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## Chapter Nine

# Ponying the Slovos: A Parallel Linguistic Analysis of *A Clockwork Orange* in English, French, and Spanish

Niall Curry, Jim Clarke and Benet Vincent

**Abstract:** Anthony Burgess's novella *A Clockwork Orange* has been translated over fifty times into approximately thirty different languages. A unique feature of the novella is its anti-language, Nadsat. Nadsat poses stylistic and creative challenges for translators, being composed of different categories which draw on different word-formation principles. Building on our own work in the area, in this paper we unpack such challenges through a contrastive analysis of the English original and two of its more popular translations, the French *L'Orange Mécanique* and the Spanish *La Naranja Mecánica*. We investigate Nadsat in each translation, offering a description of the construction of Nadsat across languages, an exploration of how the French and Spanish translators handle the multiplicity of words for 'women' in English-Nadsat, and a critical, comparative evaluation of Leal's and Quijada Vargas's idiosyncratic approaches to translating Nadsat and the impact their varied approaches have on the novella. Overall, our findings show that corpus approaches can offer data-driven insights into the translation of science fiction texts. Moreover, our formal categorisation of Nadsat items offers a bottom-up, language agnostic approach to categorising Nadsat across languages and our review of the language of women in Nadsat points to the importance of consistency in translation.

**Keywords:** translation, Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*, Nadsat, corpus approaches, applied linguistics

## Introduction

The dystopian novella *A Clockwork Orange* (henceforth *ACO*), written by English polymath Anthony Burgess, was first published in 1962 and, following the global success of its cinematic adaptation by Stanley Kubrick, the novella became Burgess's most successful book. It remains popular to this day, selling around 150,000 copies annually almost 60 years later. This seminal work of science fiction provides a dark vision of a grim urban world populated by feral teen gangs. Among its unique features is the invented idiolect in which it is written, Nadsat. Nadsat, a transliteration of the Russian suffix -надцать, which approximates to the English term 'teen', is the slang argot of the novella's protagonist and narrator, Alex. This name derives from the fact that, as discussed below, Nadsat

comprises significantly of an Anglicised Russian lexis, in addition to other morphological variations such as rhyming slang and babytalk. As an invented language, or, more precisely, *anti-language*—a deliberately obscure argot created by a group that sets itself up in opposition to the values of the society in which it exists, e.g. Cockney rhyming slang (Fowler 1979, Halliday 1976)—Nadsat has no organic acculturation beyond the artistic creation of *ACO* and its ancillary artistic creations (see Burgess 2012 for examples of these).

As such, there is a paucity of linguistic knowledge surrounding the development of Nadsat; this has posed a set of challenges to the more than fifty translators who have worked on *ACO*. Nadsat is based on various linguistic components, most prominently anglicised Russian lexis. Without a foundation on which to base translations of Nadsat, translators are challenged to find a means to convey its complexities and nuances. Another aspect to this challenge, in line with Burgess's (1972, 2002) view of what Nadsat should achieve, is to force readers to attain fluency in Nadsat and thereby be brainwashed into seeing the world as Alex sees it, in parallel with the brainwashing technique performed upon Alex by government medics. Understanding the ways translators go about this illuminates their translation strategies and reveals functional and creative elements of the praxis of literary translation.

In this paper, we compare two of the most established translations of *ACO*: the French and Spanish translations. The French translation, *L'Orange Mécanique* (henceforth *LOM*), by Georges Belmont and Hortense Chabrier, was first published in 1972 in the wake of the release of the cinematic adaptation by Stanley Kubrick; it has remained in publication ever since as the sole French translation. Similarly, the Spanish translation *La Naranja Mecánica* (henceforth *LNM*), by the Argentinian translator Anibal Leal, was first published in 1971 and has remained the sole translation in the Hispanophone world. For this analysis, we draw on corpus linguistic techniques to identify, analyse, and categorise Nadsat in each language, building on previous work in Vincent and Clarke (2017; 2020). Our primary focus in approaching these two translations is to use quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis to determine what similarities and differences are apparent in their treatment of Nadsat. A further aspect of analysis relevant to translation arises from a noteworthy anomaly with the Leal translation that distinguishes it from the French translation. Anthony Burgess's original novella, published by Heinemann in London in

1962, featured 21 chapters. However, the Norton edition published in the United States a year later omitted the final chapter, and it was this version which was filmed by Kubrick. The Leal translation, and a number of others, worked from this Norton edition and hence omitted the final chapter. Only in the current century was this omission resolved in the Spanish translation, when Ana Quijada Vargas was commissioned to translate it to be appended to Leal's original translation. The Leal/Quijada Vargas translation thus offers a unique opportunity to investigate both the development of Spanish-Nadsat and intra-translation variation between the two Spanish-language translators.

### **Burgess's Nadsat in English, French, and Spanish**

Nadsat poses stylistic and creative challenges for translators, since it is composed of different categories that draw on different word-formation principles, including the introduction of Russian words (e.g. *droog* from *друг* to mean 'friend'), babytalk (*skolliwol* for 'school') and word play such as *syphilised* ('civilised') (Vincent and Clarke 2017). Work comparing Nadsat in *ACO* and *LOM* (Vincent & Clarke 2020) shows a number of key similarities and differences in its realisation. Among the differences seen in French-Nadsat were the lack of archaic words, such as 'thou', and the use of a new category of anglicised words, such as the verb 'drinker' used for 'to drink' instead of standard French *boire*. Key differences often result from specific strategies used by the French translators centring on translating Nadsat composition processes, rather than being confined strictly to a word-by-word literal translation (Pochon 2010, 98). Such an approach positions Nadsat as the third language, separated from English and French, and allows for increased creativity through substitution (Gimbert & Zabalbeascoa 2011, 126). Overall, Nadsat development in *LOM* reflects a systematic approach (Vincent and Clarke 2020). The formal/functional categorization used is intrinsically multilingual in nature and reflects a bottom-up approach to understanding the Nadsat formation processes in each language. Building on this work, an investigation of the word-formation principles that guide Spanish Nadsat would add a valuable perspective to the growing cross-linguistic body of knowledge on Nadsat.

In the context of Spanish-Nadsat, there is a general lack of linguistic research, but what exists provides some indications of strengths and weaknesses. Contrastive work by Malamatidou (2017)

compares the French and Spanish translations in terms of how Russian-derived nouns are treated in relation to gender assignment and adaptation; that is, whether endings are retained from Russian or adapted in line with native norms, noting that the number of nouns involved in both translations is quite similar. She finds that, with respect to gender, the Spanish translation is more representative of the treatment of Russian loan-nouns in the language as a whole than the French translation. Maher (2010) also considers the Spanish text to be superior to the Italian translation, arguing that the text is exemplary in terms of its inclusion of Russian-based words.

However, Malamatidou (2017, 304) is less positive about the treatment of adaptation in the Spanish translation. She finds that the Spanish translation has a far higher degree of adaptation than both the French and *ACO* itself; this is problematic since it suggests that these Nadsat words are more assimilated into the language, altering the way readers react to them. A further critique of *LNM* is that it essentially replicates most of the Russian items of English-Nadsat in Spanish-Nadsat, meaning that the translation may not serve its intended purposes for Spanish readers (Gimbert & Zabalbeascoa 2011, 126). Such a view echoes Morilla (1994), who finds that the Spanish text is less creative and hence less effective in capturing the deviant character of Alex as represented through Nadsat. Morilla notes the importance of the English-Nadsat word *horrorshow* to Alex and the inefficacy of the Spanish-Nadsat *joroshó* in translating this complex item for the Spanish context. *Horrorshow* is based on the Russian *xopomo*, which means ‘good/well’; changing the conventional transliteration from *khorosho* to *horrorshow* adds extra meaning and is an indication right from the start of the book that what Alex and his gang consider to be ‘good’ is not in line with what we may think. The Spanish-Nadsat *joroshó* carries none of these meanings, however.

Morilla (1994) attributes the lack of inventiveness in the Spanish translation to an effort to make the text more readable for Spanish readers, and though Maher’s (2010) evaluation of the Spanish translation is more positive, this critique of lack of inventiveness in the Spanish texts remains at the centre of the discussion of the Leal/Quijada Vargas translation (cf. Adcock 2017). Overall, the argument that the Leal translation may lack some qualities is well espoused and is succinctly critiqued by Pérez Palerm

(2016), who calls for a new Castilian translation of the novel with more attention paid to the recreation of the effects of Nadsat on the reader.

Therefore, we can say that despite the longevity of both French and Spanish translations of *ACO*, they have differing reputations. Whereas the French translation is mostly praised (Bogic 2017, Pochon 2010, Radionovas 2009), the Spanish one has not been so well received (Malamatidou 2017, Pérez Palerm 2016). This may be due in part to the contrasting careers of the translation teams and differences in approach. Belmont and Chabrier were literary translators primarily with experience of translating experimental texts, such as the work of James Joyce; they also translated several other works by Burgess. By contrast, while Anibal Leal started his career translating William Burroughs, he was primarily a translator of popular fiction, such as Dean Koontz and Winston Graham. However, a further point of potential importance is the fact that the final chapter in the Spanish text was translated by a different translator, Ana Quijada Vargas, who is an accomplished translator of Anglophone science fiction, best known as the Spanish translator of Ray Bradbury, Ursula K. Le Guin and Kim Stanley Robinson. Paloposki and Pokorn (2020) outline the range of complexities involved in translator collaboration and the myriad ways it can undermine an effective translation. However, they do not discuss instances of ‘collaboration’ that involve a second translator adding to the work of another 36 years later. This unique case in the Leal/Quijada Vargas translation merits comparison of their approaches to translating Nadsat.

A further point of interest relates to the contribution of Burgess to the translations. Martínez Portillo (2019, 148) asserts that Leal’s translation involved “collaborative work with Burgess, since it was specifically carried out and prepared to retain the flavor of the original narrative”. This claim is repeated in the note on the glossary appended to *LNM* and also by Maher (2010), but there is no documentary evidence of Burgess’s involvement in the Spanish translation. This stands in contrast to the French translation; Burgess was a close friend of Georges Belmont and extensive communication between the two exists. Indeed, according to Burgess’s autobiography, he met both Belmont and Chabrier in Rome to discuss how they could assist his profile in France, and the result of the meeting was a commission to translate *ACO* (Burgess 2002, 261). It is therefore possible that Burgess may have been consulted by Belmont and Chabrier during the creation of the French translation. It is important to note that, whereas

Belmont and Chabrier provided a brief translators' note to their translation, neither Leal nor Quijada did, and the French translators' note conveys minimal information about the translation strategies adopted. Therefore, conclusions about translation strategy must be derived from textual analysis in both instances.

Owing to the evident complexity in translating Nadsat, where translators are challenged not only to find cognate target language terms for Nadsat's semantic content, but also to replicate its style, these texts remains a rich resource for unpacking translation practices and the realisation of Nadsat across cultures. Pochon (2010) has called for a comparative study of translations across multiple languages, in order to compare the strategies put in place by different translators when addressing Burgess's invented language. One of our aims in carrying out this comparison was to find out the extent to which the size of the English-Nadsat lexicon and its distribution across the whole work is replicated in the translations, as this can indicate the amount of effort the translators put into recreating the anti-language. Therefore, this study uses corpus linguistic approaches to respond to Pochon's call by contrasting the French-Nadsat of Belmont and Chabrier and the Spanish-Nadsat of Anibal Leal (with the belated contribution of Ana Quijada Vargas) with the English original. We are also interested in investigating how Leal's and Quijada Vargas's translation practices compare to one another and what impact this has on the representation of Nadsat in the final chapter.

## **Data and Methods**

This analysis is based on a parallel corpus of *ACO*, *LOM*, and *LNM*, which was analysed using the online corpus software Sketch Engine, which provides a number of useful tools for the quantitative analysis and comparison of texts. The methodology for identifying and categorising the Spanish-Nadsat lexicon in this study follows a procedure that we have developed over two previous studies on English-Nadsat (Vincent and Clarke, 2017) and then on French-Nadsat (Vincent and Clarke 2020). The aim is not just to identify how English-Nadsat items are translated into French-Nadsat and Spanish-Nadsat—the 'coupled pairs method' (Toury 1995)—but to consider French-Nadsat and Spanish-Nadsat as varieties in their own right. This means taking into account efforts made by the translators to compensate for losses

created by items that are not readily translatable. Such a descriptivist aim aligns well with the corpus linguistic approaches applied.

As the process for identifying the Nadsat in English and French is outlined in Vincent and Clarke (2017) and Vincent and Clarke (2020), here we will detail how Spanish-Nadsat items were extracted. At first glance, the Spanish-Nadsat glossary provided in the Spanish edition of the novel appears to be a comprehensive source. This glossary lists 209 items and, in line with the glossary of English-Nadsat created by Stanley Hyman and appended to the US edition (Hyman 1963), it attempts to distinguish between words with Russian derivations, such as *bábuchca* (English-Nadsat baboochka, ‘old woman’) and those with other derivations, for example *cancrillo*, the Spanish-Nadsat equivalent of English-Nadsat *cancer* (‘cigarette’). However, as pointed out in earlier work (Vincent and Clarke 2017), it is dangerous to depend on glossaries of this type since their means of compilation results in errors; Burgess did not want any glossary and so did not contribute. Hyman knew no Russian, was not entirely familiar with British English slang, and acknowledged that he did not employ a rigorous method for identifying Nadsat words, leading him to include some items in error and to miscategorise others.

The legacy of these issues can be seen in the Spanish-Nadsat glossary. The very first word in the glossary, *apología*, appears to be a misprint for *apolologías* (English-Nadsat *appy polly loggies*). The glossary also includes items that are not Nadsat items since they are not confined to the language of Alex and his droogs, such as *chaplino*, which is simply general prison slang for ‘chaplain’; it miscategorises *yarboclos* (‘balls’ based on the Russian for ‘apple’) and fails to note that this item is also spelled *yarblocos*. Thus, while the Spanish ‘glosario’ is useful in that it lists a good number of Spanish-Nadsat words, it contains a number of errors.

A more systematic method was thus needed to isolate Spanish-Nadsat items, one which identified all forms of these words for the purpose of tracking their use through the translation. To this end, an electronic version of *LNM* was obtained and then analysed. The analysis aimed (1) to identify and categorise Spanish-Nadsat wordforms/phrases and (2) investigate variations between Nadsat translation practices of the two translators credited with translating the Spanish text.



To identify Spanish-Nadsat wordforms/phrases, we first used key word analysis. By comparing the words in *LNM* against a corpus of Spanish texts (in this case, the 17.5-billion-word esTenTen18 corpus, available to all Sketch Engine subscribers), we retrieved a list of ‘keywords’, wordforms occurring comparatively more frequently in the book than in Spanish in general. This is an effective way of capturing Spanish-Nadsat words since they are either not standard Spanish words or are unusual, and thus their appearance even once in the book would lead to their retrieval.

It is important to note here that by ‘word’ we are referring to what is normally termed ‘wordform’ in the corpus linguistics literature, that is, any form separated by spaces or punctuation in the text. This means that all forms of a word are retrieved; they can then be listed under a headword (or ‘base form’). Taking the example of *bábuchca*, forms realised in the book also include *bábuchcas* and *bábuchka* (alternative spellings are not necessarily a sign of carelessness but may reflect the translator’s recognition of the variable spellings of Nadsat words in *ACO*).

Once we had the list of keywords, those that were Spanish-Nadsat were identified by isolating those that were either not standard Spanish items or were Spanish words used with a non-standard meaning. A good example of the latter is the Spanish-Nadsat word *filosa*, which literally means ‘sharp’ (in reference to, e.g., knives), but is also used in *LNM* as a translation of English-Nadsat *sharp*, meaning ‘woman’ (see also our section on ‘overlexicalisation’ below). Since *filosa* is also used in its conventional sense in *LNM*, we also had to ensure that only the relevant sense was included in the frequency counts presented in the Results below. Another criterion for categorising a word as Spanish-Nadsat is that it is used solely by Alex and his gang. This is important, since to count as ‘anti-language’, an item cannot have passed into more general usage but must remain obscure to users of the standard language (Fowler 1979, Janak 2015), but also it helps to distinguish Nadsat words from those that belong to other varieties present in the book. We have already mentioned one example of a word excluded from consideration on this basis—*chaplino*, from prison slang.

Once the full Spanish-Nadsat lexicon was isolated, it was then possible to propose categories of Spanish-Nadsat items in a similar way to previous work (Vincent and Clarke 2017, Vincent and Clarke 2020). The first category, common to all Nadsats which base themselves on Russian lexis, is ‘Core

Nadsat', which includes all items based on Russian, the few items derived from other languages (e.g. *tastuco*, 'handkerchief' from German) and items whose etymology is obscure (e.g. *silao*, 'fuss'). It was then possible to identify other means of word formation which follow patterns found in English-Nadsat and French-Nadsat. 'Babytalk' contains words formed by the addition of syllables to create childish sounding items such as *apolologías* in line with English-Nadsat word formation principles (cf. *appy polly loggies*). 'Compounds' are unconventional combinations of words, often based on the English-Nadsat original such as *fuegodoros*, which is close to the English-Nadsat *firegold* ('whisky'). The 'Truncation' category contains which have been shortened, for example *alc*, short for 'alcohol' in Spanish-Nadsat, French-Nadsat and English-Nadsat. A further category we term 'Creative morphology' includes other novel uses of Spanish vocabulary; one example already discussed is the use of *filosa* to mean 'woman' in a calque of 'sharp' and another is the word *cancrillo* to mean 'cigarette', which, as in English-Nadsat refers to the cancer-inducing properties of cigarettes. The final category of Spanish-Nadsat words, 'Anglicisms', is also seen in French-Nadsat. Words in this category are based on English words and either replace Russian words which could not be adapted to Spanish spelling conventions, e.g. *naito* ('night'), used as a translation for English-Nadsat *nochy* (based on Russian for 'night', *ночь*), or words that the translator seemed to think fit in well with the sounds of Nadsat, for example *snufar*, used for *snuff it*. This last item, along with some others in this category (e.g. *clopar* and *munchar*), seems to have been used by Leal on the basis that it is listed in Hyman's (1963) glossary.

Following this broad categorisation, we then looked at notable differences between Leal's and Quijada Vargas's translation practices in regard to Nadsat. As noted already, the unique situation in which this translation was completed makes it an interesting case. This investigation involved comparison of Nadsat items in Chapter 21 of *LNM* with those found in the rest of the book to determine any differing usage in Spanish. The results of these analyses are presented in the following section.

## Results

### *Size of Nadsat lexicon*

The respective figures for the size of the Nadsat lexicon in the source text and the two translations are shown in Table 1. It is worth remembering that English has the property that nouns and verbs can have the same form (*govoreet* means both ‘to talk’ and ‘a talk’), which is not normally possible in French or Spanish. This means that the numbers in the columns are more suggestive than exactly comparable since the numbers for English are bound to be lower (nouns and verbs of the same form like *govoreet* were not listed separately in the English-Nadsat lexicon).

In terms of categories, an obvious difference between English-Nadsat and its French and Spanish equivalents is that there is no ‘Rhyming slang’ or ‘Archaisms’. In the case of the former, this is not entirely unexpected, since the way rhyming slang is created in English is almost impossible to recreate in another language. With the latter, however, it is surprising that neither translation tried to introduce archaic terms when they form quite a salient aspect of English-Nadsat and both languages present plenty of scope for recreating this effect (e.g. using archaic expressions such as ‘vuestra merced’ in lieu of the ‘usted’ pronoun for formality (Adcock 2017, 64)). Both French and Spanish translations compensate for these losses to some extent by including words based on English lexis (Anglicisms), although neither contains a large number of words.

Table 1 also shows a clear distinction between the French and Spanish translations. The figures for ‘Core Nadsat’ suggest that, although there are some losses, both French and Spanish translators decided to keep a high proportion of items from the original. However, their approach to other categories was quite different. The French translators tried to compensate for losses of Core Nadsat words, as well as the lack of archaisms or rhyming slang, by creating large numbers of new words which are mostly in the ‘Creative morphology’ category. The Spanish translators, meanwhile, were very much more conservative in their creation of words in other categories, effectively depleting the stock of Nadsat items, echoing a lack of creativity discussed in Morilla (1994). This is thus one indication that the Spanish translation is not as rich in creative translation practices as the French one.

Table 1: Categories of Nadsat in terms of numbers of members

[insert “Table1\_ACO.png” here]

*Distribution of Nadsat across the work*

A different way of comparing the translations with the original is to explore distributions of the categories across the texts. This comparative examination of frequencies of Nadsat categories across the original text and the translations into French and Spanish helps to indicate the distinct translation strategies of Belmont and Chabrier that were not used by Leal (and Quijada Vargas). Frequencies are here normalised (per 100,000 words) to allow a degree of comparison across the texts but, as with the figures in Table 1, we should be careful not to read too much into the differences across the texts. This is due to the nature of the languages themselves. Textual expansion is a common feature of literary translation; this is reflected in the length in words of the French translation, but curiously not the Spanish, which actually experiences a contraction (*ACO*: 59776 words; *LOM*: 73370 words; *LNM*: 55379 words). Nevertheless, it is possible to discern general patterns across the distributions shown in Figures 1-3. In the English text (see Figure 1), we can see that core Nadsat words make up the significant majority of total Nadsat terms. The remaining categories make up only a small fraction in comparison. Considered as a proportion of all words in the book, core Nadsat approaches 6%, while all other categories combined only make up just over a tenth of this. The significance of this figure is the burden it places on the reader; at around 1 core Nadsat item on average per sentence, readers are required to acquire these unfamiliar words in order to understand the text.

The other, non-core categories, which are far less likely to be unfamiliar, take up quite a small proportion of overall words. Nevertheless, they are critical to the efficacy of Nadsat as an invented idiolect, since they perform different linguistic and literary functions within the text to the primary alienation function of core Nadsat. Babytalk, for example, assists in highlighting Alex's youth (he is 13 when the novel opens). Archaism facilitates a sarcastic formality on the part of Alex, particularly when communicating with his elders. These effects are achieved through the judicious sprinkling of non-core Nadsat throughout the text. To extend the metaphor, they are not so much the substance of Nadsat, as its flavouring. Without this flavouring, the Nadsat linguistically functions in a one-note manner, highlighting the alienation function of the anti-language at the expense of its nuances.

Figure 1: Overall distributions of English-Nadsat categories in *ACO* (frequencies per 100000 words)

[insert “Figure1\_ACO.png” here]

When we look at the distribution for the French translation (see Figure 2), some differences are immediately apparent. Although we should be cautious with making comparisons of this sort, it is clear that Core Nadsat makes up a significantly lower proportion of all words in the book (just under 4% of all words). Also, the second most frequent category, Creative Morphology, is far closer in overall frequency to the core category than any category is in the English text (more than a quarter of the frequency of core Nadsat); the compensation strategy seems largely to be concentrated in this area. The result of these changes in the distributions tend to suggest that considering the book as a whole, French readers are presented with a less of a challenge, even if the defamiliarization experienced due to the introduction of unusual lexis may be broadly similar to the English version.

We have mentioned above the translation strategy that leads to these differences between French-Nadsat and English-Nadsat (see also Vincent and Clarke 2020). One of the key challenges for translators of *ACO*, over and above the incorporation of foreign lexis, is the layering of meaning that Burgess brought into the work due to his sophisticated use of wordplay, as seen with the English-Nadsat word *horrorshow*, which despite its negative meaning in standard English is based on a Russian word meaning ‘good/well’. The dilemma for the translator is whether to use the same Russian word adapted to fit the orthography of target language, and thereby most likely lose the connotations present in the original, or to attempt another way of creating a similar effect. This seems a particularly important decision for frequently-occurring Nadsat words such as *horrorshow*.

Belmont and Chabrier’s answer to this dilemma for a number of key Nadsat words, including *horrorshow* is to take the second option, i.e. create a new word, *tzarrible*, a portmanteau word combining *tzar* (to give Russian flavour) with *terrible* to create a new word which comes close to recreating the complexities and nuances of *horrorshow* for a French-speaking audience (Bogic 2017). This is a strategy

chosen for a number of core Nadsat items which also occur frequently and which when adapted to French can suggest connotations that would be absent if a straight Russian translation was used. That is, Belmont and Chabrier sacrifice some of the difficulty of reading *ACO* in the quest of re-creating some of the effects that they see in English, reflecting Gimbert and Zabalbeascoa's (2011) substitution practice when dealing with a third, invented (anti-)language.

Figure 2: French Nadsat categories overall distribution (per 100000 words)

[insert "Figure2\_ACO.png" here]

The distributions seen for Spanish-Nadsat in *LNM* (see Figure 3) appear much closer to those for English-Nadsat than to those seen for French-Nadsat. Indeed, there is even more reliance upon core Nadsat terms at the expense of other Nadsat categories in the Spanish-Nadsat text; these combined only amount to one-twentieth of the frequency of core Nadsat. The lack of richness of the lexicon indicated in Table 1 is thus also reflected in a lower overall frequency of non-core Nadsat words. What this suggests about the Spanish translation is that the high proportion of core Nadsat words presents a Spanish reader with a challenge comparable to that of English readers of the original, although with a slightly reduced range of words, but that the other aspects of Nadsat, which fill out and flavour the reader's experience of the text are far less in evidence here (see also Maher 2010). Notably, while the French translation contains a number of attempts to evoke the effects of Nadsat in the source text by creating new words such as *tzarrible* for frequently occurring, key Nadsat words, in the Spanish text, however, such attempts are lacking; *horrorshow* becomes simply *joroshó*, a word that suggests nothing to a monolingual Spanish reader.

Figure 3: Spanish Nadsat categories overall distribution (per 100000 words)

[insert "Figure3\_ACO.png" here]

Indeed, all non-core Spanish-Nadsat items are based on other non-core English-Nadsat words or words that Leal apparently thought were Nadsat based on errors in Hyman's glossary, a good example being the coinage of *snufar* as an equivalent of 'snuff it'. Morilla (1994) argues that the limited use of non-core Nadsat in Leal's Spanish-Nadsat version functions to flatten the effect of Nadsat; however, his claim is tentative, owing to the limited qualitative investigation he employs. Based on our extensive corpus analysis, we can draw a more definitive conclusion and argue that Spanish-Nadsat is disproportionately dependent on the alienation function created by core Nadsat. This may lead to a monotonous quality in the text, which is perhaps why some critics such as Pérez Palerm (2016) have found the Spanish translation to be somewhat unsatisfying.

*Overlexicalisation: Differences in treatment of semantic sets*

While indicative of differences in approach and strategy on the parts of respective translators, differences in overall frequencies of categories can only reveal so much. It is important to look more closely at how Nadsat is realised in translations and whether they can claim to have created some of the same effects present in the original. One perspective which offers insights into this is a consideration of Nadsat in terms of 'overlexicalisation', the tendency of an anti-language to have multiple words which ostensibly have the 'same' reference and which therefore allow for increased nuance (Halliday 1976). A good example of this is the multiple words that exist for referring to women in Nadsat (see Table 2). There is no particular 'need' for so many different terms for but once they exist they can develop their own contrasting connotations by virtue of their typical uses. It is interesting that, although *ACO* was written before Halliday's work, Burgess, a keen linguist himself, incorporated this feature into English-Nadsat.

Table 2: Overlexicalisation of words for 'women' – comparison across English-Nadsat, French-Nadsat and Spanish-Nadsat (\* words not based on Russian lexis)

[insert "Table2\_ACO.png" here]

Table 1 above already suggests that the translators of *ACO* struggled to match Burgess's inventiveness and range of lexical creativity. This is not entirely surprising, bearing in mind the challenges involved in literary translation and the constraints on commercial translators in terms of time and resources. In this section, we will show how the French and Spanish translations differ in their response to this challenge and provide further evidence of the shortcomings of the Spanish translation by discussing the translation of a highly overlexicalised area of English-Nadsat, words referring to women.

The key point here with respect to the authenticity of the translation is the extent to which French-Nadsat and Spanish-Nadsat attempt to maintain the same sorts of meaning distinctions that English-Nadsat sets up by having so many different words for women. This question can be approached from the perspectives of range of lexis and consistency of translation and we will also touch upon connotation.

In terms of range of lexis, we can see from Table 2 that there is a gradual reduction in variation across the three varieties from English-Nadsat (10 different items) to French-Nadsat and then to Spanish-Nadsat (7 items). The range of words available to refer to women in Spanish-Nadsat is narrowed, and the resulting nuance available is thus reduced. While French only loses the difficult to translate (since it has no obvious etymology) *lighter*, Spanish loses both this and two Russian-derived core Nadsat items. There is no equivalent for English-Nadsat *zheena* (from Russian жена, 'wife'), which Leal seems to have conflated with *cheena* (apparently a truncated form using the ending of Russian женщина, 'woman'). As for *dama*, which transliterates the Russian word for 'lady', this is retained in Spanish but since it is already a Spanish word it cannot function as Nadsat. However, the overall frequencies of these items seen in the three books is very similar. This suggests that the Spanish-Nadsat items are used less discriminately; *ptitsa* in particular seems to have been used in several places where it is not employed in the original, suggesting inconsistency of translation.

Consistency of translation is important since the words were originally chosen for a reason, as the literal translations provided in Table 2 suggest. It is important to remember that, whether or not we believe that Burgess intended readers of the book to learn and (following the logic of the Sapir-Whorf



hypothesis (Cheyne 2008)) be brainwashed into taking on Alex's twisted worldview, these words have different connotations and should therefore be employed carefully.

Taking the French translation, this work is generally very consistent in its use of items to translate from English-Nadsat. Thus where we have *baboochka* in *ACO*, there is *babouchka* in the equivalent place in *LOM* and where *sharp* refers to women in *ACO*, *gironde* is found in 11 out of 12 instances in the French text. One might argue whether *gironde*, which is based on a French word meaning 'good-looking' or 'pleasant', is the best translation of *sharp*, a word that seems to have much cruder connotations (see Table 2), but the choice is at least consistent. The situation is similar for *lighter*. As seen in Table 2, no special French-Nadsat word is used for *lighter*—but even here, the translation is consistent; the standard French word *copine* is used both times *lighter* appears in the text. On both occasions the *lighters* referred to are old women in the pub whom the droogs buy drinks for in order to buy their complicity. The choice of *copine*, which suggests 'accomplice', reflects the role that the old women referred to are about to undertake in providing an alibi for the *droogs*, and so in fact adds a meaning not present in the source text.

When we come to the Spanish translation, the situation is a little different. Although Leal is careful to translate core Nadsat items fairly consistently, there is some slippage with other items. We have already mentioned the overuse of *ptitsa* in Spanish compared to English; this is due to its use where in *ACO* there is merely a pronoun (*she* or *they*) and perhaps represents an attempt to compensate for other losses elsewhere in the text. The main ways in which the Spanish text diverges from the English in terms of translation is in its treatment of *sharp* and *lighter*. With the former, the Spanish-Nadsat coinage is *filosa*, which is a literal translation of *sharp* (i.e. opposite of blunt), a word without any particular connotations in Spanish. This seems a logical choice though without capturing the sense of the original. However, *filosa* is not consistently used as a translation of *sharp* in *ACO* since Leal uses a variety of other words as well: *pollita*, literally 'chick', *niña*, meaning 'girl' and *harpia* ('harpy'). A similar inconsistency is seen with the translation of *lighter*, where we see both *harpia* and *dama* ('lady'). What this essentially means for readers is that they cannot get a consistent idea of what these words mean; the system of meanings set up in English-Nadsat is not retained in Spanish-Nadsat. This lack of consistency in Spanish

undermines a core feature of Nadsat in the novella and potentially interferes with both the brainwashing emulation and the purposeful overlexicalisation of ‘woman.’ As such, our findings and evaluation conflict with Maher (2010) and are more in line with Morilla (1994), as we argue that although a fundamental feature of the novella, there are core functions of Nadsat not evident in Spanish that could have been integrated through a more creative translation process.

#### *Differences across translators of the same work*

As noted earlier, the Spanish translation of *A Clockwork Orange* is highly unusual in that it had two different translators for different parts. Leal translated the first twenty chapters, basing this on the US edition of the book, while Quijada Vargas added her translation of the final chapter thirty-six years later. This unusual situation begs the question whether there were differences in the treatment of Nadsat across the two translators of the same work and hence the extent to which readers of *LNM* experience this anti-language consistently when they get to the final chapter.

In a first phase of analysis, a review of Nadsat items in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of the English, French, and Spanish versions of the text reveals that Nadsat is relatively comparable and follows the overall trends with more examples in English (300) than French (289), and more examples in French (289) than Spanish (255).

Table 3: Top 10 core- and non-core-Nadsat in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of the English, French, and Spanish versions of the text

**[insert “Table3\_ACO.png” here]**

Table 3 shows the top 10 ranked core- and non-core-Nadsat words in each language, showing that, for the most part, the items are shared across languages. We can note here the presence of *thou* in the English list, an archaism with no equivalent in French-Nadsat or Spanish-Nadsat. However, the most remarkable difference here is the absence of *goroschó* from the Spanish column, which is due to the fact

that it does not occur *at all* in Chapter 21. This is very surprising, given the importance of this word for Alex, which we have mentioned several times already, and that its equivalents in English and French, *horrorshow* and *tzarrible*, are ranked 8<sup>th</sup> (8 occurrences) and 4<sup>th</sup> (10 occurrences), respectively. Upon investigation of the distribution of *horrorshow*, *tzarrible*, and *jeroschó* across the novella, it becomes apparent that the absence of *jeroschó* reflects an idiosyncrasy of Quijada Vargas's translation of the novella, as Table 4 indicates.

Table 4: Distribution of 'horrorshow', 'tzarrible', and 'jeroschó' across the novella

[insert "Table4\_ACO.png" here]

Further qualitative investigation of Chapter 21 of *LNM* throws up anomalies that indicate Quijada Vargas's lack of understanding of *horrorshow* in *ACO*. This word is dealt with in 4 distinct ways in this one chapter, none of which is entirely satisfactory.

The first way 'horrorshow' is translated is as something bad, gruesome, or frightening, using standard Spanish words *espantosas*, *espanto* and *estropeado*, which reflect a sense of something horrifying and gruesome or damaged. As the following examples indicate, this meaning is at variance with the meanings of the equivalent sentences from *ACO* and *LOM*, where the word in bold is clearly expressing Alex's approbation.

- a. But it was always the same on the old nogas - real **horrorshow** bolshy big boots for kicking litsos in.
- b. Cela dit, on avait toujours les nogas dans les mêmes trucs : des vraies grosses bottes bolchoï **tzarribles** pour shooter dans les litsos.
- c. Pero siempre era lo mismo para nuestras viejas nogas, unas grandes botas bolches, realmente **espantosas**, para patear litsos.

The use of *espantosas* misrepresents Alex's feelings about the items and activities described, suggesting that Alex was afraid of what he was seeing. The following example also misrepresents

‘horrorshow’, the implication in the source text being that ‘one or two of his [teeth] weren’t all that [great]’ when the Spanish translation has Alex saying ‘one or two less damaged [teeth]’.

- d. And he smecked real gromky and I viddied one or two of his zoobies weren't all that **horrorshow**.
- e. Et il se bidonska vraiment gromky, au point que je pouvais relucher une ou deux de ses zoubies, qui n'étaient pas si **tzarribles**.
- f. Y smecó realmente gronco y vi que tenía uno o dos subos **menos estropeados**

A second way that *horrorshow* is translated is by using the word *película* (2 instances), or literally ‘film’ (i.e. movie). The Spanish translation here makes little sense and certainly does not convey any nuance of *horrorshow* as used in *ACO*.

- g. Flip **horrorshow** takings there, droog, for the having.
- h. Y a des trucs branques **tzarrible** à rafler là-dedans, les drougs.
- i. Diversión de **película** y dinero todo junto, drugo.

A further translation of *horrorshow* found in Chapter 21 of *LNM* renders it as *de primera*, or ‘first-class’. In this case, the semantics of *horrorshow* are in fact retained but with none of the unpleasant connotations this word suggests in English.

- j. but with a **horrorshow** plott and litso and a smiling rot and very very fair voloss and all that cal.
- k. mais genre plott et litso **tzarribles**, avec la rote tout sourire, le voloss super blond et tout le gouspin à l’avenant
- l. sino que tenía un ploto y un litso **de primera**, y una rota sonriente y un boloso muy muy brillante y toda esa cala.

The fourth and final translation strategy seen with respect to *horrorshow* is simply to ignore it; where in *ACO* we have ‘I could not viddy [see] her all that **horrorshow**’ the Spanish effectively becomes ‘I could not viddy her’. Here we have, in effect, a typical example of translation loss.

In summary, then, Quijada Vargas seems not to have been able either to determine the most effective way of translating *horrorshow* nor even to have done this consistently. It is interesting to

compare this with Leal's approach to the use of *jorochó*. Although, as noted earlier, this may not be the most effective translation of *horrorshow*, it is at least used consistently; of the 101 occurrences of *jorochó*, 100 of them correspond directly to the use of *horrorshow* in *ACO*. This further means that there are 100 examples of *jorochó* on which Quijada Vargas could have based her translation.

Although issues with the translation of *horrorshow* represent the most glaring problem with Chapter 21 of *LNM*, there are some other discrepancies that our investigations have revealed. Two other new Spanish-Nadsat items are also introduced, *gollis* (translates *pretty polly*, which rhymes with *lolly*, a British slang term for 'money') and *cáncer* ('cigarette'). There are no earlier examples of *gollis* in the novella, which makes it hard for a reader to understand initially. This is likely Quijada Vargas's attempt to transfer 'gollies' used in *ACO*, Chapter 1. However, given that Leal avoids this form in the first 20 chapters, it is unclear why Quijada Vargas includes it here. Quijada Vargas's *cáncer*, a translation of English-Nadsat *cancer*, contrasts with the translation used by Leal, *cancrillo* (16 instances across 8 chapters). These 16 uses correspond directly to *cancer* in *ACO*. This means that readers may not understand that *cancrillo* and *cáncer* are essentially the same. Again, it is unusual that Quijada Vargas deviated from Leal's use of Nadsat, even if in this case to create a word closer to the original.

Overall, this brief investigation of Quijada Vargas's translation practices reveals some interesting idiosyncrasies that create an incongruence between her and Leal's work on *LNM* and arguably affect the reader's experience of reading the work. We do not, however, have information about the circumstances in which Quijada Vargas took over the translation or the resources she had access to which might help explain some of these incongruences.

## Conclusion

This chapter has offered evidence that corpus approaches can offer data-driven insights into the translation practices across languages in the area of science fiction. This approach is particularly pertinent for unpacking invented (anti-)languages like Nadsat, as corpus linguistic approaches can effectively distinguish unique and rare wordforms. This research responds to Pochon's (2010) call for multilingual studies of Nadsat; a third language can tell us something valuable about the other two (van der Auwera

2012). Our findings offer a systematic description of the translation techniques and choices made regarding Nadsat and our method suggests an approach that could be used more generally to analyse SF works employing innovative uses of language.

In terms of unpacking Nadsat in *ACO*, *LOM*, and *LNM*, our formal categorisation offers a bottom-up, language agnostic approach to categorising Nadsat across languages. This helped us to show that although the Spanish text may appear to reflect Nadsat's Russian origins better, the nuance and complexity of Burgess's Nadsat construction is simplified and, in many instances, lost in the Spanish version; in this sense we build on the work of Malamitidou (2017). This contrasts with *LOM*, which endeavours to create complex equivalences by reflecting the conceptual development of Nadsat. Further, we have shown that the reduced lexicon used to discuss women not only reduces the range of ways in which women can be represented in Nadsat, but it combines terms used differently in the source text, detracting from the nuances they connote. Finally, in considering how Leal's and Quijada Vargas's translation practices compare to one another, we have shown that Quijada Vargas's translation contains a number of anomalies not yet discussed in the literature. The mistranslation of 'horrorshow' misrepresents Alex's perspectives in the final chapter and creates confusion. Moreover, it reduces the presence of Nadsat in this chapter, suggesting reduced Nadsat use by Alex not apparent in *ACO*. Furthermore, the introduction of new the Nadsat terms of 'gollis' and 'cáncer' reflects a lack of consistency with Leal's work and undermines the author's original intention for the reader to become enculturated into Nadsat over the course of the book. In this way, we have shown how corpus-based analysis can be used in translation studies to provide more robust, empirical evidence that can help support or overturn previously held evaluations of translations.

## Bios

Niall Curry is a Lecturer and ASPIRE Fellow at Coventry University. His research is interdisciplinary and centres on the application of corpus linguistic approaches to different areas of applied linguistics. Among these areas is a focus on corpus linguistics, corpus-based contrastive studies of English, French, and Spanish, corpus-based studies of language change, discourse analysis, and corpus linguistics for TESOL. Previously, Niall has worked in industry, at Cambridge University Press, and internationally, at universities in Ireland and France. For further details on his background, areas of interest, projects, publications, and ongoing research, see his [website](#).

Jim Clarke has taught literature at universities in Ireland, the UK and Belarus. He is the author of *The Aesthetics of Anthony Burgess* (2017), *Science Fiction and Catholicism* (2019), and *Anthony Burgess's A Clockwork Orange* (2021), and blogs at [www.jimclarke.net](http://www.jimclarke.net). He has written on Arthur C. Clarke, J.G. Ballard, Iain M. Banks and many other SF authors, researches religious futurisms, and is co-director of the *Ponying the Slovos* project, which explores how invented literary languages function in translation and adaptation: <https://ponyingtheslovos.coventry.domains>

Benet Vincent works at Coventry University in the School of Humanities. His background is in applied corpus linguistics—using corpus tools to investigate areas including English for Academic Purposes, Stylistics and Translation. Having lived and rabbited in Russia, getting involved in the *Ponying the Slovos* project seemed an obvious vesch to do. This will be his third publication on Nadsat.

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