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READING ALOUD AND INVENTED LANGUAGES: TRANSLATING *DU IZ TAK?*, BY CARSON ELLIS

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Abstract

This paper examines the translation of Carson Ellis's *Du Iz Tak?* in Spain and France. *Du Iz Tak?,* which won the E. B. White Read Aloud, is characterised by the fact that it is written in an invented language, the language of bugs. The purpose of the following pages is to study the mechanisms that lead to the translation of this Ellis's work and to analyse how *Koi ke bzzz?* and *¿Mau iz io?* represent two ways of approaching the translation of invented languages and of considering readability.

Keywords: Translation for children. Readability. Carson Ellis. *Du Iz Tak?* Invented language. Picturebooks.

Resumen

El presente artículo estudia la traducción de la obra *Du Iz Tak?,* de Carson Ellis, en España y Francia. *Du Iz Tak?*, que ganó el premio E. B. White al libro que mejor se prestaba a ser leído en voz alta, se caracteriza por estar escrito en una lengua inventada, la lengua de los insectos. El propósito en las páginas que siguen es estudiar los mecanismos que llevan a la traducción de esta obra de Ellis y analizar cómo *Koi ke bzzz?* y *¿Mau iz io?* suponen dos modos de abordar la traducción de los lenguajes inventados y de considerar la lecturabilidad.

Palabras clave: Traducción de LIJ. Lecturabilidad. Carson Ellis. *Du Iz Tak?* Lenguaje inventado. Álbumes ilustrados.

1. Introduction

The E. B. White Read Aloud award, established in the United States, honors books that are particularly outstanding when read aloud. Since 2006, two years after its creation, it has expanded into two categories: the original one for picture books and one for books targeted at older readers, "in recognition of the fact that reading aloud is a pleasure at any age (…). Books are nominated for their universal appeal as 'terrific' books to read aloud" (American Booksellers Association n.d.).

Increasing the age range for the books that can receive the E. B. White award supports the idea that reading aloud a literary work is something that can be enjoyed by all audiences. This approach is also related to the dual target of young adult and children's literature (Klingberg 1986; Shavit 1986; Puurtinen 1995; Oittinen 2000; Mendoza García 2018), which goes beyond the choice of a specific topic, style, or genre: the adult reader takes pleasure in becoming an active element in the transmission of the story and connecting with what we could call the "material aspect" of an illustrated book. Pointing at the images, looking for details, touching the pages, imitating the voices, and acting out the story are part of the enjoyment.

The awareness that one of the requirements in literature for children is that it needs to be able to be read aloud effortlessly is evident in the E. B. White Read Aloud award. Oittinen (1989) explained this idea when she classified the legibility of a text, as a synonym to its readability, as one of the norms (according to Toury) applied to children's literature; that is, it is one of the essential requirements that characterize it and that determine the acceptability (or lack of it) of a specific text.

For Gillian Lathey, the fact that children's literature is meant to be read aloud is a determining factor when translating it. In fact, this researcher refers to "translating 'aloud'" (Lathey 2016: 94), and this concept is relevant to understand how sound affects the process of transfer between languages. Other scholars have focused on this same factor, including, for example, Riita

Puurtinen (1998) or Cay Dollerup (2003), who highlighted the importance of syntactic constructions to achieve legibility.

The objective of this study is to reflect on the process of translating aloud mentioned by Lathey and on readability. We will provide examples for our considerations by focusing on Carson Ellis' *Du Iz Tak?* (2016), the book that received the E. B. White Read Aloud award in 2017. The unique feature in this work, as will be explained below, is that it is written in an invented language, some sort of "Insectese" or entomo-language spoken by the characters in the book. I will discuss here the mechanisms that make it possible to read aloud the original book and the ways in which the translations of *Du Iz Tak?* Into French and Spanish have approached this task.

2. Du Iz Tak?

Apart from the accolade mentioned above, *Du Iz Tak?* has also received the Caldecott Medal to the best illustrated book, awarded by the Association for Library Service to Children in the United States. Similarly, its translation into Spanish (*Mau iz io?*, Ellis 2017b) was selected by the Madrid Booksellers Association as the best illustrated album in 2017. In addition, the Bookstore Association of Quebec gave the award to the best book of the year to its French translation, *Koi ke bzzz?* (Ellis 2016).

Its author, Carson Ellis, is a well-known illustrator who does not only work on children's and young adult literature. *Du Iz Tak?* is the second book in which he is the author of both the text and the images, after *Home* (2015) —translated into Spanish as *Mil hogares* and into French as *Chez nous*—, and before her latest work, *In the Half Room* (2020) —which has not yet been translated into Spanish but has been translated into French, with the title *Une nuit de demi lune*.

Du Iz Tak? tells the story of a life cycle with the example of a plant: its birth, growth, splendor, withering and end. The cycle starts all over again: in the first image we can see a sprout, and in the last one we can see new shoots that suggest a narration that is circular, like nature, and like many of the stories targeted at children. The microcosmos of this plant contains insects, and these animals will lend their voices to the book through a language that

was invented specifically for them, the "Insectese" or "Insectian" that was mentioned above.

It is important to point out that, at first, the book was only supposed to include illustrations. Once that she finished her work, Carson Ellis decided that she wanted something more dynamic, because she thought that at that stage the result was "not enough; it was too static or too flat" (Jan 2017). In order to add liveliness to her story, Ellis decided to take inspiration from the children's series of Pingu the penguin, and to create a language just for the insects.

Pingu and *Du Iz Tak?* share a complete interdependence between the text and the images, although there is a significant difference between Pingu's speech and the Insectese in *Du Iz Tak?* Pingu emits sounds rather than words, a rushed mumbling that expresses his thoughts and his dialogues with those around him. In the case of insects, we find a language that seems to have its own grammar and vocabulary.

Using an invented language is an established tradition in products for children: we may mention, apart from the example of the Minions in cinema, the extraterrestrial pictograms of David Wiesner's *Mr Wuffles!* (translated into Spanish as *Sr. Minino*). Nikki Gamble (2019: 204) draws an association between *Mr. Wuffles!* and *Du Iz Tak?* because both books use an invented language which "invites readers to work out what is being said, making these books great choices for investigating language structure and communication". *Du Iz Tak?*, then, can be used to observe the learning and understanding mechanisms that guide the reading process, which are only viable, ultimately, if the readers know the code that the text is employing. The possibility of approaching an unknown language until we learn and understand it would be explained, according to Chomsky, by the existence of language universals. If a Martian came to Earth and spoke a language that violated these principles, according to Chomsky (Gliedman 1983), we would not learn that language in the same way, and we would have to approach it more slowly and with more obstacles. As we will see below, the language in *Du Iz Tak?* does not present the same difficulties that would stop us when faced with Chomsky's imaginary Martian.

3. First the drawing, then the text

Reading an illustrated book is always a performance: for the person who is reading aloud so that someone who does not yet know how to read can follow the story, and for the person who is learning how to read and wants to practice, alone or with the company of someone older who can guide them. This is the interpretation put forward by Oittinen (2014: 39), who places reading and performance at the same level: our contact with stories comes before we are able to read and write, and it takes place through the voice that is telling the story. Translators of children's literature will have to pay attention to the means through which the text comes to life, and these range from the size of the font to the layout of the text on the page or of the prosodic signs. And the translators, according to Oittinen, must be aware of the expressive potential of the text that can be achieved through intonation, emphasis, and pauses, among other elements, to contribute to the enjoyment of reading aloud.

In other words: reading a book targeted at children is, when done properly, a theatrical play, and the book as a whole becomes a script whose annotations are not only textual, but also —or mainly— visual. Therefore, the drawings will indicate the mood or the age of the speakers, their geographical location, or the time of day in which they are. There are many studies that have analyzed this interaction between images and text in children's literature (Oittinen 2001; O'Sullivan 2006; Kummerling-Meibauer 2017; Oittinen, Ketola & Garavini 2018; Oittinen & Pitkäsalo 2018). With regard to translation, the graphic component will be able, in some cases, to make up for information that may not be conveyed in the target text for any reason, or to guide the reading (that is, the translation) towards a specific semantic field or conceptual element.

Although the interaction between images and texts is highlighted here, there is still a prevalent idea that the text is the dominant element and that drawings play a subservient role. This hypothesis may be observed, for example, whenever there are different editions of the same classic book with different images, but the fact is that each illustration adds different nuances to the text, and it can even alter the age of the target audience of the book

(Pereira 2008) or the main message of the story, as is the case in some children's book on LGTBQ+ topics (Tarif 2018; Morillas 2021).

It has already been mentioned that Carson Ellis originally conceived her book without words, and that she added the text afterwards. Therefore, in this case the theory would be inverted; that is, the text would be subordinate to the illustrations. Oittinen (2000: 106-107) compares a translation with words to illustrations, which would become translation into images. In this case, the process is the opposite: the visual element in *Du Iz Tak?* is the source text (ST), whereas the text that goes with it would really be the target text (TT). Under these conditions, the two versions published in France and in Spain are actually indirect translations since they are translations of a translation through an intersemiotic route.

4. Translating Insectese

The Insectese in *Du Iz Tak?* does not intend to be a comic language, and it does not have parodic or mimetic purposes: while Aristophanes had a Chorus singing with the intention of sounding like real frogs ("brekekekex koax koax", according to the translation by María Aparicio 2007), we find here what is merely "another" language which is, incidentally, common to all insects: dragonflies, beetles or flies seem to be able to understand each other perfectly without any differences in the way they express themselves.

The first question we might ask ourselves is: why was it necessary to translate this invented language into Spanish, French, German, Chinese and many other languages? Why could it not be left as it was? Is Insectese not a universal language?

The enjoyment in the reading of *Du Iz Tak?* has a dual origin: on the one hand, the reader enjoys the auditory pleasure derived from this new language, the interest for the unknown, the attractive of what is exotic, what has never been spoken, pronounced, or read before. It has already been mentioned that texts targeted at children must be able to be read effortlessly. First of all, the need to translate Insectese would be due, in my opinion, to the phonetic adaptation to each language, so that the text does not contain unpronounceable sequences or fragments that are alien to the language of the reader, because that is also the case of the original audience of the book,

which speaks English. In addition, *Du Iz Tak?* includes different phonetic clues that help the audiences to decode some of the words used: there is homophony between some of the terms in the text and some English words. We might also wonder whether younger audiences would not be actually capable of understanding Insectese as it is, and to ascribe the strangeness they may feel when reading the book (or listening to it) to the language of these animals.

Together with the pleasure derived from the sonority of the text, its novelty, and its strangeness, we can find the enjoyment caused by the exploration of the language used (Gamble 2019), by the search for meaning and for a narration. Perhaps this second element is the answer to the question of why *Du Iz Tak?* should be translated: it is necessary to take into account the fact that, even though the language of insects is made up, it is adapted to a certain extent to the morphosyntactic structure of English and it helps the readers understand the text, as was mentioned before, by phonetically evoking some of the words that exist in that language. Therefore, translation is interpreted here as a mechanism that reinforces the comprehension of a text that, by itself, presents an invitation to linguistic exploration. The topic is, once again, readability, and we must remember that readability does not only depend on the articulation of one word after another. It exists based on syntax, textual coherence and extratextual knowledge.

Stevenson (2016) claims that reading *Du Iz Tak?* aloud requires finding the appropriate intonation to give meaning to the text, even though "imaginative listeners" will have no trouble enjoying it. Intonation is essential when reading aloud in general (and even during silent reading), particularly because, when addressing younger audiences, conventions dictate emphasis and prosopopoeia. We might add that in *Du Iz Tak?* prosody is an essential decoding element for the person who listens and who, at the same time, sees the illustrated story, with the images as an element that advances the meaning of what is being read.

In any case, Carson Ellis' editor, Liz Bicknell, explained in an interview (Corbett 2017) why the translation of the book was going to pose a challenge. First of all, according to her, some of the words that Ellis invented for her insects have their own meaning in other languages, and she gives the example of *Tak*, a word that sounds like "thank you" in Swedish (*tack*). The same

thing happens with *Su*, for example, which means "above" in Italian, and it would be interesting to see the translation of this word (which means "yes" in Insectese) into Italian if the work finally sees the light in this language.

Another problem behind the translation of *Du Iz Tak?* was that it was necessary to understand that this invented language had a specific meaning. The French translation revealed that this factor had not been understood. For example, the word for "ladder", *ribble*, was repeated on purpose in the original version three times so that the readers could deduce what it referred to, and the author followed a logical process of vocabulary teaching. In the first version of the French translation, according to Ellis, the translation of the word *ribble* was not repeated, because the link between the object that was described and the word to name it had gone unnoticed. Ellis, then, decided to rewrite her text in English so that the different connections could be properly appreciated. Based on that translation, the French publishers rewrote their version completely. The translators of *Du Iz Tak?*, therefore, must be aware that the language invented by Carson Ellis does have meaning.

A third obstacle, according to Ellis' publisher, was the fact that each language has its own structure, apart from Chomsky's "language universals", and it is essential to know it in order to decode the language of insects. As Bicknell concludes, deducing what the animals are saying is part of the enjoyment.

5. *Koi ke bzzz?* and *¿Mau iz io?*

We can see that the French version had the full approval from its publishers, and this could lead us to think that this was also the case in all other editions, although it would not be appropriate to assume as much, since *Du Iz Tak?* has been translated into at least 11 other languages. In any case, what this account reveals is the awareness at the publishing house Candlewick Press, devoted to children's literature, of the role that translations play in the editorial process.

This episode related to translation may have led the publishers of the British version of *Du Iz Tak?* at Walker Books to add a paratext that was not included in the book before. In the edition used for this study, which dates back to 2017 —that is, one year after the first American edition— the back

cover of *Du Iz Tak?* features a full moon and three butterflies. The biggest butterfly is flying above the title of the book, and right below the title, in italics and with a smaller font size, we can read, as if it was a translation, *What is that?* Then, a short abstract and blurbs from different reviews are included. Also, in the cover, apart from a reference to the Caldecott award that was given to the book, there is a caption below the image with a sentence from *The Guardian* which is at the same time an endorsement and a synopsis: "*Glorious and hopeful… uses a made-up bug language to tell of a year in the life of a group of insects*".

This edition makes it easier to know what the book contains, it clarifies what we will find inside, its plot and its language, which did not happen in the original edition, which was more restrained, more surprising. It seems as if, in spite of the accolades awarded to the book, the editors did not trust completely the captivating power of the images —which were previously the only element in the paratext, apart from the title— and they needed an element of disambiguation, something with propaedeutic value. The translation of *Du Iz Tak?* as *What is that?* in the back cover gives the readers, from the beginning, a clue to decode, at least, the title, which is also the first sentence in the book. A dragonfly points at something green emerging from the floor and asks another dragonfly, who contemplates what readers can guess is a sprout: *Du Iz Tak?* ("What is that?"). The other dragonfly answers: *Ma nazoot* ("I don't know"). Obviously, in the original American edition by Candlewick Press there were still no reviews to refer to, and the book had not received the Caldecott Medal yet, but the line *What is that?* could have also been added then as a clarifying subtitle.

The Spanish edition, *¿Mau iz io?*, is identical to the first edition of *Du Iz Tak?*, and it is also presented without any sort of textual paratext with the exception of the title itself. The French version, however, adds a brief summary of the plot and explains that the book is written in the language of insects, although it does not provide a translation for *Koi ke bzzz?*, perhaps because its meaning is more transparent for French-speaking readers. This difference announces, in a way, the two ways in which both translations approach the language of insects.

To begin with, the French title, *Koi ke bzzz?* is more evocative, and it shifts from the onomatopoeia (*bzzz*) to the echoes of the French language.

It is a literal translation, if we consider that, from a phonetic perspective, *Du Iz Tak?* is reminiscent of *Do it talk?* (or at least it may seem so, since we have already seen that it means something different here), and that *bzzz*, which refers to the sound produced by some insects, may also be interpreted as a term that refers to their language. The Spanish title, *¿Mau iz io?*, for its part, has the sound of a proper noun. In fact, that is the way in which the son of Barbara Fiore (director of the publishing house with the same name, which edited the book in Spanish) pronounced his name when he was little, as she explained (Jan 2017). *¿Mau iz io?* is a more exotic title because it cannot be directly linked to Spanish, although perhaps it was inspired by the *Iz* in the original title. As Fiore explains (Jan 2017): "starting from the title, all the other sounds started to appear. We were looking for sounds that children were familiar with and that could be easily repeated". The Spanish translation of the title, therefore, is a free translation, a phonetic adaptation and recreation, rather than a morphosyntactic transfer. That is the case, as we will see below, of the rest of this version.

Both the French and the Spanish translations (as well as the original, *Du Iz Tak?*) follow the spelling and typographical conventions of their respective languages. In the case of the Spanish edition, we can find, as we saw with the title, opening and closing question marks, as indicated by the typographical rules in Spanish, and in line with the convention that the text of children's literature must be, with the exception of some specific cases, normative from that perspective. On the other hand, as it generally happens when the narration consists exclusively of dialogues, there are no quotation dashes for the different lines. Both in *Du Iz Tak?* and in *Koi ke bzzz?*, the lines of the characters end with a punctuation sign (there are abundant interjections and questions in the text, and in all other cases, sentences end with a period), but in the Spanish version, unless they end with exclamation or question marks, there are no periods at the end of sentences. Capitalization is used for proper nouns, and capital letters are also used for emphasis, as if they were stage directions, to indicate that something must be read more loudly than usual, or with a specific intonation.

With regard to the word count, the ST has a total of 98 words, whereas the Spanish edition has 88 and the French edition has 103. That is: the French version uses five more words than the original, and the Spanish

version uses 10 less, as if translating from Insectese showed the opposite trend to translating from English into Spanish: in general terms, as we know, a Spanish translation tends to have more words than the original English text.

5.1. Koi ke bzzz?

We have seen before that the repetition of words is one of the mechanisms used in the original book to assist in the progressive learning of Insectese. As in a foreign language class, new vocabulary is introduced and then reinforced through repetition, in order to facilitate its assimilation. In the case of *Du Iz Tak?*, as we said above, the visual text is a determining element (that is also often the case in foreign language handbooks, both for adults and for younger learners).

One of the words that is repeated in the text is *plonk*, which was translated into French as *plonk*; that is, it remains unchanged. Both in English and in French, this word is almost a homophone of the word "plant" (*plant* and *plante*, respectively), and in this case, apart from the visual reference of the images, there is a phonetic clue that helps to decode the text.

We have already mentioned that the word used to refer to a ladder, *ribble*, appears three times. In the first case, there is no element that gives indications as to what the word may be referring to: the image shows the plant, which has grown a bit more than in the previous page, and three insects that are talking to each other. One of them, a fly, says: *Ru badda unk ribble*. *Su*, answers another insect, and the third one, a ladybug, adds: *Bore inkin Icky*. In the next page, the insects call Icky and, while pointing at the plant, they say: *Icky, ru badda unk ribble*. One more page, and we can see Icky carrying a long ladder in his hands: *Unk ribble!*, the ladybug exclaims. We now know that *unk ribble* is a ladder, and that *Ru badda unk ribble* probably means "we need a ladder" or "let's take a ladder".

The French translation, which seems to try to facilitate the comprehension of the text more explicitly than the original, transforms *Ru badda unk ribble* into *Za plonk tro hoot!*, which may be understood, not considering the grammar, as "Ça plante trop haute". And, for that tall plant, what they need is *Unk echonk!* in the French version, that is, a ladder. The French edition,

then, does not repeat the translation for *ribble* in the three instances in which it appears, but changes it to use homophony in the two repeated cases, while in the third one it uses the images as a disambiguating element.

Example 1

Ru badda unk ribble.	Za plonk tro hoot!
Su.	Zouizz!
Bore inkin Icky.	Zudonk a Gluicky…
(…)	(…)
Icky, ru badda unk ribble.	Gluicky, za plonk tro hoot!
Unk ribble!	Unk echonk!

There is also a repetition of the word *gladdenboot*, whose meaning is once again easy to deduct thanks to the illustrations: "flower". The French version presents *turlitiboot* as an equivalent, which promotes the sonority of the exclamations and the phonetic interplay, particularly because *turlitiboot* is repeated seven times in a dialogue and its repeated pronunciation becomes a tongue-twister of sorts. Just as the title emphasized the play with onomatopoeia with *bzzz*, the translation of *su* (another recurrent term), which means "yes" in Insectese, becomes *zouizz* in French, with a new onomatopoeia that reinforces the sonority of the text and reminds the readers of an element that is characteristic of the French language, in this case the affirmative adverb *oui*.

5.2. ¿Mau iz io?

In the case of the Spanish version, it is not that easy to find a correspondence between the ST and the TT.

To begin with, in *¿Mau iz io?* Insects seem to be smarter than in *Du Iz Tak?*, because they know from the start that what is growing is a "muña-muña". At least, that is the response they give to the question in the title:

Example 2

Du Iz Tak?	¿Mau iz io?
Ma nazoot.	Muña-muña

Therefore, whereas the translation for *Ma nazoot* should have been equivalent to "I don't know", here we can find an answer to the question: "muña-muña", which, on the other hand, maintains a certain logic, since insects are supposed to be familiar with their own habitat. We can deduce what "muña-muña" means when this term appears again next to the image to which it refers. When faced with the flower, the insects exclaim: "¡Sun muña-muña!", "¡Iz sun muña-muña!", "¡Iz muña-muña!".

If we consider the translation of *Du Iz Tak?* as *What is that?* we may deduce that *¿Mau iz io?* means "¿Qué es eso?", and therefore, that "iz" corresponds to the Spanish verb "es". Therefore, it may be interpreted that "¡Sun muña-muña!" and "¡Iz sun muña-muña!" mean, respectively "¡Una flor!" and "¡Es una flor!". "¡Iz muña-muña!", then, would be equivalent to "¡Es flor!", which means that Insectese does not seem to require the use of an article. It may also be the case that, from a grammatical perspective, this is just a minor error in translation, and that instead of translating *unk* as "Sun" it was presented as "Iz".

Let us now observe the translation of *plonk*:

Example 3	
Du Iz Tak?	¿Mau iz io?
Ma ebadow unk plonk.	Yuyo yaneta
Du kimma plonk?	¿Yuyo chachocoma?
Ma nazoo	Muña-muña

Considering that the term repeated in the Spanish translation is "Yuyo", we might think that this word, in Insectese, means "plant". This alleged noun is placed at the beginning of the sentence, which would mean that "yaneta" and "chachocoma" are adjectives, when analyzed from the morphological perspective of Spanish, which does not seem to be applied in the translation, thus increasing the strangeness caused by this entomo-language or Insectese.

However, "Yuyo", in some countries of Latin America, refers to a type of herb (edible or not, depending on the country), whereas "chachocoma" is phonetically close to "chachacoma", a flower of the Andean Mountains. This association may be established by those who know the terms, although for most of the target readers, the key element will be the semantic evocation and the phonetic play caused by the phonemic iteration.

If we review the French translation of this same fragment, we can see that the decoding process is much simpler:

Example 4

Du Iz Tak?	Koi ke bzzz?
Ma ebadow unk plonk	Poot unk plonk?
Du kimma plonk?	Koi ke plonk?
Ma nazoot.	Za zu pat.

In this case, we can understand that they are talking about a plant, that they are asking which plant it is, and that the answer, *Za zu pat*, with *pat* at the end that reminds us of the French negative particle *pas*, is still equivalent to "I don't know". In the Insectese of *¿Mau iz io?*, the decoding process is, as we just described, less direct, particularly for an audience of readers unfamiliar with the different varieties of Spanish.

5.3. Proper nouns

Let us now consider how the two proper nouns in the text have been translated. As we know, anthroponyms (including the abundant motivated names) are one of the areas of interest in translation studies of young adult and children's literature (Cámara Aguilera 2009) due to their relevance in the plot and their capacity to evoke other cultures. In *Du Iz Tak?* we can find *Icky* (the character who lends others the ladder) and *Ooky*, its female counterpart (it is worth mentioning that the insects are anthropomorphized in the illustrations, and in this case, the reader can appreciate the differences between male and female insects or, if preferred, between man-insects and woman-insects). *Icky* is undoubtedly a proper noun, and in fact the other insects call him three times before he leaves his hideout and lends them the ladder. As regards *Ooky*, Icky calls her so that she can admire the flower, and she emerges from the same trunk he was in. Perhaps in order to offset the idea that Icky is the one in charge of the ladder and Ooky the mere spectator that admires the flower, Ooky is shown smoking a pipe, which is surprising for two reasons: political correction has erased tobacco depictions from many stories, and the characters who are generally seen smoking have traditionally been male.

The phonetic play *Icky* / *Ooky* is evident, and it has been adapted in French as *Gluicky* and *Ooky*, whereas it has not been maintained in the Spanish translation. *Icky* is translated as "Chimú": those able to decode it will be reminded of the pre-Columbian Peruvian civilization and its people. However, *Icky* is not always translated the same way. For example, when the insects think they need to ask for a ladder, in the ST we can read *Bore inkin Icky*. The Spanish translation shows: "Bubú bacano", a proposal that maintains a repetition of sounds. Later, when the insects greet *Icky* and *Ooky*, we find in the translation terms that seem to be common nouns ("amigo" and "amiga"?), rather than proper nouns:

Example 5

Ta ta, Icky.	Ta ta, guayra
Ta ta, Ooky.	Ta ta, matungo

Oddly enough, each of the three readings of *¿Mau iz io?* found on YouTube shows a different pronunciation for "guayra". We can hear "guaieira" (Prieto n.d.); "guayra" (with the stress falling on the "y") (Mendoza n.d.), and guayara (Jarque Martínez n.d.). Therefore, the potential reference to "guajira" is not always clear. The term "matungo" is also characteristic of Latin American Spanish, but since this adjective means "lack of health" in Cuba and Argentina and "high" in Paraguay, it may have been added to the text because of its expressive value.

The translation of the first sentence in which *Ooky* is mentioned is remarkable: the flower has bloomed and *Icky* puts her hands around her mouth as a loudspeaker and exclaims: *Ho Ooky!* When the page is turned, Ooky is leaning out of the trunk. The translation for *Ho Ooky* is "¡Tuy Ïvïrá!", which could lead us to deduce that the translation for *Ooky* is "Ïvïrá", capitalized as if to indicate a proper noun (it is, in fact, the only capitalized word not at the beginning of a sentence in *¿Mau iz io?*). However, we can later find "ïvïrá" again, this time in lowercase, as a translation for *scrivadelly*, which would mean that there are nouns in Insectese that can be at the same time proper and common (as happens in Spanish). Let us see an example:

Example 6	
Ho Ooky!	¡Tuy Ïvirá!
Unk scrivadelly gladdenboot!	¡Sun ïvïrá muña-muña!
Ta ta, Ooky	Ta ta, matungo

Another possible interpretation is that, since *gladdenboot* means "flower" and *scrivadelly* is a positive adjective, "ïvïrá" may be used in Insectese as an affectionate form of address, something like "sweet" or "beautiful". The truth is that there is no correspondence between the terms and the translation makes it difficult to create an Insectese-Spanish dictionary (*gladenboot* = "muña-muña", for example, but Ooky = "Ïvirá" or "matungo"). In addition, while "muña-muña" includes a hyphen, which is a rare occurrence in Spanish, the umlaut over the "i" takes the reader even further away from the Spanish vocal system, even though there are no grave accents and, as we have seen, the text follows the punctuation rules regarding capitalization, inverted and ordinary question and exclamation marks, and the commas before vocatives.

6. Conclusions

It is clear, after considering the examples above, that the motivations behind both translations were completely different. When the French translation moved away from the original, it did so in order to facilitate a more immediate understanding through phonetic-semantic associations. These associations are related to the French language, as was shown in Example 1 with *Za plonk tro hoot!*, and to the sounds produced by the animals (*bzzz, zouizz*). This is a text in which comprehensibility and readability have been considered at the same level, and the translation takes advantage of the exotic elements of the language of insects to reappropriate them and make them familiar, thanks to the reminiscences mentioned above. It might even be said that this translation is pedagogical, since it pays attention to the needs of the younger audiences, but it is also aware of the older readers, and it gives them the tools to decode the text in order to read and transmit the story. The French translation puts the reading aloud process on a level with the intelligibility of the text.

For its part, and despite using some denotative terms that are, in any case, not common to all the varieties of Spanish, the Spanish translation

seems to interpret reading aloud mainly as an aural play. If we consider the vowels, for example, there is only an "e" in the entire text of *¿Mau iz io?*, and the "u" becomes the main figure, which appears in most lines, as well as in the title. There is also an increased repetition and confluence of consonants: "muña-muña", "yuyo yaneta", or "bubú bacano", among others, as well as the "¡Ta ta!", which is the only element that has been taken literally from the original, together with *su* (featuring again the "u"). There is no systematic correspondence when there are repetitions in the ST, and the text in *¿Mau iz io?* relies much more on the illustrations than the proposal in *Koi ke bzzz?*, which makes it more faithful to the spirit of illustrated books and to the original idea behind the work itself.

We pointed out at the start that *Du Iz Tak?* had received an award for its versatility when it is read aloud. The French translation strives to create similarities in meaning between the vocabulary in Insectese and in French, and it also tries —due to the intervention of Walker Books, as we now know— to mimic the structure of the repeated formulas in the ST, in order to facilitate learning the words in Insectese. The Spanish translation does not seem to have considered the morphosyntactic structure of the target language, and it increases the strangeness and exotism of the text, as if it considered that in this case its readability —which has received different awards— depended mainly on the pleasure of mimicking and dramatizing, with the help of the illustrations, a language similar to the gurgling sounds and the babbling of toddlers. Although this is a valid choice, it overlooks one of the most interesting possibilities in the translation of *Du Iz Tak?*: showing the readers how translation practices can become a guideline to unravel and learn an unknown language, in a process that combines curiosity with the desire and the will to understand others.

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