

New Frontiers in Translation Studies

Michał Borodo

Juliane House

Wojciech Wachowski *Editors*

Moving Texts, Migrating People and Minority Languages

 Springer

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Translating from and into Basque: The Case of Children's Literature

Naroa Zubillaga

1 The Basque Language and Translated Children's Literature

Basque, or “euskara”, as it is known to its speakers, is a non-Indo-European language whose origins have continuously aroused the curiosity of linguists and while it is not the intention of this article to delve into the different theories surrounding its origins, some of its historical and sociolinguistic characteristics should nevertheless be explained. This will help the reader to better understand the nature of Basque literature, the importance of children's literature as a genre and the role translations play in Basque culture at large.

The total area in which Basque is spoken is currently divided into three administrative areas: two autonomous communities within Spain (the Basque Country and Navarre) and three provinces (Labourd, Basse Navarre and Soule) collectively located within the French Pyrénées Atlantiques department. The legal status and social presence of the Basque language differs both within and between these areas. Of the three million inhabitants of these regions, there are around 800,000 Basque speakers and over half of the population is monolingual in either French or Spanish. At the same time, the area's Basque speakers can themselves be divided into either complete bilinguals or passive bilinguals. This complex situation has many implications for the use and promotion of the language within the area's cultural system. Although the first printed books in Basque were published in the 16th century, such publications were scarce until the end of the 20th century. It was after the Carlist Wars and the abolition of the old Basque laws *fueros* (1876) that the Basque Cultural Enlightenment emerged, as a response to the suppression of Basque culture at the time. Literature became more important in this period, but was

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who translates for children (Epstein 2012), but there are also other constraints related to power relations between languages which affect authors and translators, such as a sense of superiority or inferiority with regard to a particular language.

Furthermore, in a minority language such as Basque, the percentage of translated texts is higher than in other major languages and the translation methods used in both language directions seem to be more varied. Rather than allowing to easily distinguish between direct and indirect translations, research indicates that in most cases translation methods are somewhere in between the two. In many situations, the translations are neither 100% indirect nor 100% direct because they were often produced using both intermediary and original versions as source texts. In other words, it appears that in diglossic situations translators from minority languages who translate “directly” nevertheless often consult versions already published in hegemonic languages. These findings problematize the notions of purely direct and purely indirect translations. Also frequent in minority language cultures is the phenomenon of self-translation. In order to aspire to be translated into hegemonic languages, minority language texts almost always need to be first translated into a/the hegemonic language/s with which the minority language coexists. In conclusion, it appears that the analysis of translations from and into minority languages can both enrich and broaden translation research and theories.

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