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Study of the translation techniques for swearwords in video games

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Abstract:

The present study offers an analysis and classification of the techniques when translating swearwords in five video games. Audiovisual translation (AVT) plays a fundamental role in the field of video game translation, encompassing multimedia translation, dubbing, subtitling, and localization, which seeks to adapt the game to the culture of the target country. The research provides a comparative evaluation of the translation techniques used to render swearwords from English into Spanish in the subtitle texts. From all the data of the small specialized corpus, a total of 858 examples—based on a list of twelve swearwords —have been classified into tables and graphs. The analysis reveals a predominance of literal translation and adaptation techniques, reflecting a balance between preserving the original meaning and culturally adjusting the content. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of translation strategies in the context of AVT for video games.

Keywords: translation techniques, subtitling, video games, AVT, swearwords.

Resumen:

El presente estudio ofrece un análisis y una clasificación de las técnicas a la hora de traducir palabras malsonantes en cinco videojuegos. La traducción audiovisual (TAV) desempeña un papel fundamental en el campo de la traducción de videojuegos, incluyendo la traducción multimedia, el doblaje, la subtitulación y la localización, que trata de adaptar el juego a la cultura del país de destino. La investigación ofrece una evaluación comparativa de las técnicas de traducción empleadas para traducir palabras malsonantes del inglés al español en los subtítulos. A partir de todos los datos del pequeño corpus especializado, se han clasificado en tablas y gráficos un total de 858 ejemplos, basados en una lista de doce palabras malsonantes. El análisis revela que las técnicas de traducción literal y de adaptación son las más frecuentes, es decir que existe un equilibrio entre la conservación del significado original y el ajuste cultural del contenido. Estos resultados contribuyen a una mejor comprensión de las técnicas de traducción en el contexto de la TAV para videojuegos.

Palabras clave: técnicas de traducción, subtitulado, videojuegos, AVT, palabras malsonantes.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS:

AVT (Audiovisual Translation).

TAV (Traducción Audiovisual).

SL (Source Language).

TL (Target Language).

VHS (Video Home System).

DVDs (Digital Versatile Disc).

FUBAR (Fucked Up Beyond All Recognition).

DOA (Dead On Arrival).

LZ (Landing Zone).

CD-ROM (Compact Disc Read-Only Memory).

ST (Source Text)

TT (Target Text)

AI (Artificial Intelligence)

1. INTRODUCTION

The present paper focuses on the study and classification of the techniques for translating swearwords in the video games *Gears of War, Call of Duty: Black Ops, Battlefield V, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* and *Scarface: The World is Yours*. It highlights the importance of translation as a means of communication (House & Blum-Kulka, 1986), between countries with different languages. Bassnett (2013) defined translation as "[w]hat is generally understood as translation involves the rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL)" (p.12).

Any research on video games should begin by considering their origins. The first video game ever created was *Nought and Crosse*, also called *OXO*, developed by Alexander S. Douglas in 1952. The game was a computerized version of tic-tac-toe.

Later, in the 1970s, the home console was released, along with the game *Space Invaders* the first to depict spacecraft invading Earth. It was developed by Toshihiro Nishikado in 1978. The programmer acknowledged being inspired by the novel *The War of the Worlds*, written by H. G. Wells and published in 1898,This game was the first to use music and sound effects, and its influence can still be seen in modern games. Furthermore, *Space Invaders* became a cultural phenomenon, and the image of aliens could be seen in fashion, movies, music and other video games such as *Gears of War*, Constantine (2011).

In the 1980s, many video games such as Nintendo's *Super Mario* and consoles like SEGA appeared. In the 1990s, computer games emerged with the introduction of CD-ROMs. Later, in 2000, Sony launched the PlayStation, and in 2001, Microsoft entered the console industry by creating the Xbox, Facultat d'Informàtica de Barcelona (2008).

At the same time, a major entertainment industry was developing, growing year by year in profits and becoming a billion-dollar industry. This is illustrated by a study conducted by *Business Research Insights* (2025), which reported that video game localization was valued at $2.17 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach $4.45 billion by 2033.

When compared to the total revenue generated by the global video game industry, these figures may seem relatively small. In 2024, global video game market revenue was estimated at almost 455 billion dollars, which the mobile games sector accounting for approximately 98.7 billion dollars. Two of the leading companies in this AVT market, as

noted by Clement (2024), are Keywords Studios and Lionbridge. Whereas in Spain, the video game industry reported a profit of 2,339 million euros in 2023, according to Gónzalez Lorca (2023:12) in the yearbook of Asociación Española de Videojuegos. These data highlight that the video game industry, not only surpasses other entertainment sectors in terms of revenue but also plays a central role in shaping contemporary cultural, social and technological practices.

This study analyses the translation of swearwords in video games from English into Spanish, with the aim of examining the types of translation techniques applied. In the context of video game translation, the role of the AVT (Audiovisual Translation) is relevant in video games. According to García (1996) "[l]a conversión de un texto audiovisual extranjero en nacional es el resultado de un proceso en el que intervendrán varias instancias (técnicas, artísticas, traductivas, económicas)". (p. 124)

This topic was selected for this undergraduate dissertation because the use of AVT in video games is particularly fascinating. In video games, translation refers not only to text but also includes multiple semiotic components such as visual and auditory elements, —including but not limited to music, voices, tone, and colours. Additionally, even gestures and body movements performed by actors when portraying video game characters or animated figures must be properly translated, although these elements are not the focus of this paper's analysis.

Taking into account the objectives outlined for this thesis, the main objective of this study is to analyse the translation techniques employed in the English-to-Spanish translations of the video games mentioned at the beginning of the introduction. Given that "[s]ubtitling and dubbing are still commonly considered the two main modes of AVT, with voiceover being the third" (Remael, 2010: 12), this study focuses on the subtitling of these games in both languages in order to analyse the data, vocabulary, and expressions found.

The present undergraduate dissertation is structured as follows: the introduction provides a general overview of this topic and outlines the objectives. The second section addresses AVT, offering a definition and describing the types of translation techniques identified in the material under analysis. The literature review is presented in the third section, providing an overview of current research on the subject. The fourth section describes the materials analysed and the procedure followed to examine the translation techniques used for rendering swearwords into Spanish. The fifth section presents the

results, including a comparison of the translation techniques applied to swearwords across various video games, followed by the discussion. The final section provides the conclusions.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Audiovisual Translation

The name of AVT has evolved over time, adapting to the needs of the film industry from which it originated. However, all authors agree that it represents a new modality of translation, as traced by Pardo (2013):

> Many terms have been employed to refer to film or TV programme translation. The term *transadaptation* or *film dubbing* was used by István Fodor in 1976; Film translation was the term used by Mary Snell-Horby, 1988; Ian Mason used the term *screen translation* in 1989; *traducción cinematográfica* was the term used by Amparo Hurtado in 1994; and Jorge Díaz Cintas, in 2001, used the term *traducción audiovisual*. *Audiovisual translation*, and *multimedia translation* were first proposed by Gambier in 2003 and he also mentions the term *transadaptation* which Eithne O'Connell used again in 2007. In the end, as time went on, there was a clear tendency towards the use of a preferred term: «audiovisual translation». (p. 19-20)

Regarding the origin of AVT, "[l]os inicios de la traducción audiovisual se remontan a los inicios mismos de la cinematografía" (Orrego, D., 2013: 298), since silent films required translation through subtitling and, later, with the advent of sound films, through dubbing. Similarly, Pardo (2013), defined AVT as "Audiovisual translation is a modality of translation which rose in the 1930s and it could be defined as the technical method that made the linguistic transfer of an audiovisual text possible" (p. 20). In his work, Chaume (2019) also stated "Nuestro oficio, el oficio de los traductores y traductoras de textos audiovisuales, nace de forma paralela al invento del cine" (p. 15), highlighting the parallel development of AVT with cinema.

This type of audiovisual production has two unmistakable characteristics: it is 'multimodal' as it involves or uses several modes such as language, image, music, colour, costumes, etc.; and it is also referred to as 'multimedia', because it is transmitted in a synchronized manner through different media. The term 'multimedia' refers to any object or system that employs multiple means of expression, such as text, images, sound, video, even animation. Therefore, the main objective of audiovisual productions is to convey information both verbally and non-verbally. This concept was defined by Chiaro (2012) as follows:

> Audiovisual translation (AVT) is the term used to refer to the transfer from one language to another of the verbal components contained in audiovisual works and products. Feature films, television

programs, theatrical plays, musicals, opera, Web pages, and video games are just some examples of the vast array of audiovisual products available and that require translation. (p. 1).

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs of this section, and as reflected in the above definition, the evolution of this type of translation can be traced from its origin in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with silent films to the present day. A significant boom occurred in the final years of the twentieth century, driven by technological advances such as VHS (Video Home System), cell phones, computers, DVDs (Digital Versatile Disc), the expansion of the Internet, various television platforms, the film industry, video games, and more. These advances are partly due to the exponential increase in the use of technology, which has become essential in nearly every aspect of daily life, both personal and professional. Even though we are often unaware of our daily exposure to AVT, it is present not only in technology and social media, but also in translated materials such as leaflets for video games, consoles, and computers.

In addition, video game users are among the most demanding consumers in the field of audiovisual translation. Moreover, the translator is responsible for the linguistic and cultural adaptation of the source material, a process known as 'video game localization' or 'computer game localization'. The localization industry emerged alongside the computer industry in the 1980s, due to the increasing demand for multilanguage support in software. According to Pirrone and D'Ulizia (2024), it is important to note:

> There are two distinct aspects to take into account when localizing video games. On one hand, there is "linguistic localization" (which mainly refers to the translation process), while on the other hand, "product localization" consists of adapting a product or service to the culture and language of customers in a specific target market. (p. 2).

This is a very important modality within AVT because, in the dynamic world of video games, success does not only depend on high quality gameplay and advanced graphics. It also depends on effective localisation, which involves not only translating the dialogues, rather adapting the video game to other cultures and countries. Therefore, Granell, Mangiron and Vidal (2015) stated that:

> la localización de videojuegos es algo más que traducción. Efectivamente, en la traducción de videojuegos, no solo se traduce el texto escrito u oral, sino que se traducen, entre otros elementos, imágenes y gráficos textuales, los llamados *art assets*. (p. 20)

In other words, the game's title, art assets, graphics, lip-synchronization, packaging, manuals, and cultural and legal aspects are typically modified to adapt the product to the target market. For this purpose, the translator must be knowledgeable about the culture, religion, tradition, etc., of the target country in order to adapt the SL to the TL in a way that avoids causing offense and preserving the essence of the game in translation.

2.2. Translation techniques

Before beginning this section, it is worth recalling the different types of translation addressed in the subject 'Theory and Practice of English/Spanish Translation' in this degree, which referred to the work of Roberts (1995: 69–70), who in turn drew on Delisle (1980) to identify eight ways of classifying translation:

- According to the function of the source text (ST), Delisle distinguished between pragmatic or literary translation. (1980: 29-34).
- According to the degree of specialization of the ST, he differentiated between general or specialized translation (1980: 25).
- According to the general purpose of the translation, he divided academic (direct/reverse) or professional translation. (1980: 40-43)
- According to the translation approach used to produce the target text, he distinguishes between transcoding, which produces word equivalence, and translation (proper), which produces message equivalence. (1980: 58-69).

Following the definitions in the previous paragraph, AVT can be classified as a 'literary translation' because it is not an informative text; 'specialised translation' because it contains jargon, terminology, and expressions that are only understandable to a specific community; as a 'professional translation' because its aim is the transmission of a message to a translation user; and finally, as a 'proper translation' because it produces a coherent and meaningful message.

Regarding translation techniques and procedures, Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) presented one of the first classifications of translation techniques, which was later further elaborated in their book, (2000: 84-93) and further discussed in Munday's book (2002) and by many other scholars. Their classification was complemented by other techniques, as stated by Molina and Albir (2002: 500) and Volf (2020: 1). The following paragraphs provide a list of brief definitions for each of the translation techniques.

Direct translation techniques are used when there is a structural, lexical and semantic correspondence between the SL and the TL. The main techniques included in this category are:

- Borrowing. "the SL word is transferred directly to the TL" (Vinay and Darbelnet: 85).
- Calque. "A foreign word or phrase translated and incorporated into another language" (Molina and Albir, 2002:499).
- Literal translation is "Word for word translation" (Molina and Albir, 2002:499).

Oblique translation techniques, according to Molina and Albir (2002) "occurs when word for word translation is impossible". These techniques include:

- Transposition. "A shift of word class, i.e., verb for noun, noun for preposition", Molina and Albir (2002).Modulation. It involves changing the point of view, focus, or cognitive category of the source text message, while preserving its meaning'.
- Equivalence. Vinay and Darbelnet use this term to refer to cases where it describes the same situation by different stylistic or structural means. (2000: 90)
- Adaptation. It is a cultural or contextual substitution to adapt the text to the target audience.

Other recognized techniques, as stated by Molina and Albir, and Volf, are:

- Amplification introduces information that is not explicit in the source text.
- Reduction eliminates information considered redundant or unnecessary in the TL.
- Compensation replaces a stylistic or functional effect lost elsewhere in the text.
- Description replaces a term with a description of its form or function.
- Generalization "is a technique of using more general or neutral terms in the TL" (Molina & Albir, 2002).
- Particularization is the use of a more specific term than the original.
- Inversion moves a word or a phrase to another place in a sentence or a paragraph so that it reads naturally in the TL.

2.3. Types of swearing expressions

In order to differentiate among the types of swearing language, it is first necessary to understand the definition of swearwords, according to Cambridge Dictionary, 'swearwords' is defined as "a rude or offensive word". In other words, these expressions

are vulgar and offensive terms that often carry derogatory connotations. Moreover, the video games analysed in this study use taboo and slang expressions as swearwords, as they are set in a military context. Therefore, the first step is to define each of these terms according to Cambridge Dictionary.

The word 'vulgar' is defined as "rude and likely to upset or anger people, especially by referring to sex and the body in an unpleasant way". Some examples of vulgar words include 'shit', 'asshole', 'bullshit', and 'fuck you'.

As for the term 'offensive', it is defined as "unpleasant and causing upset". For instance, expressions such as 'shut up', 'bastards', among others.

When it comes to the term 'derogatory', the Cambridge Dictionary defines it as "showing strong disapproval and not showing respect". For instance, in *Gears of War*, Baird says, *"watch out for the boogeyman"*. This expression is derogatory because he treats adults as if they were children.

In the case of 'taboo', it is defined as "a subject, word, or action that is avoided for religious or social reasons", such as 'shit', 'bitch', 'fuck', and more.

The differences between swearwords and taboo words lie in their definitions above. On the one hand, swearwords are "a rude or offensive word". On the other hand, taboo words are "a subject, word, or action that is avoided for religious or social reasons". A study by Díaz-Cintas (2001) and Ávila-Cabrera (2015: 8) on 'taboo and offensive' language showed that subtitles had a greater impact on the audience than spoken language. Therefore, the subtitling of offensive and taboo language is a sensitive issue for translators, as the decisions made, in some cases, may affect the viewers' sensibilities, depending on their age, culture, and level of permissiveness.

As regards 'slang', the Cambridge Dictionary defines it as "very informal language that is usually spoken rather than written, used especially by particular groups of people". In the analysed games, there are many military slang terms as Hashimov and Sattoroy (2021) explained that "Military terminological set is used as a military slang by a group of military workers" (p. 161). Examples include 'FUBAR' (Fucked Up Beyond All Recognition), 'DOA' (Dead On Arrival), 'LZ' (Landing Zone), among others. However, due to the changes over time, slang vocabulary can now be found in music, fashion, technology and especially on the Internet, which is the primary medium used by young people to communicate. In relation to this development, Izmaylova,

Zamaletdinova, and Zholshayeva, (2017) stated: "[t]he contribution of slang in enriching language" (p. 76).

Moreover, in another paper, Jay and Janschewitz (2008) described how the use of this swearing vocabulary depends on factors such as gender, education, relationship, professional context and the emotional state of the individuals involved in communicating.

As far as the swearing expressions are concerned, regardless of the language used, the dialogues of these video games are filled with 'slang', 'taboo', 'vulgar', 'offensive' and 'derogatory' words directed at the characters to whom they are addressed. Moreover, according to the dictionary definitions provided in the previous paragraphs, it is very difficult to classify these words strictly within the defined categories. This is due to the linguistic differences, as what is acceptable in the SL may not be acceptable in the TL. Additionally, the perception of a term can change over time —what once was considered taboo may now be acceptable, and vice versa. Therefore, swearwords should be adapted to the TL in a way that reflects the socio-cultural context of the target audience.

3. STATE OF THE ART

Since there is limited research specifically focused on the translation of swearwords in video games, studies on film subtitling and other types of audiovisual translation have been used to support this analysis.

In the case of dubbing, Mejías Climent (2019) stated that dubbing in video games has been carried out since the 1990s, along with voice-over, and both "son términos empleados alternativamente para referirse a la inclusión de voces humanas en un videojuego" (p. 110).

More information is available regarding subtitling. Ávila-Cabrera (2015) explained how various translation techniques for swearwords have been employed by translators to soften, maintain, intensify, neutralise and even omit them. In the same work, Ávila-Cabrera (2015: 16-17) discussed different postulations regarding the treatment of the swearwords, citing Ivarsson and Carrol (1998) and Díaz Cintas (2001b), who agreed on the difficulty of translating swearwords when searching for their equivalents in the TL. Consequently, some authors, such as Ivarsson and Carrol (1998), opted to soften swearwords. In contrast, Gambier (2014: 280) advocated avoiding coarse language in written discourse, while others (Chaume, 2004; Santaemilia, 2008; Greenall, 2011) suggested maintaining the effect of swearwords from the SL when transferring them to the TL (Ávila-Cabrera, 2015: 17).

Moreover, Ferlová (2014: 28) explains that subtitles are expected to be shorter than dubbing, as they are subject to both temporal and spatial constraints in translation. This was previously discussed in greater detail by Brondeel (1994), who established the guideline that subtitles should not remain on screen for more than six seconds, as also noted by d'Ydewalle (1987: 28). Therefore, translators often eliminate repetitions they consider non-essential for understanding the dialogue, as stated by Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 200) in their subtitling guidelines.

Likewise, Soler Pardo (2011: 91) explained that Jay's book (1992) is important because it helps to distinguish between the different varieties of swearwords and provides a classification into categories such a cursing, profanity, blasphemy, taboo, obscenity, vulgarity and epithets, among others. Soler Pardo also pointed out that, according to Del Águila and Rodero (2005) and Zabalbeascoa (1996), dubbing appears to be a better option for people with visual impairments or difficulties in reading, while subtitling is more

suitable for the hard of hearing and for those who enjoy the original voices of the actors or understand the language in which the film was shot (p. 196).

In his study, Thanontip (2014: 6) quoted Malmkjaer (2005), who divided the linguistic difficulties into two levels: lexical and structural. That is, it is difficult to find words in TL that have equivalent meaning to words in the SL, since no word in two languages has an exactly equivalent meaning (Catford, 1980; Larson, 1984). At the structural level, "translators follow the structure and grammar of the SL, leading to unnatural translations" (Larson 1984; Sangaramrueng, 1999). Furthermore, Thanontip (2014: 10) mentioned that the AVT used in movies, specifically subtitling, offers advantages such as being more economical and easier to produce. He also pointed out that with subtitles, immigrants and tourists can listen to the original language of the film. Despite the many advantages of subtitling, some disadvantages include specific limitations, such as a maximum of 28 letters or 10-20 words displayed at the time. Albir (2008: 185) added that the subtitle length is typically limited to a maximum of two lines and between 28-38 characters, including spaces, and that the length depends on the medium in which it is used. Due to this limitation, Serban (2004) noted that it "can cause information loss", and Gottliedb (2008) pointed out that subtitles are usually displayed for no more than six seconds, these space and time constraints may affect the translation of the swearwords analysed.

Díaz-Pérez (2020) stated that,

> according to Jay (2009: 155), the main reason for swearing is to express the speaker's anger, frustration, or surprise, to such an extent that two-thirds of swearing data are related to the expression of these emotions. However, as Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 270) acknowledged, swearing may also be used to promote social harmony, "as in face building (e.g. This pie is pretty fucking good!)". (p. 5)

Additionally, Díaz-Pérez noted that there are certain technical constraints that may have implications for the translation of swearwords. For instance, the number of characters per line and per subtitle is limited, as is the reading speed required by the viewer.

To analyse the translation of swear words in the film *Uncut Gems*, Adelia (2022: 6–8) employed the classification of translation techniques proposed by Molina and Albir (2002). These are the same techniques used in the present analysis of swearwords in video games.

With respect to the translation of swearwords in comics, Anggraini (2017: 102) explained that there are four translation techniques proposed by Davoodi (2009): 'cencorship [sic]', where the translator eliminates swearword from the SL in the TL; 'substitution', which implies that the translator replaces the term with a social or lexical equivalent in the TL that produces a similar effect on the target reader (Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek, 2005; Al Timen, 2015); 'taboo for taboo'; and 'euphemism', where the aim is to replace a swearword with a less vulgar term. Moreover, this author points out that "The word-for-word translation will be odd and unnatural because of the distinctive syntactic structure of the TL" and therefore prefers free translation.

Tejerina (2004) wrote a paper analysing the translation of swearwords in the animated series *South Park*. On the one hand, she discusses the creativity of scriptwriters, who invent many swearwords in search of an original humorous effect; however, Agost (1999:108) had already noted the difficulty of translating humour. On the other hand, some of the anglicisms that most frequently appear in AVT include, for example, 'bastard' which used to be translated as *'bastardo'*, although translators nowadays tend to avoid this rendering and prefer *'cabrón'* instead. In addition, she discusses omission as a technical translation, noting that English words are generally shorter than their Spanish equivalents. In the end, Tejerina (2004: 148) acknowledges that swearwords do not have fixed equivalents, meaning that a word cannot always be translate in the same way, as it depends on the context.

4. METHODOLOGY

This section provides a description of the materials to be analysed and the analysis procedure.

4.1. Materials

This study is based on a small specialised corpus divided into two sub-corpora, the number of words is 148,843 consisting of full texts from five video games and their corresponding Spanish translations, all aimed at players of all ages. As the material analysed consists of subtitles, the texts are written in two languages, that is to say, it is bilingual, and since the games were developed by different companies, such as Epic Games and Infinity Ward, they are considered to have multiple authors. This pilot corpus is homogeneous in terms of time span—covering the period from 2006 to 2022—and genre, as all selected video games share a military and action theme. Although the sample is limited in size, it allows for a descriptive analysis of the translation techniques employed. It is assumed that the translators have aimed to convey the original message as accurately as possible by applying various translation techniques to reflect the meaning and tone of the original dialogues.

For this study, the texts were selected to analyse an English-Spanish parallel texts set, as the texts in the video games were written in English and translated into Spanish. For the English and Spanish texts, the materials selected to analyse the swearwords consisted of the characters' dialogues from the five video games. The subtitle texts were obtained from the subtitles of YouTube videos. Subsequently, most of the swear words were retrieved from the original subtitles of the games, as some were not included in the transcripts, which displayed empty brackets instead of the actual terms. The translations from English to Spanish were then compared according to the translation techniques used, always considering the context and with especial attention to the swearwords.

With regard to the criteria used to tag the different texts and to present them chronologically, both the month and year in which the games were launched on the market have been considered. To illustrate this, the example used is *Gears of War*: **(002EngVgGOWNov06)**, which has been tagged following this pattern:
- Number of text (e.g., 002).
- Language in which the text was written, English (Eng) or Spanish (Spa).
- Type of text: Video game (Vg).

- Title of the text: the acronym used here is GOW.
- Date: month followed by year (e.g., Nov06 = November 2006). If the month is not available, only the year is included.

Additionally, a summary of all the video games used to create this dataset — including information about the identification of the games through ID tags, language, type of text (in this case, video games), links to the transcriptions, the name of the source (YouTube), the publication date of the videos on YouTube, and the number of words appearing in Sketch Engine— is presented in the following screenshot of the Excel file named *Pilot_Corpus_0_TFG*.

The link to the excel file is: https://uvaes-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/g/personal/carlosangel_vicente_estudiantes_uva_es/ERwjcE4y5i9Dl3jVKxzx8U4BMhyg7yOhlla4xi3mFjRrqw?e=tlUAdv

Figure 1. Pilot_Corpus 0_TFG, excel

Furthermore, my analysis is quantitative because this research focuses on collecting data and information from each text in both languages regarding the frequency of use and translation of swearwords. The number of words included in the pilot corpus is reflected in the Table 1.

Video game names	Nº words English	%	Nº words Spanish	%
Gears of War	8,133	11.00	7,634	10.19
Call of Duty: Black Ops	15,639	21.15	14,077	18.79
Battlefield V	7,149	9.67	8,334	11.12
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	28,791	38.95	26,402	35.24
Scarface: The World is Yours	14,210	19.23	18,474	24.66

Total	**73,922**	**100**	**74,921**	**100**

Table 1. Number of words

With respect to the length of video games, the duration in both languages is shown in the table below:

Video game names	Video game length in English	Video game length in Spanish
Gears of War	04:28:31	04:25:39
Call of Duty: Black Ops	04:25:22	04:17:16
Battlefield V	04:07:10	04:33:56
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	05:28:13	05:11:11
Scarface: The World is Yours	03:34:57	04:31:31
Total	**22:03:33**	**22:58:53**

Table 2. Length of video games

The description of the video games selected for this study is as follows:

- The *Gears of War* series is a third-person shooter video game franchise that includes a multiplayer mode. This series comprises a total of nine games, of which this paper analyses the first instalment. Released in 2006 under the same name as the saga, *Gears of War*. It takes place on an imaginary planet similar to 'Earth'. This planet is inhabited by humanoid beings and mutants known as 'Locusts', who live in the centre of that planet. This game was selected because it is one of my favourites and contains frequent use of swearwords.

The original aim of this paper is to analyse the translation techniques used for the swearwords present in the aforementioned game. To complete the analysis, four additional games with related themes were also selected. The first three, listed below, belong to the action genre, while the fourth focuses on gangsters. All of them feature a high frequency of swearwords.

- Call *of Duty: Black Ops* is a first-person shooter, a video game genre that simulates the use of firearms from the perspective of the main character. The game is set during the Cold War, where the protagonist, CIA agent Alex Mason, is interrogated to

recall the location of chemical weapons developed by the Russians. It was released worldwide on November 9, 2010.

- *Battlefield V* is also a first-person war game set in World War II. It takes place in several countries and focuses on the actions of different commandos to defeat the Germans. It was launched on 20 November 2018.

- *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* is another first-person shooter. It involves several international commandos and is set in various countries including the Netherlands, Mexico, Spain, Urzikstan, and more. The main mission consists of pursuing Commander Hassan, a terrorist from Al Qatala group, who seeks revenge for the death of his General by planning missiles attacks against the United States. It was released on 28 October 2022.

- *Scarface: The Worls is Yours* centres on gangsters and drug dealers. This game is based on the movie *Scarface*, in which Tony Montana, a mobster and drug smuggler, is the protagonist. The game focuses on Tony's revenge: after having his empire taken from him, Tony returns to recover it by killing and bribing anyone necessary to achieve his goal. It went on sale on 10 October 2006.

4.2. Procedure

Once the games were selected, the transcriptions were downloaded from YouTube and were copied into Word document and then converted into .txt files using AntFileConverter. The links to the transcribed texts, obtained from YouTube in both English and Spanish, are included in Annex.
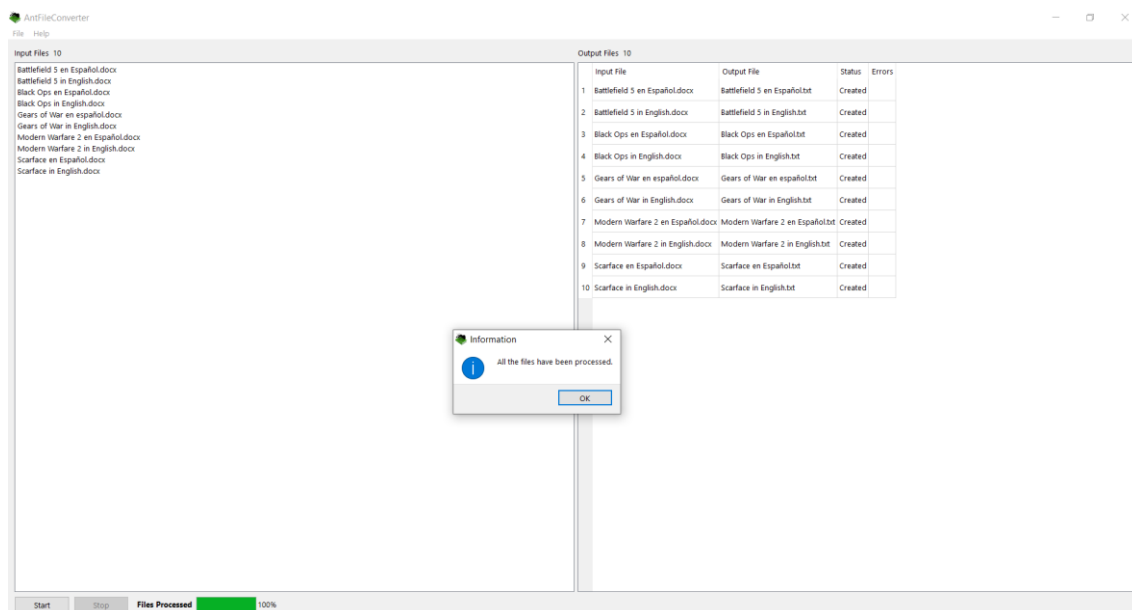
Figure 2. AntFileConverter

The web-based tool Sketch Engine was used to obtain the frequencies and concordances of the analysed swearwords. For example, Figures 2 and 3 below illustrate the frequency and concordance, respectively, of the term 'bastard' in the game *Scarface: The World is Yours*.
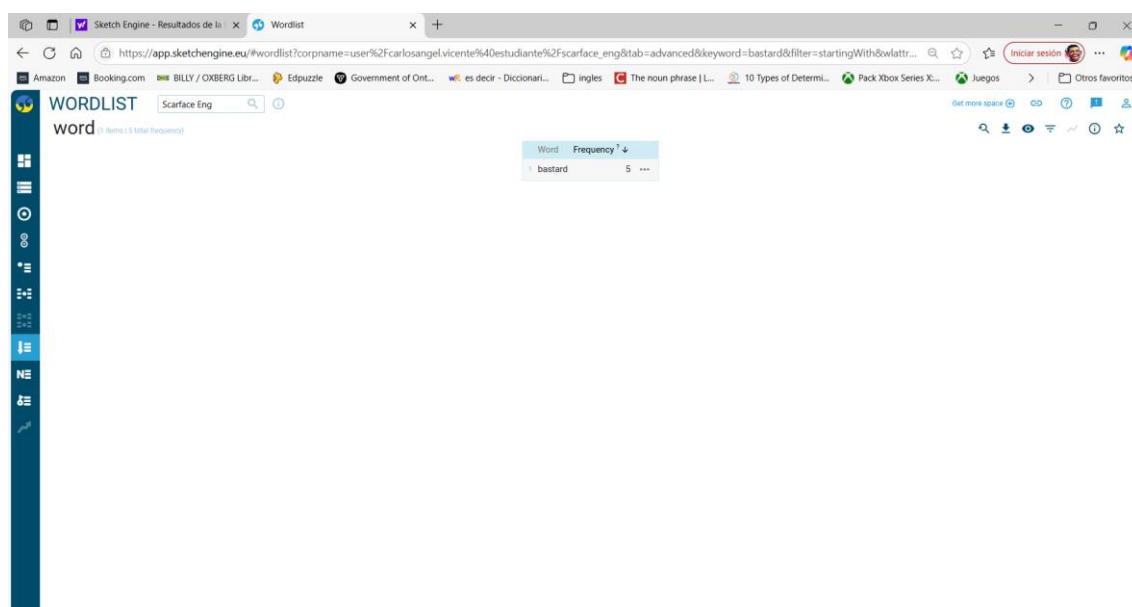
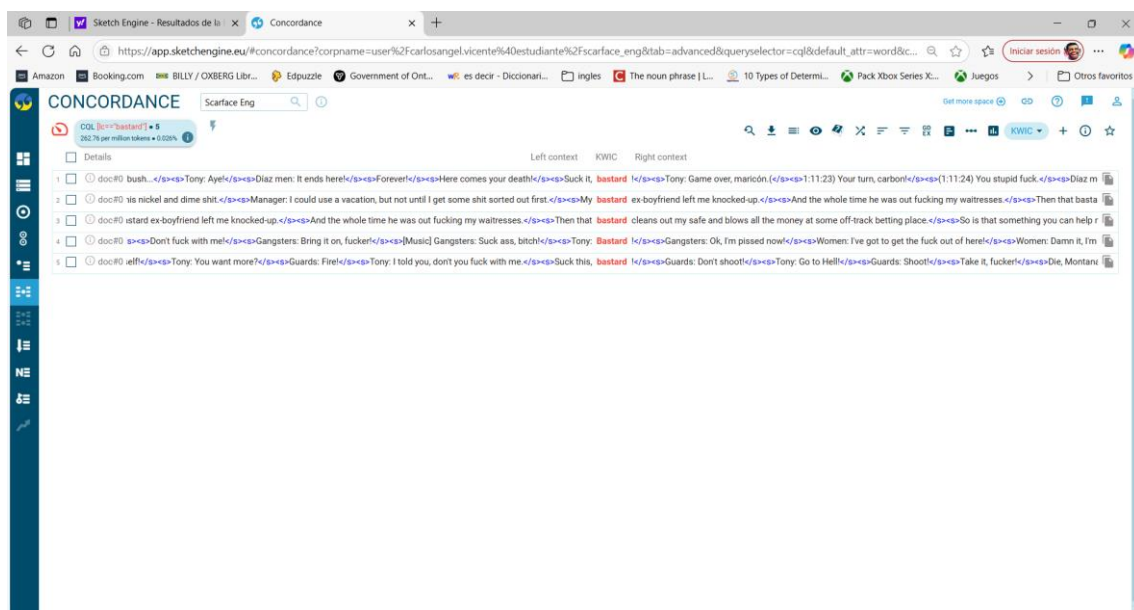

Figure 3. Sketch Engine frequency

Figure 4. Sketch Engine concordance

All 858 results are compiled in the Excel file titled *'Video Games Swearword Wordcount'*, which is organised according to Dewaele's (2016) list of 12 swearwords (ass, asshole, bastard, bitch, cunt, damn, dick, fuck, hell, motherfucker, nigger, shit), along with the translation techniques employed by the translators (literal translation, adaptation, transposition, reduction, omission, particularization, generalization and inversion).

Videogames	Nº	Time	Original Version (English)	Dubbed version (Spanish)	Translation tecniques
	1	0:11:29	… those sons of bitches …	… esos hijos de puta …	Literal
Gears of War	2	1:49:07	Burn, bitch!	--------	Omission
	1	0:10:37	Crazy bitch …	Puta loca …	Literal
	2	0:45:02	You son of a bitch!	¡Hijo de perra!	Adaptation
	3	1:23:43	Well, if he did, then he's one tough son of a bitch!	¡Si lo ha hecho, ese cabrón es muy duro!	Inversion
	4	1:30:22	Tag that son of a bitch right now!	¡Marque a ese cabrón enseguida!	Adaptation, Generalization (asshole, bastard, bitch)
	5	2:32:21	Somebody take that son of a bitch down!	¡Que alguien mate a ese hijo de perra!	Adaptation
	6	2:33:43	This son of a bitch ain't fighting no more.	Ese hijo de perra no volverá a luchar.	Literal
Call of Duty: Black Ops	7	2:36:24	Son of a bitch!	¡Hijo de perra!	Adaptation
	8	2:42:39	That was a bitch!	¡Qué cabronazo!	Adaptation
	9	3:14:44	You fucking son of a bitch.	Cabronazo hijo de perra.	Reduction
	10	3:22:17	Put that son of a bitch down!	¡Acabe con ese hijo de perra!	Adaptation
	11	3:22:48	Payback, you sons of bitches!	¡Venganza, malditos cabronazos!	Adaptation
	12	3:29:01	Got you now, you son of a bitch!	¡Muere, hijo de perra!	Reduction
	13	3:47:28	There you go you son of a bitch!	¡Ahí tienes, hijo de puta!	Reduction
	14	4:13:57	… the son of a bitch needs to go down once and for all.	… ese hijo de puta tiene que morir de una vez por todas.	Literal
Battlefield V	1	0:31:58	Alright, you son of a bitch.	Muy bien, hijo de puta.	Literal
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	1	2:45:41	You've got balls, you son of a bitch.	Órale, tienes huevos, cabrón.	Adaptation
	1	1:11:32	Suck ass, bitch!	¡Mama culo, puto!	Literal
	2	1:15:50	I got this bitch in my sights!	¡Yo tengo a este puto en mi vista!	Literal, Generalization (bitch, motherfucker)
	3	1:20:14	You fucking miss me, bitch!	--------	Omission
	4	1:32:57	You try to clown me, bitch? Now clown this!	--------	Omission
	5	1:44:11	Meet your god, bitch.	Te presento a tu creador.	Omission (bitch)
	6	1:47:09	I got this bitch in my sights!	¡Yo tengo a este puto en mi vista!	Literal
	7	1:52:02	We need to stop that son of a bitch.	--------	Omission
Scarface: The World is Tours	8	1:54:18	If this asshole, goddamn informer, son of a bitch gets to the DEA before we get to him, he'll bust up this entire operation, and we'll be looking at twenty years at Dunbury!	¡Si este puto cabrón informador hijo de puta llega hasta la DEA antes de que lo cojamos, va a reventar toda esta operación, y nosotros nos pasaremos veinte años en Danbury!	Literal (son of a bitch), Generalization (asshole, son of a bitch, motherfucker)
	9	1:58:36	Self-destructing sons of bitches.	Cabrones suicidas.	Reduction
	10	1:58:50	Your immigration motherfucker, I got your bitch!	Refugiado hijo de puta, te tengo.	Omission (bitch)
	11	2:13:54	Suck ass, bitch!	¡Chúpalo, cabrón!	Omission (ass), Reduction
	12	2:20:47	Surprise bitches!	¡Sorpresa, cabrones!	Adaptation
	13	2:30:36	Meet your god, bitch!	¡Muere, cabrón!	Reduction
	14	2:55:17	Suck ass, bitch!	¡Chúpalo, cabrón!	Omission (ass), Reduction
	15	3:17:01	I got this bitch in my sights!	¡Yo tengo este puto en mi vista!	Literal
	16	3:29:33	I got this bitch in my sights!	¡Yo tengo este puto en mi vista!	Literal
	17	3:29:40	Meet your god, bitch!	Te presento a tu creador.	Omission (bitch)
TOTAL	35				

Figure 5. Video game swearword wordcount, excel

Subsequently, a quantitative analysis of these techniques and their frequency across the five video games was conducted, followed by a contrastive English-Spanish study of the quantitative results.

The case study was used to analyse the swearwords found in the games in relation to the list compiled by Dewaele (2016), which includes "a traditional list of twelve swearwords (ass, asshole, bastard, cunt, damn, dick, hell, motherfucker, nigger, shit)" (p. 3).

Finally, Section 5 (Results) presents tables with various examples of the translation techniques and the list of swearwords, together with graphs showing the frequency of the translation techniques employed and the occurrence of each swearword from the list mentioned above.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tables listing the translation techniques applied to each swearword include only a selection of examples rather than the complete set of results. This decision was made to facilitate clarity and to focus the analysis on particularly illustrative or representative cases. The selection considers both the frequency of occurrence and the variation in the techniques employed. The complete results (858 swearwords), including both singular and plural forms with their corresponding techniques, are available in the spreadsheet entitled '*Video game swearword wordcount*', the link is: https://uvaes-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/g/personal/carlosangel_vicente_estudiantes_uva_es/EZqfgOoo-_pNq80X3Lq3tvwBL_ABR5kkPfU43XQRofgULg?e=SsnIRA

5.1. Results

In this section, the use of swearwords in the STs is analysed alongside their corresponding subtitled versions in Spanish, indicating the time at which they occur. The ST–TT (Target Text) pairs are organised according to the order of Dewaele's (2016) list of 12 swearwords (ass, asshole, bastard, cunt, damn, dick, hell, motherfucker, nigger, shit), together with the translation techniques used by the translators, based on the classifications proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet, and Molina and Hurtado. These frameworks have been particularly helpful in understanding the various translation processes and techniques applicable to the modification of dialogues and in guiding the subsequent analysis of sentences containing swearwords.

A brief explanation of some of the results is provided in this section; not all findings are discussed due to the word limit of this paper. Therefore, only those considered most relevant have been selected.

The collection of texts previously described in Section 4 is used to obtain the frequency of occurrence of these words in each game, as can be observed in the table below.

Swearwords	*Gears of War*	*Call of Duty: Black Ops*	*Battlefield V*	*Call of duty: Modern Warfare 2*	*Scarface: The World is Yours*	**Total words**
Nº of words	8,133	15,639	7,149	28,791	14,210	73,922
Ass	9	8	0	10	26	53

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Asshole	7	2	0	9	13	31
Bastard	1	17	3	10	5	36
Bitch	2	14	1	1	17	35
Cunt	0	0	1	0	0	1
Damn	11	11	8	6	7	43
Dick	0	0	0	0	6	6
Fuck	2	27	3	70	154	256
Hell	21	21	5	49	43	139
Motherfucker	0	0	0	5	46	51
Nigger	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shit	55	42	8	34	68	207
TOTAL	**108**	**142**	**29**	**194**	**385**	**858**

*Table **3**. Frequency of swearwords*

In relation to the table above, it is noteworthy that the swearword *'nigger'* does not appear in any of the games. Similarly, the word *'cunt'* is only found in *Battlefield V*, while *'dick'* appears exclusively in *Scarface: The World is Yours*.

With respect to the list of words used for the contrastive analysis of the video games, the following table and graph present the results for the frequency of the 858 swearwords, taking into account the total number of swearwords and the number of occurrences of each swearword in every game.

Video game names	Raw frequency	Relative frequency
Gears of War	108	12.59%
Call of Duty: Black Ops	142	16.55%
Battlefield V	29	3.38%
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	194	22.61%
Scarface: The World is Yours	385	44.87%
Total	**858**	**100%**

*Table **4**. Frequency of swearwords in video games*
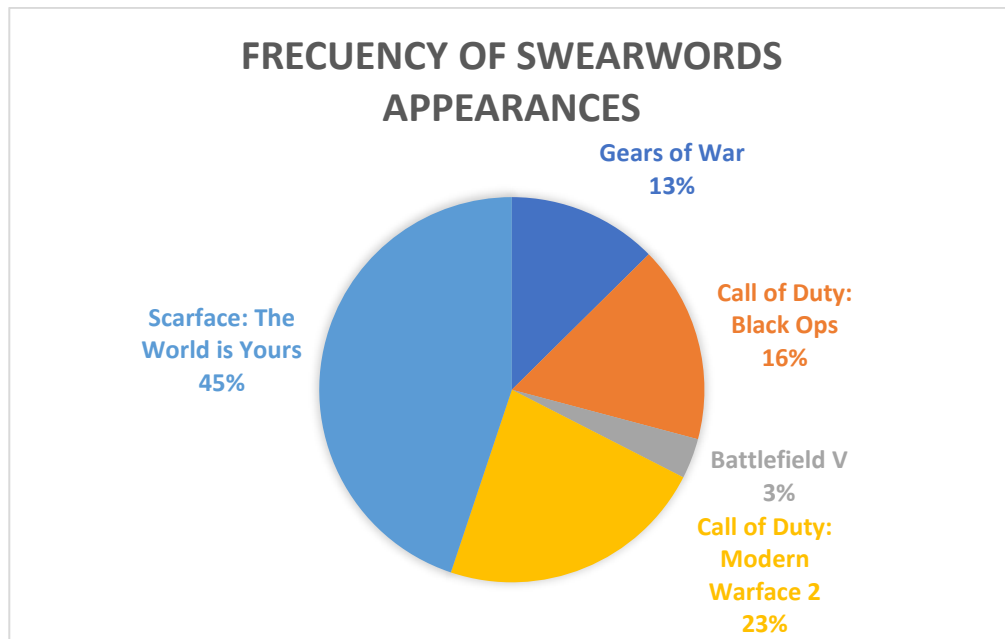
Figure 6. Frequency of swearwords

Regarding the results, it can be observed that the lowest percentages of the twelve swearwords appear in *Gears of War* (13%) and *Battlefield V* (3%). In contrast, *Scarface* shows a 45% frequency, which is a significantly high percentage compared to the other games. In fact, in almost every utterance, there is at least one swearword present in both the original English version and the Spanish translation. This game is followed by *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* (23%) and *Call of Duty: Black Ops* (16%).

Another aspect to consider is the relationship between the number of words in each set in Table 1 and the number of swearwords. One might expect that the greater the number of words, the greater the number of insults. However, in this case, the opposite is observed: Scarface, with half as many words as Modern Warfare 2, contains almost twice as many swearwords.

Video game names	Nº words English	Nº swearwords English	%
Gears of War	8,133	108	1.33 %
Call of Duty: Black Ops	15,639	142	0.91 %
Battlefield V	7,149	29	0,41%
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	28,791	194	0,67 %

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Scarface: *The World is Yours*	14,210	385	2.71 %

Table 5. Percentage of swearwords in each game

As stated in the section Theoretical Background, the following translation techniques have been used for our analysis: borrowing, literal translation, adaptation, reduction, amplification, omission, particularization, generalization, inversion and transposition.

In order to compare the translation techniques employed across the five games, a table with various significant examples is included for each swearword in the list, as shown below:

Swearword: ass

Video game	Nº	Time	ST	TT	Translation technique
Gears	1	01:09:32	Kicked their ass!	Les he pateado el trasero.	Amplification Particularization
	2	01:39:09	You can kiss my wrinkly old ass!	¡Podéis besarme mi viejo culo arrugado!	Literal Inversion
Black Ops	3	01:37:08	Get your asses to the boat!	¡A la embarcación, vamos!	Omission Inversion
	4	00:13:52	the Rebels are getting their asses kicked!	¡A los rebeldes les están dando una paliza!	Adaptation Omission
Modern Warfare	5	03:09:12	Can you get your fucking head out of your ass for a second?	¿Te puedes sacar la puta cabeza del culo por un segundo?	Literal
	6	04:52:17	Let's go, asses in gear, on me ...!	Vamos, coged vuestro equipo, seguidme.	Omission Transposition
Scarface	7	00:30:54	Like you got some fucking baseball bat up	¿Es que te han metido un puto bate de beisbol	Literal

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			your ass or something?	por el culo o qué?	

Table 6. Examples of 'ass' in video games

The first aspect to note regarding literal translation is that the length of the utterances in each example is similar in both the SL and the TL, and the grammatical structure of the sentence in both languages follows the same pattern, translating each word in the same order from the SL to TL. As a result, no part of the intended message is lost in the translation.

As shown in Table 5, different translation techniques are applied to the word *'ass'*. In examples 3, 4, and 6, the translation technique used is Omission. In the other examples, 'ass' is always translated as 'culo', except for example 1, where it is translated as 'trasero'. As the same word, 'ass', is translated in different ways depending on the context, it is a case of particularization. In example 2, '*You can kiss my wrinkly old ass! - ¡Podéis besarme mi viejo culo arrugado'*, the inversion translation technique is used, since 'arrugado' appears at the end of the sentence.

Example 3, '*Get your ass to the boat! - ¡A la embarcación, vamos!*' also shows inversion, as the sentence structure changes from the SL to the TL, moving the final part to the beginning, and vice versa.

Example 6, '*Let's go, asses in gear, on me ...! - Vamos, coged vuestro equipo, seguidme'*, illustrates the use of transposition, given the prepositional phrase *'on me'* is translated as a verb *'seguidme'*.

Swearword: asshole

Video game	Nº	Time	ST	TT	Translation technique
Gears	1	1:02:40	Hey assholes!	¡Eh, imbéciles!	Literal
	2	3:04:49	Bunch of assholes.	Montón de idiotas.	Literal Particularization
Black Ops	3	00:51:33	Those assholes are on the way back!	¡Esos gilipollas están volviendo!	Reduction Transposition

Modern Warfare	4	05:04:00	Fucking assholes, get out of here.	… pendejos, para fuera.	Literal Reduction
	5	05:00:13	… you and that asshole with the mask, …	Tú y ese cabrón de la máscara …	Literal
Scarface	6	00:07:15	You asshole Antonio.	Eres un gilipollas, Antonio.	Amplification
	7	01:54:18	If this asshole, goddamn informer, …	¡Si este puto cabrón informador…	Particularization

Table 7. Examples of 'asshole' in video games

In these examples, the word *'asshole'* is translated in different ways: 'imbéciles', 'idiotas', 'pendejos', 'gilipollas' and 'cabrón', using both literal translation and particularization.

Example 3, *'Those assholes are on the way back! - ¡Esos gilipollas están volviendo!'*, is an example of transposition. The translator has changed the adverb '*back*' into the gerund 'volviendo', that is to say adverb for verb. Additionally, it is a case of Reduction, a shorter expression which retains the original meaning and structure.

In example 4, '*Fucking assholes, get out of here. - … pendejos, para fuera*', the second part of the sentence shows reduction. However, the translation of 'asshole – pendejos' is a case of literal translation.

Example 6, '*You asshole Antonio - Eres un gilipollas, Antonio*', amplification occurs through the addition of the verb '*eres*' to clarify and emphasize who the insult is directed at.

Swearword: bastard

Video game	Nº	Time	ST	TT	Translation technique
Gears	1	00:11:13	I'll take out all these bastards with one shot!	¡Acabaré con esos cerdos de un disparo!	Adaptation Reduction

Black Ops	2	00:56:30	Poor bastards…	Pobres mamones…	Particularization Adaptation
	3	02:21:48	Kill those bastards!	¡Maten a esos cabrones!	Literal
Battlefield	4	03:24:48	these bastards are crazy …	esos bastardos están locos…	Literal
	5	00:22:36	You horrible bastard, Mason.	Eres un maldito infeliz, Mason.	Adaptation
Modern warfare	6	05:06:48	Let's nail this bastard once and for all, sir.	Recibido, vamos a cargarnos a ese cabrón de una vez.	Inversion
Scarface	7	01:22:24	My bastard ex-boyfriend left me knocked-up.	El cabrón de mi exnovio me ha hecho un bombo.	Literal Amplification

Table 8. Examples of 'bastard' in video games

The word *'bastard'* also has different meanings, and its translation involves the use of particularization, with literal renderings such as 'cabrón/es' and 'bastardo/s', and adaptations, such as 'cerdos', 'mamones', and 'maldito infeliz' which replace the swearword with more colloquial expressions in the TL.

Example 6, '*Let's nail this bastard once and for all, sir - Recibido, vamos a cargarnos a ese cabrón de una vez'*, shows transposition, where the noun 'sir' is replaced by 'Recibido', a past participle. It also involves an inversion, since this element is moved from the end to the beginning of the sentence.

Example 7, '*My bastard ex-boyfriend left me knocked-up. - El cabrón de mi exnovio me ha hecho un bombo',* illustrates the use of amplification. As can be seen, more words are used in the TL than in the SL, due to the translator's application of this technique to avoid potential loss of the meaning. In addition, in the utterance 'left me – me ha hecho', the translator adds clarification to better express the intended meaning.

Swearword: bitch

Video game	Nº	Time	ST	TT	Translation technique
Gears	1	01:49:07	Bitch.	Puta.	Literal
	2	00:11:32	those sons of bitches.	Esos hijos de puta.	Literal
Black Ops	3	00:10:37	Crazy bitch…	Puta loca…	Literal
	4	02:42:39	That was a bitch!	¡Qué cabronazo!	Adaptation
Battlefield	6	00:31:58	Alright, you son of a bitch.	Muy bien, hijo de puta.	Literal
Modern Warfare	7	02:45:41	You've got balls, you son of a bitch.	Órale, tienes huevos, cabrón.	Adaptation
Scarface	8	01:20:11	What you fucking miss me bitch.	Has fallado puto.	Reduction Generalization

Table 9. Examples of 'bitch' in video games

In the games *Battlefield V* and *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*, examples 6 and 7, the word 'bitch' does not appear alone, but as part of the expression 'son of a bitch' translated as 'cabrón' (adaptation) and 'hijo de puta' (literal), respectively.

In examples 1 and 8, 'bitch' is translated as 'puta' and 'puto' (literal). However, in number 4, 'bitch' - 'cabronazo' is an adaptation. Since 'bitch' is rendered using different meanings, this also involves the technique of particularization.

Example 8, '*What you fucking miss me bitch. - Has fallado puto*', is a case of reduction, as only part of the original sentence is translated. This indicates that the translator has opted to condense the original structure without losing the meaning. Certain linguistic elements have been omitted during the translation process to ensure the TL version sounds more natural. Another reason for applying this technique may be the time and space constraints imposed by subtitling.

Swearword: cunt

Video game	Nº	Time	ST	TT	Translation technique
Battlefield	1	00:52:24	You have just told every cunt with an iron cross exactly where we are.	Acabas de descubrir a todos los cabrones con cruz de hierro exactamente en dónde estamos.	Adaptation

Table 10. Examples of 'cunt' in video games

The word 'cunt' appears only in the *Battlefield* video game. Although the translator follows the grammatical structure of the sentence as if it were a literal translation, it is actually an adaptation, as 'cunt' is translated as 'cabrones'.

Swearword: damn

Video game	Nº	Time	ST	TT	Translation technique
Gears	1	00:33:36	Damn!	¡Maldita sea!	Literal
	2	00:40:58	Take out those damn RPGs!	¡Acabe con esos putos RPGs!	Adaptation Particularization
Black Ops	3	00:15:59	Damn you, Mason.	Maldito sea, Mason.	Literal
	4	00:44:31	Damn, it's Weaver…	Mierda, es Weaver…	Particularization
	5	03:40:58	Take out those damn RPGs!	¡Acabe con los putos RPGs!	Adaptation Particularization
Battlefield	6	01:34:50	Damn it!	¡Maldita sea!	Literal
	7	03:33:39	Damn! Everyone alright?	¿Qué demonios? ¿Todos están bien?	Adaptation Particularization
Modern Warfare	8	00:03:53	Damn right I would.	Joder que sí lo sabría.	Particularization

	9	03:15:13	On the damn ship.	En ese puto barco.	Adaptation Generalization
Scarface	10	01:16:11	Damn, you're a bad shot!	Joder, disparas como el culo.	Adaptation Generalization

Table 11. Examples of 'damn' in video games

In examples 1 and 6, both 'Damn!' and 'Damn it!' are interjections that are literally translated as 'Maldita sea'.

Example 3, '*Damn you, Mason – Maldito sea, Mason*', involves a case of literal translation.

In the remaining examples, 'damn' is translated as 'putos', 'malditos', 'mierda', 'demonios', and 'joder', adapting the translation to the cultural norms of the target country. These different renderings of the same swearword exemplify the use of particularization.

In example 10, '*Damn, you're a bad shot! - Joder, disparas como el culo*', the translator has adapted the specific term of the SL 'a bad shot' to its culturally equivalent expression in the TL, 'como el culo'.

Swearword: dick

Video game	Nº	Time	ST	TT	Translation technique
Scarface	1	01:44:12	Dick face.	Cara de pinga.	Literal

Table 12. Examples of 'dick' in video games

This swearword appears only in the game *Scarface: The World is Yours*, specifically in the line '*Dick face – Cara de pinga*', which is a literal translation that uses 'pinga', a vulgar expression commonly used in Latin American Spanish.

Swearword: fuck

Video game	Nº	Time	ST	TT	Translation technique
Gears	1	2:04:55	Fuck you!	¡Jódete!	Literal
Black Ops	2	00:35:22	Where the fuck's the train?	¿Dónde coño está el tren?	Particularization Literal

	3	00:05:05	Get the fuck out of our way!	¡Quítense de en medio, joder!	Inversion
Battlefield	4	01:09:58	Fuck off.	¡No jodas!	Adaptation
Modern Warfare	5	00:17:24	How the fuck are they seeing us?	¡Cómo coño nos están viendo!	Literal Particularization
	6	03:26:02	Fuck!	¡Joder!	Literal
Scarface	7	00:01:31	Fuck you, you fucking maricon!	¡Que te den por culo, maricón!	Adaptation
	8	00:08:06	Fuck them all!	A la mierda todos.	Adaptation Inversion

Table 13. Examples of 'fuck' in video games

Example 1, *'Fuck you! - ¡Jódete!'* and example 6, '*Fuck! - ¡Joder!'* are interjections that express anger or contempt and are translated literally.

Examples 2 and 5 also illustrate literal translation, as seen in *'Where the fuck's the train? - ¿Dónde coño está el tren?'* and '*How the fuck are they seeing us? - ¡Cómo coño nos están viendo!'*.

In example 3, '*Get the fuck out of our way! - ¡Quítense de en medio, joder!',* the word 'fuck' appears at the end of the sentence 'joder'. But in example 8, '*Fuck them all! - A la mierda todos'* the personal pronoun 'them' is placed at the end and translated as 'todos'. Both are cases of inversion, as the grammatical structure is altered in the translation.

Example 4, '*Fuck off! - ¡No jodas!'*, is an adaptation that, in this case, conveys surprise.

In example 7*, 'Fuck you, you fucking maricon*! - ¿Que te den por el culo, maricón!', several translation techniques are used: '*Fuck you'* is translated literally*,* 'fucking' is omitted, and 'maricón' is a borrowing from Spanish. In fact, in *Scarface: The World is Yours*, there are other examples of swearword borrowing, as some characters are South American and occasionally swear in Spanish, for example, 'cabrón' (2:25:18) and 'coño' (2:38:30), among others.

Swearword: hell

Video game	Nº	Time	ST	TT	Translation technique
Gears	1	00:34:10	What the hell was that?	¿Qué demonios era eso?	Literal
	2	01:52:04	What the hell does "Lambent" mean?	¿Cómo que brillan con luz tenue?	Omission
Black Ops	3	00:19:28	Raise hell!	¡Liberar el infierno!	Literal
	4	02:37:15	Where the hell are you?!	¡¿Dónde coño estás?!	Adaptation
Battlefield	5	03:29:28	What the hell are you talking about?	¿De qué demonios hablas?	Literal
Modern Warfare	6	00:01:38	What the hell are the Russians doin' with Ghorbrani?	¿qué coño pintan los rusos con Ghorbrani?	Adaptation Generalization
Scarface	7	00:34:06	Go to hell!	Vete al infierno.	Literal
	8	00:13:53	Tony come on where the hell you been?	Vamos Tony, ¿dónde coño has estado metido?	Adaptation Particularization Inversion

Table 14. Examples of 'hell' in video games

Examples 1, 3, 5 and 7 are literal, word-for-word translations. However, in example 3, 'Raise' is translated as the verb 'Liberar' in the infinitive form, which is a common mistake in spoken Spanish, as it renders a command using the infinitive instead of the correct imperative form 'Liberad'.

In example 2, *'What the hell does "Lambent" mean?'*, the swearword is not translated, so it is an example of omission.

Examples 4 '*Where the hell are you?!'* and 6 '*What the hell are the Russians doin' with Ghorbrani?* are cases of adaptations since 'hell' is translated as 'coño'. In contrats,

example 5 '*What the hell are you talking about?*' is a literal translation because 'hell' is translated as 'demonios', although the number changes from singular to plural. This is also an instance of particularization, as 'hell' is translated using different expressions: 'demonios', 'infierno' and 'coño'.

In example 8, there is inversion in the first part of the sentence, as in '*Tony come on - Vamos Tony*', the subject and the verb change positions in the translation.

Swearword: motherfucker

Video game	Nº	Time	ST	TT	Translation technique
Modern Warfare	1	03:32:24	You motherfucker.	Hijo de la chingada.	Literal
Scarface	2	03:15:09	Die, motherfucker!	¡Muere, cabrón!	Adaptation
	3	02:12:17	You dumb motherfucker.	Ignorante hijo de puta.	Literal

Table 15. Examples of 'motherfucker' in video games

Motherfucker appears in only two video games. In examples 1 and 3, the translation is literal, whereas in example 2, it is an adaptation 'motherfucker – cabrón'. Furthermore, when the same word is translated using different words, particularization can also be identified.

Swearword: shit

Video game	Nº	Time	ST	TT	Translation technique
Gears	1	00:01:48	Shit!	¡Mierda!	Literal
	2	00:02:51	I'd be in some deep shit.	se me caería el pelo.	Adaptation
Black Ops	3	00:49:02	Shit!	¡Mierda!	Literal
	4	00:56:15	Holy shit!	¡Joder!	Literal Generalization
Battlefield	5	03:12:19	Well, Commanders don't have the	Bueno, los comandantes no se pueden permitir el lujo	Amplification Inversion

			luxury of saying any old shit …	de decir mierdas antiguas…	
Modern Warfare	6	00:14:52	Shit!	¡Joder!	Adaptation
	7	00:13:08	Yeah, I don't see shit ...	Ya no veo una mierda ...	Literal Particularization
Scarface	8	00:07:13	Oh shit, Manny.	Oh mierda, Manny.	Literal

Table 16. Examples of 'shit' in video games

The interjection '*Shit!*' in examples 1, 3, and 6, translated as '¡Mierda!' or '¡Joder!', are literal translations. The same technique is applied to other interjections, such as *'Holy shit! - ¡Joder!'*. Examples 7 and 8 are also literal translations that follow the same sentence structure.

Because in example 2, '*I'd be in some deep shit.*', it is not translated as '*Me metería en un buen lío*' but as '*se me caería el pelo*', which ultimately conveys the same meaning. In other words, the intended message is preserved by adapting the style and grammar of the ST to the target culture.

Example 5, '*Well, Commanders don't have the luxury of saying any old shit - Bueno, los comandantes no se pueden permitir el lujo de decir mierdas antiguas*' is an amplification, because the TL uses more words than the SL. It also illustrates adjective-noun inversion 'old shit – mierdas antiguas'. In English, adjectives typically precede the noun they qualify, except in constructions involving stative verbs, where adjectives may follow the verb. This contrasts with Spanish, where adjectives generally follow the noun.

According to the results shown in Tables 5-15 in the case of generalization, a comparison of the examples in tables above reveals that several English words are translated using the same equivalent in Spanish. For instance, 'Damn!' in Table 11 and 'Holy shit!' in Table 16 are both translated as '¡Joder!'; similarly, in Table 13 and 14, 'Fuck', and 'hell' are translated as 'coño'; and another example is 'bitch' in Table 9 and 'damn' in Table 11 are translated as 'puto'.

Furthermore, based on the results presented in the tables, it can be concluded that the same translation techniques are applied across the five games: borrowing, literal translation, adaptation, transposition, reduction, omission, amplification, generalization, particularization and inversion. The translations of the swearwords are largely consistent,

except in *Scarface,* where some characters already swear in Spanish in the original English version of the game.

Once some examples of the translation techniques used in these video games have been explained, the following graph summarizes the previous results.

Translation Technique	Raw frequency	Relative frequency
Literal translation	33	35.48%
Adaptation	21	22.58%
Reduction	4	4.30%
Amplification	4	4.30%
Omission	4	4.30%
Particularization	13	13.98%
Generalization	5	5.38%
Inversion	7	7.53%
Transposition	2	2.15%
Total	**93**	**100%**

Table 17. Data for the frequency of translation techniques
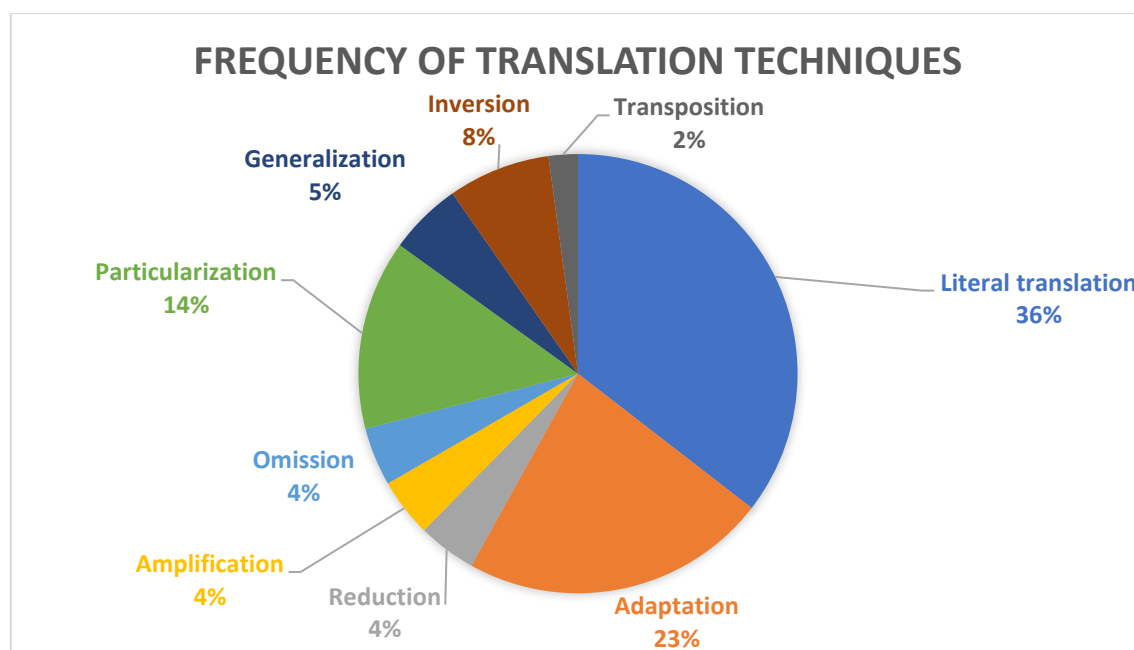

Figure 7. Frequency of translation techniques

The graph depicts the frequency distribution of various translation techniques, with each category including its respective percentage of use, providing a quantitative overview of their prevalence in translation practices.

Inversion account for (8%), Generalization for (5%), Amplification, Omission and Reduction for (4%) and Transposition for (2%). These percentages suggest a limited use of generalising strategies, possibly due to their potential to dilute cultural or linguistic specificities. In contrast, Literal Translation stands out with the highest frequency (36%), highlighting its predominance. This prominence may reflect a prioritisation of preserving the meaning or idiomaticity of the original text.

Omission, Amplification and Reduction at 4%, indicate a balanced but minimal use, probably employed to optimise conciseness or clarity without altering the content. Conversely, Generalization (5%) and Adaptation (23%) display divergent frequencies. The meaningful use of Adaptation is in line with theoretical frameworks such as Vinay and Darbelnet's adaptation technique, which emphasises cultural equivalence, a fundamental aspect of cross-linguistic communication.

Overall, the data reveal a preference for techniques that prioritize contextual and cultural fidelity (e.g. literal translation, adaptation) over structural adjustments (e.g. inversion, transposition). This tendency may be attributed to the challenges of preserving the integrity of the ST while adapting it to the norms of TL.

All in all, the graph offers valuable insights on the prioritization of translation strategies applied to the translation of swearwords used in video games.

5.2. Discussion

Regarding subtitling, the 'Literature review' section stated that Ávila-Cabrera (2015) explained how translators use some translation techniques for swearwords to soften, maintain, intensify, neutralise and even omit them. Similarly, in the case of comics, Anggraini (2017) explained other translation techniques that achieve effects comparable to those identified by Ávila-Cabrera. Specifically, Ávila-Cabrera mentions several techniques that were used in the translation of swearwords in this study, although not explicitly adaptation, literal translation and omission; the same goes for the classification of translation techniques in comics with the same objectives.

As for the limitations of subtitling, Ferlová, (2024), Díaz-Pérez (2020), and Thanontip (2014) discuss both spatial and temporal constraints, noting that translators often resort to reduction and omission techniques, which are common in video game translation, to adapt to these limitations. Omission and reduction account for a total of 8% of the techniques used, probably due to spatial constraints, while amplification accounts for 4%, likely due to cultural adaptations, which tend to require more space.

Additionally, Thanontip (2014) classified linguistic difficulties into two levels: lexical and structural. These difficulties arise in the translations found in these analysed video games, and to address them, translators employ techniques such as adaptation and omission at the lexical level, and inversion at the structural level, as explained in the Results section.

Regarding translation techniques, Adelia's study (2022) used the same classification presented by Molina and Albir (2002) for translating swearwords in a film, which is also applied in this paper.

In the 'Literature Review' section, it is stated that Anggraini (2017) points out that free translation is the preferred technique for translating swearwords in comics. However, the results for the translation of swearwords in video games indicate that the preferred technique is the literal translation, probably to ensure that the intended meaning is fully conveyed without loss.

Another work presented in the Literature Review is by Tejerina (2004), who discussed anglicisms such as 'bastard', although this author states that it is now translated as *'cabrón'*. However, the translations of the games analysed in this study are more recent and include *'cabrón/es'* and *'bastardo/s'* as literal translations, as well as *'cerdos', 'mamones'*, and *'maldito infeliz'* as adaptations. Regarding translations of the same word, this study has found several instances of inconsistent translated, as exemplified by particularizations such as those used for the word '*bastard*'.

6. CONCLUSION

According to the results obtained in this undergraduate dissertation through analysis the translation techniques used for swearwords in five video games, it can be observed that the most frequent techniques are literal translation and adaptation, mainly due to the spatial and temporal limitations of subtitling.

The results show that video game translators have aimed to convey the original message as accurately as possible by applying various translation techniques. It is important to note that this is a case of Audiovisual Translation, in which on-screen lip-synchronisation and subtitling play a significant role. This aspect could be proposed as a topic for future research, given that the translation must be highly precise to ensure both elements are perfectly synchronised and there is no lag when characters speak in the game. Therefore, the use of adaptation contributes to achieving perfect synchronisation in any language.

In terms of obstacles affecting the results, a significant amount of time was required to complete the transcriptions, as most of the swearwords had to be manually located in the video, given that only empty brackets appeared in the original transcripts. For this reason, only five action games were analysed, which means that the sample may not be representative enough to generalise the results. Additionally, some of the findings cannot be extrapolated to other languages, as both the grammar and culture context vary across target countries. Another challenge is that *Scarface* is an open-world game in which players choose how they want to play, making it more difficult to match English phrases with their Spanish translations.

Future research may focus on technology, given that the video game industry has become a billion-dollar sector, and that future technological progress is likely to be substantial. Such advancements could support further research into translation techniques and their adaptation to the cultures of different countries. One technological development that is already accelerating is Artificial Intelligence (AI), which has a remarkable capacity to learn from extensive resources and adapt to cultural differences between languages. Moreover, AI is revolutionising the field of translation, as it enables more personalised translations —an important aspect when localising video games for international audiences. Another possible line of research involving AI would be to examine whether the results obtained in this study are consistent with those generated by AI, and, if not, to investigate the reasons for any discrepancies.

This study is significant because it demonstrates that subtitling is subject to spatial and temporal constraints. Despite these limitations, translators have managed to produce adequate translations of swearwords by employing the most appropriate translation techniques to adapt their translations to the target culture, while also striving to avoid omission in order to preserve the essence of the dialogues.

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Annex: Links to the dialogues

In terms of the English texts, they are taken from the following five video games:

-Gears of War

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zrNt6ZRLq4

-Black Ops

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WAg8OjBGL4

-Battlefield V

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JfQGqaVv7I

-Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_74yzN4lf3w

-Scarface: The World is yours

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DI3uW97hRc

       Similarly, for the texts in Spanish, I have used a total of five texts from the video games listed below:

-Gears of War

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRYPPZzEmZo

-Black Ops

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tgbmTT2RZY

-Battlefield V

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xp1zVxXHcV4

-Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4KPiNsrda8

-Scarface: The World is yours. In this case, in order to obtain the transcribed dialogues in English, the game is divided into 16 parts, all of which are included in a single document, and the link is given below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfMuLY3ywAU&list=PLAvqzmZVPdwLskdUvTUY_JKgpCtpkliT-