Lévêque 2021). After World War II, interest was lost in Bonsels' book. Later, publications in French appeared around 1978 and were based on the television series.

The only books of Maya in Basque that were based on the television series were published in 2007, demonstrating the power of the audiovisual medium in the case of this product, as explained in section two.

The Basque children's television channel ETB3 began broadcasting the 3D series of Maya the Bee in Basque in 2015 with a 78-episode season, with

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6. The series was broadcast in French slightly later, in 1978.

a duration of 15 minutes each. The ZDF channel subsequently produced another season with 52 new episodes, but these have not been dubbed yet into Basque and the episodes that can still be seen today on ETB3 are repetitions of the first season. The 3D movies *Maya Erlea* and *Maya Erlea2* have also been dubbed as part of the *Zinema Euskaraz* (Cinema in Basque) program to promote movies in Basque.

The use of Basque on television began on 31 December 1982, when the Basque television channel ETB1 was launched. It was a difficult beginning, as there was a lack of material produced in Basque and it was necessary to increase the schedule with imported and translated products. The channel mainly offered sports and animated series aimed at children. When the Spanish-language Basque television channel ETB2 was launched in 1986, ETB1 focused even more on content for children and sport-related programs (Barambones 2012: 34). ETB3 was created in 2008 and was dedicated entirely to younger audiences in Basque. It started broadcasting the 3D series of *Maya the Bee* in Basque in 2015. The videos and scripts to be translated were purchased by the Spanish distributing company Planeta, so the Basque radio television channel EITB had the English and Spanish versions of the product. Consequently, the language pair used on the audiovisual translation depended on the version purchased by the distributing company. In this case, the source language used was English.

The audiovisual products dubbed by ETB3 followed a certain process: the first five scripts (called the “pilot version”) were translated by the Basque service of the Basque radio and television station EITB. Additionally, a series of conventions to be followed were drawn up. Later, both the translation and dubbing of the whole series were done by a dubbing company or studio. In the case of *Maya the Bee*, the studio Bilbao Mixer was in charge of the task. The script was translated by several translators, and this is noticeable in some of the language choices made throughout the chapters. We will return to this point later, in section 5, which looks at the analysis of the results.

The following sections examine certain aspects of audiovisual translation into a minority language, including relevant background information, methodology and results.

### 3.1. Audiovisual translation for children in a minority language

In 2003, O'Connell conducted a descriptive study of the Irish dubbing of the German children's series *Janoschs Traumstunde*. She analyzed six episodes of 27 minutes each and focused on the simplification of LSP (language for specific purposes) terms. Among these terms, O'Connell also included nature-related terms (flora and fauna), as such terms were abundant, bearing in mind that Janosch's series featured animals (O'Connell 2003: 160). The author concluded that, although there are established terms for the original LSPs, the Irish-dubbed series did not use them and preferred instead to use lexical simplification techniques (O'Connell 2003: 130). The author linked this phenomenon with the minority status of Irish Gaelic:

Since Irish is a minority language, it will continually have a terminology deficit in relation to some fields compared to dominant languages. But even in fields where the necessary terminology does exist, other norms operational within the larger polysystem may result in that terminology not being adopted and used.

The result, according to O'Connell, is that, in lexical terms, the Irish dubbed version offers much less variety and complexity than the original version, meaning that the dubbed product is not as ambivalent as the original (*ibid.*: 189-190). O'Connell's previous study is of interest to the analysis of *Maya the Bee*, due to the fact that Irish is also a minority language, so the same simplifying tendency may be observed. Moreover, the series *Maya the Bee* also features animals that live in nature, so the same variable of "nature-related terms" may be used. For that reason, one of the aims of this study will be to analyze whether simplifying techniques are also used in the case of Basque in terms related to fauna and flora.

In the specific field of Basque, Barambones (2009) carried out a corpus-based study of the audiovisual translation for children's audiences into Basque by the Basque channel ETB1. The author analyzed the language model used in the dubbed versions in general terms and reached interesting conclusions regarding the use of the informal register:

At the lexical and semantic levels, the translated texts show a high degree of formality, which becomes evident in the use of neologisms and verbs that belong to the written register. Since these audiovisual texts are addressed to

children, this approach is rather striking and can become counterproductive in the sense that these terms cannot be easily understood by younger viewers. In contrast with this lexical formality, children's and teenagers' slang is scarcely used, perhaps due to the fact that in practice most of these idiomatic expressions are borrowings from Spanish. The end result is that colloquial language in keeping with children's mode of discourse is missing from the translated texts. (Barambones 2012: 166-167)

This analysis is also pertinent to this study, since the *Maya* series may also show signs of a more formal or written register in the translation of fictional dialogues. The neutralization of insults or offensive language has already been noted in the translation of books for children from German into Basque (Zubillaga 2015). Although this latter study did not focus on audiovisual translation, it is relevant as it delves into the translation of one of the aspects of fictional dialogue, namely, swearwords. Thus, the linguistic analysis conducted for the purpose of this article has also included observations on the translation of offensive language and cases of wordplay, as they are characteristic of fictional dialogues that appear many times in *Maya the Bee*. Therefore, the other aim of this study will be to analyze the translation of tone in the translation of offensive language and cases of wordplay.

Other studies relating to the study of audiovisual translations into a minority language include Prat's (2014) corpus-based work, who analyzed the audiovisual translation of cartoons and anime into Balearic Catalan and found, while respecting the rules, examples of orality at all levels of the language (Prat 2014: 291-292). Marzà (2009) and Matamala (2009), who analyzed Valencian and Oriental Catalan in the dubbing of cartoons, respectively, also found instances of simplification.

These previous studies have the contextual factor of a minority language in common, and the greater use of formal language or lexical simplification should be understood on the basis of this conditioning factor.

#### 4. Methodology

To carry out the linguistic study of the series, a mixed parallel corpus of textual and audiovisual material was selected consisting of a third of the episodes, i.e., the scripts (the English ones and those with Basque translations for dubbing) and the episodes (the English ones as well as the end versions

in Basque),<sup>7</sup> so that the audiovisual code could be taken into account. The study was conducted from the indirect source language (SL) (English) into the target language (TL) (Basque) and not the other way round.

The sample consisted of 26 out of the 78 episodes of *Maya the Bee* dubbed into Basque. In order for these episodes to be as random as possible, the first 9 episodes, 8 episodes in the middle (episode 36 to 43) and the last 9 episodes were chosen. This gave a total of 26 scripts and their videos, each of them with a duration of approximately 15 minutes. Thus, the entire corpus contained 52 scripts and their respective 52 videos, 26 in English (the original indirect source language used for the translation) and 26 in Basque. As both the scripts and the audiovisual material were studied and viewed, the resulting corpus might be said to be a mixed parallel corpus. Hereinafter, “SC” will be used to refer to the original source corpus with the scripts and videos in English and “TC” for the target corpus with the scripts and videos in Basque.

The elements studied during the examination of the scripts and videos were nature-related terms and examples of offensive language and wordplay.

Considering the previous study by O’Connell on the simplification of LSP terms, especially nature-related terms (fauna and flora), the first objective of the analysis on *Maya the Bee* was to check and compare whether the phenomena detected by O’Connell in her study could also be identified in the dubbing of *Maya the Bee* into Basque. As *Maya the Bee* is a work where the main character is an animal and everything takes place within a natural environment, the main hypothesis was that the episodes would have a large number of such terms. In order to conduct the analysis, the scripts and videos were examined, and all nature-related terms were identified, after which the taxonomy of translation techniques for audiovisual translations proposed by Martí Ferriol (2010: 114-115) was used to identify the techniques used in each case.

When identifying nature-related terms, a significant number of examples of offensive language and wordplay in the texts was found. Offensive

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7. The author is indebted to the Basque Department of EITB (Basque radio and television channel) and the studio Mixer for providing material and being open and helpful in answering all questions and enquiries during the analysis.

language is a large area of study, but for the purposes of this article only the translation of abusive swearing was analyzed, i.e., those swearwords used to insult or inflict harm (Wajnryb 2005: 25). As for elements of wordplay, the cases identified as such were the funny expressions which result from mixing the meaning and phonetics of words. As we will see subsequently, in the case of *Maya the Bee*, many cases of wordplay can be seen with the word “bee”. The previous study on the literary translation of offensive language (Zubillaga 2013) focused on whether the translations retained, euphemized, eliminated, omitted, or dysphemized the tone of the swearword. Consequently, the same categories were used to identify the phenomena within the translation of offensive language and cases of wordplay. The tone is one of the elements that make up the register (Hatim & Mason 1992: 50). As swearwords and wordplay acquire their expressivity through their tone, the taxonomy on translation of tone was preferred in this case.

Therefore, two different taxonomies were used: the taxonomy proposed by Martí Ferriol (2010: 114-115) for the nature-related terms, and the taxonomy on the translation of tone used by the author in a previous study (Zubillaga 2013) for the translation of swearwords and wordplay.

## 5. Results and discussion

In total, after culling the words from the SC of 26 episodes, 332 occurrences of nature-related terms and their translations were analyzed.

Figure 1 confirms that, in most cases (94.5%), the terms were translated with an equivalent term in Basque, and there were only a few cases where the term was eliminated (1.8%), generalized (1.6%), modulated (0.9%), reduced (0.6%), adapted (0.3%) or explicated (0.3%). Therefore, no tendency of lexical simplification could be confirmed as was the case in O’Connell’s study. A few examples were added after the figure to illustrate some of the techniques and interesting phenomena related to “double equivalence” of the same word.

Figure 1. Translation techniques used for terms related with nature

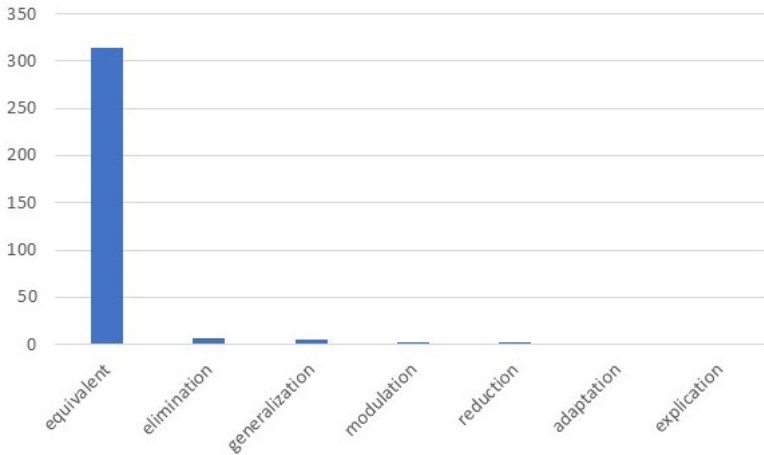


Table 1. Translation of nature-related terms. Examples

Episode	SC	TC	Translation Technique
3. Queen Messenger	But they get to wear those adorable folded ... <b>flower petal</b> hats.	<i>Baina, hain da dotorea mezularien kapela, lore-hosto eta guzti!</i> [But the messenger’s hat is so elegant! It even has <b>petals!</b> ]	Equivalent
8. Misleading appearances	That, little bee, is a <b>death’s head hawkmoth</b> , always hungry, he can’t stop eating!	<i>[O! Ez dut sekula horrelako...] ...tximeleta erraldoirik ikusi? Buzurra dauka sorbaldan, eta itxura batean goseak amorratzen dago</i> [[Oh! I’ve never seen...] ...such a <b>giant butterfly?</b> It has a death’s head on his shoulder and it seems it is very hungry].	Generalization
3. Queen Messenger	Okay then! <b>Bug-lings</b> on your marks!	<i>Ongi da. Lagunak, prest zaudete?</i> [Okay. Are you ready, <b>friends?</b> ]	Reduction
5. Maya to the rescue	May... we try an <b>apricot tree</b> now?	<i>Orain, eramango nauzue sagarrondo batera?</i> [Now, will you bring me to an <b>apple tree?</b> ]	Adaptation

The first example illustrates how the term “flower petal” is kept by giving an equivalent coined in Basque, *lore-hosto*. This example is particularly important because, although the Basque term fully reflects the English term, it is probably not the word that most Basque speakers would use every day for “petal”. Most speakers would prefer to use the loanword from Spanish (*petaloa*), which is also included in the dictionary of the Academy of the Basque Language. This phenomenon could indicate the preference for using a “more Basque” synonym. Something similar has also been observed in studies carried out on the use of Galician (Martínez Lorenzo 2020). It is not the author’s intention to positively or negatively evaluate the decisions taken during the translation process. However, in this particular example, the phenomenon to which Barambones refers when using Zabalbeascoa’s words is evident:

As far as Basque is concerned, the fact that the use of the unified or standardized language was confined to more or less formal, non-colloquial ambits often led to what Zabalbeascoa (2008) has called “displacements”, when referring to the credibility of the translated dialogue. In other words, the incongruity of characters that make use of a language variety that does not fit in with their social, cultural, economic, or geographical circumstances. (Barambones 2012: 51)

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that this same term is translated using the Spanish loanword (*petaloa*) in episode 37. The same thing happens with the term “nectar”: the Basque language has both, the Basque version *lorezti* (literally, “flower-honey”) and the loanword *nektar*. Although in the first episodes *lorezti* is used, the episodes from episode 36 on prefer to use *nektar*. Therefore, some linguistic decisions taken by the Basque service of EITB are not retained in later episodes. This is not a definitive change, as *lorezti* is used again in episode 75. This phenomenon may be due to the participation of various translators throughout the translation process of the whole series.

The second example illustrates a generalization, as the “death’s head hawkmoth” is translated as a “huge butterfly” in Basque.

The third example shows a reduction. Although a translation is offered, the chosen term (*lagunak*, friends) is reduced to an expression that has nothing to do with nature.



In the fourth example, the translator has adapted the nature-related term: the apricot becomes an apple tree (*sagarrondo* in Basque). The truth is that there are no iconic restrictions, i.e., it could be said there are no restrictions between the source and target material (Martí Ferriol 2010: 83-84), since the image does not show any kind of tree; it is simply the desire expressed by the earthworm to taste a piece of fruit. The translator was, therefore, free to change the word. The reason for changing the type of tree could be that both the word for the fruit (*abrikot*) and the word for the tree (*abrikotondo*) are not used very much in Basque,<sup>8</sup> so the aim of this adaptation may be to use language that Basque children will understand easier. This would therefore be the opposite effect to the displacement observed with *lore-hosto* in the previous example.

In addition to nature-related terms, the translation of abusive swearwords and cases of wordplay was analyzed. A total of 40 swearwords and 38 cases of wordplay were identified. Figure 2 illustrates the tendency to maintain, in the case of swearwords and the tendency to eliminate in cases of wordplay.

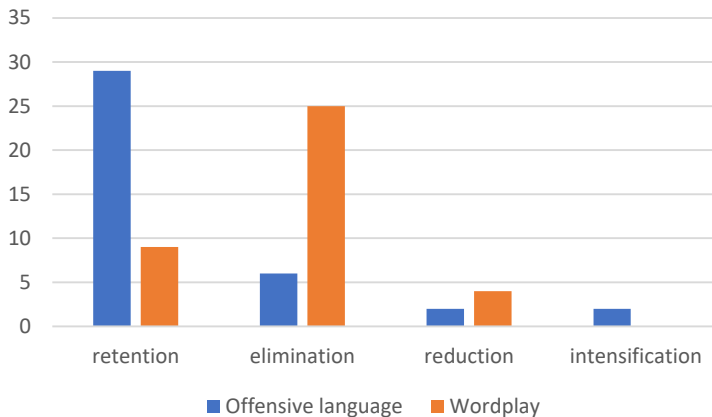


Figure 2. Treatment of swearwords and wordplay

8. The word *abrikot* occurs 83 times in the 21st century reference corpus of the Basque language, ETC (Sarasola & Salaburu 2021), and the word *abrikotondo* occurs 28 times. By contrast, *sagar* (apple) occurs 10,321 times and *sagarrondo* (apple tree) 1,406 times.

With regard to swearwords, the tone of most of them was retained (74.3%) and, in some cases (5.2%), intensity was added, although there were also cases (20.5%) where the insult was omitted altogether. The aforementioned study (Zubillaga, 2015) analyzed the translation of offensive language from German into Basque in a corpus of 1,276,280 words. It was found that translations neutralized offensive language significantly. The product considered herein is audiovisual and the study sample is smaller to be able to draw systemic conclusions, but as far as this particular sample is concerned, there does not seem to be a neutralizing tendency as far as offensive language is concerned.

As far as cases of wordplay are concerned, a loss is noticeable, since, in most cases (65.8%), wordplay was omitted altogether. In other cases, wordplay was reduced (10.5%) or given an equivalent (23.7%). The following chart illustrates some examples:

Table 2. Examples of translations of swearwords and wordplay. Examples

Chapter	SC	TC	Translation Technique
1. Judge Beeswax	<b>Ill-mannered little bee!</b>	<i>Erle lotsagabea!</i> [Shameless bee!]	(swearword) Retention
2. Willy's bottle	Silly Willy. You shouldn't worry.	<i>Esatea ere! Ez dago arduratu beharrik!</i> [What a witticism! There's no need to worry]	(swearword) Elimination
3. Queen Messenger	<b>Beee-utiful</b> morning, everyone.	<i>Kaixo! Egun on, denoi.</i> [Hello ! Good morning everyone]	(wordplay) Elimination

The first example shows the translation of an insult, for which an equivalent is given, and the degree of the insult is somewhat retained in Basque. Defining the nature of the tone or register of an insult may be difficult, as is the decision of whether the tone is retained in the target language. However, in the absence of further studies on how the series was received, we think that *erle lotsagabea* (shameless bee) relates to “ill-mannered bee”.

By contrast, the second example shows how the swearword was eliminated in its translation. It is true that swearwords vary in tone and that, in

this case, as Willy is Maya's best friend, the "swearword" that Maya uses when speaking to him takes place in the context of friendship. In any case, the Basque translation *esatea ere!* (what a witticism!) is not a swearword.

Most wordplay, however, has been omitted, as exemplified here, when Maya the Bee is in the habit of lengthening the syllable "be" pronounced /bi/, to emphasize the English word "bee", as she is a bee. Thus, wordplay is created such as "beee-utiful", which phonetically emulates "beautiful" but inserts the word "bee" at the beginning. This wordplay is repeated on more than one occasion in combination with other words, and as Basque, like most other languages, does not share these words phonetically, it is practically impossible to copy the wordplay. Perhaps this wordplay could be compensated for with other expressions, which, although without maintaining the play on words with "bee", would manage to maintain the playfulness the original English version wants to convey. Nevertheless, iconic or formal restrictions (related to isochrony) might hinder the use of the compensation technique.

## 6. Final remarks

If it had not been for the leap to its audiovisual format, the character of Maya the Bee would have fallen into oblivion, since Bonsels' work did not arouse any interest after World War II, either due to the controversy surrounding the author's political views or because the book did not fit in with the literary trends of the time. Nevertheless, the audiovisual medium managed to create an almost entirely new product, since Maya the Bee has experienced a modern rebirth and, consequently, the audiovisual product has become the guiding version or a "new original".

The ambivalent or crossover character of Bonsels' original work might have been lost as a result of this multimedia leap, as the series is more aimed at children.

In the specific case of the Basque language, it should be noted that Maya first appeared via the first audiovisual version in Spanish. It later appeared in Basque, together with the new 3D version. This series is still broadcast today, and one of the aims of this article was to carry out a translational

study to observe the translation of nature-related terms, offensive language and cases of wordplay.

In the 29 episodes of *Maya the Bee* analyzed in Basque, most of the nature-related words were given equivalents, so there seems to be no tendency to omit or simplify words, as O'Connell found in her work in 2003 on dubbing for children into Irish.

Nor did there seem to be any neutralizing tendency regarding offensive language. However, certain neutralizing tendencies in cases of wordplay seem to be noted. One way of retaining cases of wordplay would be to use compensatory language. Marzà (2016), who analyzed the translation of intensifiers in the dubbing of sitcoms in the Valencian system, found instances of addition and compensation: isochrony and kinetic synchrony did not hinder the use of these techniques (*ibid.*: 208-209). However, Marzà conducted a complementary SC-TC analysis, which made it possible to find potential examples of compensation.

The present case study is intended to take a closer look at the history of *Maya the Bee*, from its birth to its “rebirth” as an audiovisual franchise, as it has adapted to both modern audiences and new media formats. Nevertheless, a complementary SC-TC analysis, a systematic analysis of audiovisual codes and a more extensive study on reception is needed to test some of the hypothesis that emerge from this case study, as the displacement phenomena due to the way in which certain words are translated. Moreover, it would be interesting to analyze other audiovisual adaptations for children than just *Maya the Bee*. The use of audiovisual products has grown so much that it is of paramount importance to analyze how they are offered, so that the product continues to be relevant and appreciated.

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