

Making *maricones* into *bitches*: Multimodal, multi-lingual representation of reclaimed slurs in *Drag Race España*

Brittney O'Neill, York University

Katie Slep, York University

Abstract: While the *Drag Race* television franchise continues to expand across linguistic and cultural contexts, some linguo-cultural specificities resist translation for the global audience. This paper critically analyzes the intertextual management of *Drag Race España* participants' use of the reclaimed slur *maricón*. Following shocked reactions from Anglophone fans, the Season 1 translation (*f*g*) was abandoned, and instead, in Season 2, the utterance was frequently omitted in both English and Spanish subtitles and/or translated as *bitch*—a common utterance in Anglophone iterations of the show. We argue that this shift domesticates the language of the Spanish contestants, defanging the political potency of contestants' reclamation of a slur targeting their own sexualities and camp femininities, and instead leaving discussions of reclamation orphaned, as their active illustration is replaced with a more broadly reclaimed term, which likely has not been used as a slur against the contestants and therefore lacks the same political force.

Keywords: drag, Drag Race, reclaimed slurs, translation, AVT, subtitles

1. Introduction

First airing in 2009 as a reality competition show to find America's Next Drag Superstar, the participant who exhibits the most charisma, uniqueness, nerve, and talent (C.U.N.T.), RuPaul Charles' *Drag Race (RPDR)* television empire has gone on to span the globe, with localizations showing up in 10 languages over 15 countries. While the shows are broadcast on cable television in their respective host nations, they are also available on the dedicated streaming platform, WowPresentsPlus, which offers access to the entire *Drag Race* franchise regardless of the viewer's location; hence, *Drag Race* has become a global phenomenon not only through localizations, but also through the creation of space where fans need not wait for the next season of their own localized version, but instead can consume numerous international editions. Given this international expansion and interweaving, *Drag Race*'s highlighting of elements of queer/drag culture in a format increasingly consumed by mainstream television viewers offers an interesting case study not only in how subcultural meaning making translates to mainstream audiences, but also how such meaning making is translated across languages and cultural contexts.

Drag Race España is the seventh non-US addition to the franchise, with the first season airing in 2021, the second in 2022, and the third in 2023 (S3 not analyzed in the current paper). The show airs with Spanish audio, but, on WowPresentsPlus, has subtitles¹ in a number of languages, including Spanish and English. In terms of structure and overall aesthetic, *Drag Race España* is very similar to the original US production, but crucially it is situated within a different cultural context with its own particular meaning-making practices around drag. This includes the prominence of Canary Islanders' Carnival drag, the role of Spanish regionalism, and most saliently

¹ While the Spanish subtitles may be more accurately described as closed captions, we use the term "subtitles" throughout, for both languages, to better facilitate the comparison across the two written media which are presented in the same location and visual style and are made available through the same menu button in the interface.

for this paper, the frequent use of the arguably reclaimed slur, *maricón* (lit. *fag*) in the contestants' (and less frequently, hosts' and judges') speech. In this paper we consider how this contentious term is rendered in the Spanish audio, through transcription in the Spanish subtitles, and through translation in the English subtitles across the first two seasons of the show. We begin by discussing the broader domain of audiovisual translation (AVT) of offensive terms, followed by a consideration of slur reclamation, before bridging these two topics via queer translation studies. We then present our research questions, methodology, results, and a discussion of the strategies chosen to render the term, as well as the implications of those strategies for queer politics and meaning-making, in the context of the global hegemony of English and the affordances and limitations of AVT.

2. Audio visual translation (AVT) of offensive language

Because there can be no perfect equivalency between languages (and the cultures in which they are embedded), a core challenge of translation is the management of this intertextual gap between source and target text. This gap is particularly problematic when managing utterances that are heavily entangled in cultural meaning making practices. For example, Espinola and Vasconcellos (2006) consider the translation of a Brazilian film into English and an American film into Portuguese respectively, finding that the translations differ in their degree of domestication (conversion into target language relevant cultural references) versus foreignization (retention of source language cultural references) of so called extralinguistic cultural references (ECRs). These patterns result in Anglophone viewers receiving a film that is tuned to their cultural context and thus loses some of its connection to the Brazilian context, whereas Lusophone viewers receive a film that remains embedded in the American cultural context and demands that they bridge the gap

in cultural knowledge themselves. Such patterns speak to the hegemony of English, and particularly American cultural products in film and television. Where American viewers may expect “foreign” productions to be adapted for their cultural milieu, non-American viewers are assumed to have access to American culture and a willingness to make and derive meaning through it.

While ECRs cover a broad range of utterances (see Espinola and Vasconcellos, 2006 for examples), offensive language offers a uniquely challenging area for the management of cultural reference in AVT. Not only must the utterance be appropriately foreignized or domesticated to achieve equivalent meaning, but the current consensus seems to be that it should also retain a roughly equivalent offensive load to the source text in order to achieve the same emotional and characterological effects (Ávila-Cabrera, 2023; Barrera-Rioja, 2023). Researchers have considered the use of racial slurs (e.g., Filmer, 2012; Mereau Keating, 2014; Sierra, 2017), religious profanity/blasphemy (e.g., Ávila-Cabrera, 2020), and sexual language (e.g., Adamou & Knox, 2011; Díaz Cintas, 2001), finding that the cultural particularities of the source and target language often significantly impact the translator’s ability to effectively retain thematic meaning and offensive load. For example, studies exploring the translation of racial slurs used in American movies have typically found that Spanish lacks the lexical inventory required to render such terms. In some cases, the differences in each culture’s involvement in the history of the slave trade mean that older terms lack the appropriate offensive load, whereas newer terms come with inequivalent historical connotations and fail to evoke the relevant references to slavery and segregation (Sierra, 2017). In other cases, the target language simply lacks the proliferation of specifically racially charged slurs found in English, instead having a greater inventory of slurs based in regionalisms (Filmer, 2012).

A similar case, particularly visible across the English-Spanish AVT literature, is the management of offensive terms that draw on religious references, as linguo-cultural groups, and particularly English and Spanish, differ substantially in both the frequency and variety of religious profanity and the degree of offense that such language is likely to cause. Ávila-Cabrera (2020) finds that over half of all religious profanity in four English-language Tarantino films was not transferred faithfully into Spanish, instead being omitted, neutralized, or toned down in ways that reduced the likelihood of contravening the target culture's taboo against vilifying religious figures. Such translation choices evoke the ever-present spectre of self-censorship amongst audiovisual translators.

While self-censorship can be a direct response to moral or aesthetic qualms about taboo or offensive language (e.g. Sierra, 2017), there is also an often taken for granted principle in AVT that offensive language becomes more offensive when written versus when spoken. Díaz Cintas (2001) nuances this notion by pointing out that this effect seems to be limited to subtitles and may not extend to other forms of writing like novels, hence proposing that the issue is not entirely the medium of written text, but instead the combination of that medium with the shared/public context of watching television or movies, potentially in the company of friends, family, or even strangers. While streaming services have created greater opportunities for solo consumption of televisual media, video still remains easier to over-see/hear than books which tend to involve small typefaces and limited or no other visual elements. This means that it is generally less likely that another will accidentally read offensive language in a book one is reading privately. Furthermore, despite the potential for solo consumption of streamed media like *RPDR*, social norms around televisual media remain more open to co-watching, as exemplified by the release of new *RPDR* episodes in livestreams that allow physically distant fans to co-watch through the temporal boundedness of

the stream and the associated fan fora (including mainstream social media like *Reddit* and *X*) that facilitate synchronous discussion of the media during consumption. Thus, unlike a novel, which is typically read individually and privately, when reading subtitles, offensive language becomes public and “on-record” and hence more likely to be deemed problematic due to associated embarrassment in sharing the experience of reading the offensive language. While the notion that offense is greater in written versus spoken text has been contested by Bucaria (2018), who finds that subtitles are in fact more faithful than dubbing for a series of American TV shows translated into Italian, other research (e.g. Mereau-Keating, 2014) seems to substantiate this claim, finding that subtitles neutralize taboo language to a greater degree than dubbing. Thus, we can expect that audiovisual translators may be inclined to self-censor not only due to distaste for offensive language itself, but also due to the commonly held belief that transcribing such offensive language into subtitles may make it even more offensive to viewers.

Interestingly, despite these broad tendencies towards self-censorship and the challenges of mediating across cultural differences in taboo and offensive language inventories, Valdeón (2020) has proposed a Spanish Vulgarization Hypothesis whereby they argue that translations from English into Spanish tend to increase the number and intensity of potentially offensive terms due to an overall greater acceptability of vulgar (albeit perhaps not religiously profane or blasphemous) language in Spanish-speaking cultures. This hypothesis is not necessarily borne out by other studies of AVT translation from English into Spanish which find either reduced or roughly equivalent levels of offensive load (Ávila-Cabrera, 2015, 2020; Fernández Dobao, 2006; Sierra, 2017). Nonetheless it speaks to a potential difference in the broader acceptability of the use of offensive/taboo language amongst Spanish TV audiences.

Despite the fairly rich literature on AVT approaches to translating English taboo words into Spanish (e.g. Ávila-Cabrera, 2015, 2020, 2023; Fernández Dobao, 2006; Sierra, 2017; Valdeón, 2010, 2020) there are substantially fewer studies of AVT from Spanish to English (cf. Barrera-Rioja, 2023; Díaz Cintas, 2001), and in both directions there remains a deficit in the consideration of words that, while arguably still taboo in the source language, have nonetheless been reclaimed in the source text, and lack a clear (equally reclaimed) parallel in the target language. Ranzanto (2013) begins to address this in English-Italian translations where some instances of *dyke* are rendered not as the arguably more semantically equivalent, but less reclaimed, *frocia*, but instead as the relatively neutral *lesbica*. Ranzanto argues that the “colour”, or particularized affective connotation, is lost in this translation, but, as there are relatively few tokens, not much more can be said about how this loss of colour affects the depiction of queer individuals or their political potency through reclamation of former slurs. It is important to note, however, that Ranzanto is working with scripted television and films and hence, while the depiction of characters is still important, these characters are ultimately fictional. Thus, the onus for the choice of language falls on the writers and is less likely to be seen as representative of real life actors speaking those words. In *Drag Race*, however, utterances are framed as unscripted “reality tv” under which the speaker is seen to originate their own word choices. Hence the stakes are much higher as the words are not literary and designed to construct a particular (perhaps reprehensible character) but are instead seen as representing the sort of person that each contestant may be. With this in mind, we now turn to an exploration of the reclamation of offensive terms, such as *dyke* or more precisely for our concerns, *maricón*.

3. Offensive language and reclamation

While all language is subject to on-going flux and change, terms referring to minoritized groups are particularly susceptible to processes of pejoration (e.g. *hussy* McConnell-Ginet, 1998/1989) and reclamation (e.g. *bitch* McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Such terms are often focal in political efforts to improve the social and legal treatment of such minority groups, whether by attempting to purge slurs from official sources such as dictionaries (e.g., Henderson, 2003), by advocating for new terms to replace those that have lost their political potency or undergone pejoration (e.g., *Black* replacing *colored* or *negro* as the latter two underwent pejoration (Henderson, 2003)), or by attempting to reclaim those very terms that have come to be used as slurs (e.g., *bitch* McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Such reclamations do not result in universal outcomes—not every reclaimed slur will be usable by the same people, in the same ways, or with the same balance of pejoration and amelioration—and this does not simply come down to the degree of success or phase of the reclamation process. While the accounts differ in the details, a common distinction is drawn between those terms which are reclaimed in ways that defang their pejorative power versus those that leverage the pejorative power to achieve some political or social goal for the group targeted by the slur.

For Coles (2016), this distinction pivots on whether the slur is made available for out-group use (i.e. is neutralized, e.g. *queer*) or may only be used by in-group members (i.e. is used for solidarity or political goals, e.g. *nigga*). By contrast, Brontsema (2004) focuses less on who can use a given slur and more on the way that reclamation efforts seek to make use of the slur. Paralleling Coles' (2016) out-group use, slurs can be neutralized or reversed to give them either positive or neutral valuation (e.g. *queer* in contemporary use as in *queer studies*) which do then allow them to potentially be used by outsiders, but which also often conditions their use within the in-group. Brontsema's (2004) second category is defined not so much in terms of in-group use but

rather as use which retains the negative connotations of the slur and deploys those forceful connotations to achieve political goals (e.g. *queer* in its use by Queer Nation, i.e. “We’re here. We’re queer. Get used to it.”). These approaches are also echoed in Jeshion’s (2020) distinction between pride and insular reclamation. The former seeks to flip the valence of the term across the broader language community such that a term previously used as a slur, comes to be used neutrally or even positively by both in-group and out-group members, e.g., *gay* coming to be a primary neutral term used to refer to members of the LGBTQ community. Such reclamation is understood to result from in-group members using the term self-referentially as a term of respect and pride, which then becomes available to members of the out-group to use as a respectful way to refer to the group. In contrast, the latter type, insular reclamation, deploys the reclaimed term, not as a respectable label for the group, but instead uses it ironically or transgressively to mock its use as an insult and, through that shared mocking, creates camaraderie within the in-group, e.g., Fierstien’s “Everyone loves to hate a homo” (as cited in Jeshion, 2020). Crucially, Jeshion also argues that pride reclaimed terms are not generally used as vocatives, or if they are, those vocatives become the unreclaimed slur (cf. *queer studies* vs. a stranger shouting “hey queer!” out of a car window), whereas insular reclaimed slurs are frequently used as vocatives as an inherent part of their reclamation through transgression and mockery. This transgressive mockery is elaborated in Jacobs’ (2002) account of the chiastic slaying present in the reclamation of *nigga/nigger*[sic]. By repeating the slur within the in-group, the object (*nigger*), becomes subject (*nigga*) who can speak back to power by refusing to be objectified by the slur.

Thus, while some argue that pejoration is inextricably bound to slurs and thus, they cannot be reclaimed (see Brontsema’s (2004) discussion of resistance to the reclamation of *queer*), the accounts discussed above provide ways to understand how reclamation can nonetheless take place,

even if/when pejoration is indelibly tied to the term. What these accounts also point to are the limitations for outsiders to use these terms in reclaimed ways. In the papers cited above this outsider status is understood as referring to those within the same broad society who do not share the same identity as those victimized by the slur. In the context of AVT of reclaimed slurs, however, the question must be asked as to the extent to which belonging to a roughly equivalent category (i.e. a potential in-group) in a linguistically and culturally disjunct societal group (i.e. an out-group) does or does not give one license to use and access to understanding insularly/insider/politically reclaimed terms. In short, in today's highly globalized world, does reclamation travel across linguo-cultural groups? And where terms must be translated, how can an equivalently reclaimed term be found both within a different linguo-cultural context and within the constraints of in-group reclamation by groups of which the translator (and viewer) may not be a part?

3.1 The reclamation of *maricón* and *fag*

Within Spanish-speaking contexts, the words *marica*, *maricón*, *mariquita* and various other variations (henceforth referred to as *maric**), are commonly used as insulting terms by non-queer individuals (i.e. out-group members). While they are denotationally slurs against gay men, Cashman (2012) finds that they are used broadly to denigrate a target's masculinity or strength regardless of sexuality, similar to the way that *gay* was used in the 1990s and early 2000s. In such cases, users often deny the homophobia inherent in the use of the slur, with some even going so far as to suggest that it just means "gay, not positive or negative" (Bill Richardson, as quoted in Cashman, 2012: 71) or suggesting that its use is just part of Spanish-speaking cultures and, while used as an insult, should not be seen as communicating homophobia on the part of the user

(Cashman, 2012). At the same time, however, this suite of terms is being reclaimed within queer in-groups (Hernandez, 2014; Valdeón, 2010). Hernandez (2014), for example, describes the queer artistic potential of reclaiming the term through their consideration of Terrill and Sandoval's visual art, arguing that "As a self-naming visual statement, the Mexican hostility and stigma of the "faggot" [maricón] could be reinvested with empowering possibilities and resistant rereadings" (134). Thus, there is evidence of reclamation of *maric**, but what exactly its English equivalents are remains troubled.

In their consideration of the use of *maric** by public figures in the US, Cashman (2012) draws attention to the difficulties in translating *maric**. It clearly does not correspond to a neutral reading of *gay*, but there is also debate as to what extent it corresponds to *fag(got)*. For some speakers, the generic use of the term as an insult means that it only means *sissy*, *wimp*, or *jerk*, and does not evoke a connection to gayness at all. For others, however, the homophobic weight of the slur remains salient and it cannot help but be heard as equivalent (and equivalently offensive) to *fag(got)*. However, Cashman considered only those cases in which *maric** was used by straight men as an insult against other (presumably straight) men. Valdeón (2010), by contrast, investigated the interpretation of *maric** as a term used by and toward gay people in the translation of *Will & Grace* into Spanish. *Maric** was commonly used as an equivalent to *fag* both in in-group reclaimed uses, and out-group slur uses, suggesting that it, like *fag*, remains clearly tied to sexuality and is multivalent in accordance with the contexts of use. Interestingly, however, in the same work, Valdeón compares the reclamation of *maric** not to *fag* but to *queer*, suggesting that there is a disjunct in the degree of reclamation between *maric** and *fag*. Nonetheless, they ultimately argue that *queer* is still more reclaimed than *maric**, as evidenced by its borrowed use in Spanish for terms like *téoria queer* (for queer theory, as an academic discipline, as opposed to *teoría maricona*,

a term which has been used but has seen significantly less uptake), and fret about the use of *maric** even by queer characters as mainstream audiences may fail to understand it as a reclaimed term. Thus, as with any ECR, there is no perfect translation for *maric** into English, but the consensus seems to be that it is most closely represented by *fag(got)* (Ávila Cabrera, 2023; Cashman, 2012; Keenaghan, 1998; Valdeón, 2020).

Like Cashman's (2012) arguments about *maric**, Pascoe (2005) contends that *fag(got)*, as a slur, is primarily an attack against a target's masculinity.² Because *fag* is understood to evoke a penetrated or penetrable body, in a patriarchal social order wherein penetration is associated with power, a *fag* is readable as a disempowered masculinity reduced to the feminized position of being penetrated. Hence, Pascoe claims, when adolescent boys use the term as an insult, they are not necessarily targeting an individual's sexuality so much as his failure to live up to a powerful, patriarchal masculinity. In short, it is a mechanism to police appropriate expressions of masculinity. Like *maric**, however, there are nonetheless spaces where the term has been reclaimed (Cepollare & Lopez de Sa, 2022; McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Valdeón, 2010), but these spaces do seem to be limited to spaces that are either queer, leftist political, or both. This means that when *fag* is uttered by out-group members it retains a powerfully pejorative reading, i.e. it remains a potent slur.

Considering the contested meanings of these terms, this study questions what happens when an apparently reclaimed slur is recontextualized across linguistic and cultural boundaries through the medium of broadcast television. Outside of both the narrow community of practice in which the slur was initially reclaimed (i.e. Spanish drag performers) and the broader linguistic community of practice (i.e. speakers of Spanish), the use of *maric** becomes subject to a politics

² *Maricón*, similarly, references femininity as a play on the common name *María*, in reference to the Virgin Mary, where the term *María* could be a substitute for any woman due to its frequent use. *María* → *marión* → *maricón*

of respectability, which responds not to *maric** itself, but to its casting as a similar but perhaps less reclaimed English slur: “*f*g*”.³

4. Queering translation

While AVT research and queer studies (including queer linguistics) do not yet appear to have found much overlap, with queer translation studies tending to focus on literary translation (e.g. Baer & Kindle, 2017), this burgeoning area of scholarship nonetheless provides useful tools for considering the translation of LGBTQ+ experience, which often includes both being the target of and sometimes reclaiming slurs like *maric**. Notably, Démont (2017) provides a tripartite model for assessing translations of works dealing with queer subjects. Démont argues that translations can be categorized as misrecognizing, in which the queer content of the work fails to be transmitted in the translation; minoritizing, in which the queer content of the work is reduced to domesticated terminology that places denotational accuracy above the queer potential of the text; or queering, in which the queer content is retained and the plural possibilities and layers of meaning that Démont argues are inherent to queer texts are preserved.

This framework has been deployed to consider AVT in Jin and Ye’s (2023) analysis of the Chinese theatrical version of *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Addressing both the subtitles as well as the censorship at the level of recutting the film, Jin and Ye argue that a single work may not fit exclusively within one of Démont’s categories, instead arguing that the film is represented through both minoritizing and misrecognizing translations which obscure the queer content of the film, and where it is unavoidable domesticate it in ways that reduce the political potential of the film. While

³ With the exception of only one scene in Season 2, *fag* is never presented without asterisk censoring. In this paper we present the censored token as it is presented in the subtitles: *f*g*. However, the term in general is rendered in full as *fag*, so as to allow us to draw distinctions between the term itself and its censored use in both the subtitles and surrounding discourse.

not considered in light of Démont's framework, the queer potential of reclaimed slurs is touched upon by Ranzanto's (2013) work on the translation of queer topics from English to Italian television. The loss of 'colour' in rendering *dyke* as *lesbica* (rather than *frocia*), under Démont's model, could be understood as the result of a minoritizing translation, wherein the political potential of the term is sacrificed in favour of a domesticated and politically correct contemporary term for the referent. By contrast, Valdeón (2010) finds that Spanish dubbings of *Will & Grace* use the potentially offensive *maric** not only when translating *fag*, but also in some cases the original English version used more neutral forms such as *gay* or *homosexual*. Could this be argued to be a queering translation (leaning on more frequent use of *maric** as a reclaimed slur in Spanish) or perhaps just evidence of the Spanish vulgarization hypothesis discussed above (Valdeón, 2020)? The author's concern about viewers failing to understand the term as reclaimed suggests that they read this as a case of vulgarization, but it presents a particularly interesting question for this study: if *maric** is the source, in the supposedly more tolerant of vulgarity Spanish, how will the more conservative English translation manage it?

With the backdrop of these intersecting considerations of translation and reclamation, we ask:

RQ1: How do the subtitlers manage the contentious term, *maric** in Spanish and English subtitles across the first two seasons of *Drag Race España*?

RQ2: How does this management change over time?

RQ3: How do these management strategies interface with queer meaning making practices and what impact might they have on the political potential and risk of using "reclaimed" slurs in discourse made available for broad public consumption?

5. Data and Methodology

The data for this study were drawn from Seasons 1 (9 episodes) and 2 (11 episodes) of *Drag Race España* as broadcast online on WowPresentsPlus.⁴ Using these two seasons allows us to consider the baseline trans(crip/la)tion established in Season 1 as well as the trans(crip/la)tion of Season 2 which appears to respond to online comments and critiques that identified the English rendering of the censored slur (*f*g*) as shocking or even offensive. For each season, all but the final coronation episode (a shorter episode after the contest has ended and the winner has been chosen in the previous episode) were analysed. In addition to this primary dataset, discussions of the show's use of *maricón* in fan fora were extracted to provide further contextualization.

After initial review of the data, a collection of words were identified as being (1) morphologically and semantically related to *maricón* and (2) treated in similar ways to *maricón* in the Spanish and English subtitles. We then extracted all instances where these variants (*maricón*, *marica*, *mariquita*) as well as their plural forms (*maricones*, *maricas*, *mariquitas*) were uttered in the Spanish audio. For each instance, the corresponding English and Spanish subtitles were extracted and the audio was transcribed.⁵ This resulted in 37 utterances extracted from Season 1 (avg. 4.1 per episode) and 64 utterances extracted from Season 2 (avg. 5.8 per episode).⁶ These totals excluded a number of *maric** related words which were either proper names punning on the word (e.g. *Mary Corn*, *Mary Conan*) or rhyming word play which suggested *maric** (translated to rhyme with *fag*) but never actually uttered *maric**. We also excluded the host's, Supreme Deluxe's, catch phrase used to introduce most mini-challenges: “¡agárrate las bragas marichocho!” as this

⁴ <https://www.wowpresentsplus.com/drag-race-espana/>

⁵ All Spanish transcription by the second author.

⁶ The increase in the total number of utterances is partly accounted for by an increase in the number of episodes from nine to eleven, however this increase persists when considered on a per-episode basis. We discuss possible accounts for this increase further in section 6.1 below.

was the only time when *marichocho* was uttered and its translation was always *pussycats* rather than *fag*, *f*g*, or other associated terms.

Following extraction, the representations in the subtitles were coded by the first author using the emergent categories as outlined in Table 1. The second author reviewed the coding and any mismatches were brought forward for discussion until a common category was agreed upon. Gender determinations for words were made based on grammatical gender in Spanish, and on the basis of semantic or definitional gender in English. Thus, while *darlings* may have feminine connotations in English, it is not definitionally feminine and so was coded as masc/neuter. By contrast, *girls* definitionally refers to persons identified with the female sex or feminine gender and so was coded as feminine.

Representational style was quantitatively analysed on a by season, by episode, and by language basis, though due to the relatively small numbers of tokens per season, no statistical analyses were conducted. The data were also subject to qualitative analyses, considering the specific contexts where the various representations were used and to enable us to dig more deeply into critical instances where reclamation, respectability, and translation engage in complex interrelations in the trans(crip/la)tion of a scene.

Table 1. Codes used to categorize representational style in subtitles

Code	Spanish Example	English Example
Orthographic Sanitization (Roache, 2023)*	<i>m-----n</i>	<i>f*g</i>
Bare Slur	<i>maricón</i>	<i>fag</i>

Bare Slur in Other Language	-	<i>maricones</i>
Replaced		
Direct	<i>homosexuales</i>	<i>gay</i>
Indirect.Curse	-	<i>fucking</i>
Indirect.Sexuality	-	<i>fairies</i>
Indirect.Pronoun	-	<i>she</i>
Indirect.Masc/Neuter	<i>participantes</i>	<i>darlings</i>
Indirect.Fem.Positive/Neutral	<i>niña</i>	<i>girls</i>
Indirect.Fem.Pejorative	<i>bruja</i>	<i>hag</i>
Bitch	-	<i>bitches</i>
Omitted	Ø	Ø

^hyphens indicate codes which were not represented in a given language's data set

*notably no other terms are orthographically sanitized in the subtitles, only those within the *maric** complex.

6. Results and Discussion

Considering the distribution of renderings for *maricón* in English and Spanish subtitles, a clear distinction emerges between Season 1 and Season 2 with the former relying almost exclusively on orthographic sanitization (i.e. replacing portions of the potential offensive word with asterisks or dashes, (Roache, 2023)) in both languages while the latter deploys a wider range of strategies in both languages before eventually coalescing around orthographic sanitization in Spanish subtitles and replacing the term with *bitch* in English subtitles. We discuss this distribution in greater detail

below, followed by discussion of the specific implications of replacement choices and a more in-depth consideration of moments where the political potential of *maric** is highlighted in the in-show discourse; we also consider the implications of the English replacements chosen as translations of *maric** in Season 2.

6.1 Quantitative Findings

Throughout Season 1, both English and Spanish subtitles adopt an approach of orthographic sanitization, as illustrated in Example 1, in the great majority of cases.

(1) S1E1 - 53:32

Audio (Au): ¡este **maricón** no se va para su casa!

Spanish/Español (Es): ¡este **m*****n** no se va para su casa!

English (En): This **f*g** is not going home!

For Spanish this happens in 86.5% (n=32) of the instances with the remaining instances being unsanitized slurs (e.g., *mariquita*, an arguably softer term which can also mean ‘ladybug’ or ‘parakeet’, though it is censored elsewhere; n=2), replacement with a neutral term such as *homosexuales* (n=2) and omissions (n=1) (Figure 1). In the English subtitles, 75.7% (n=28) of the instances were sanitized, while the remainder were replaced with more neutral terms referring to homosexuality such as *queer* (n=4), replaced with an expletive such as *shit* (n=2), presented in Spanish (i.e. *maricones*; n=1), replaced with a feminine term (*girl*; n=1), or omitted (n=1) (Figure 1).

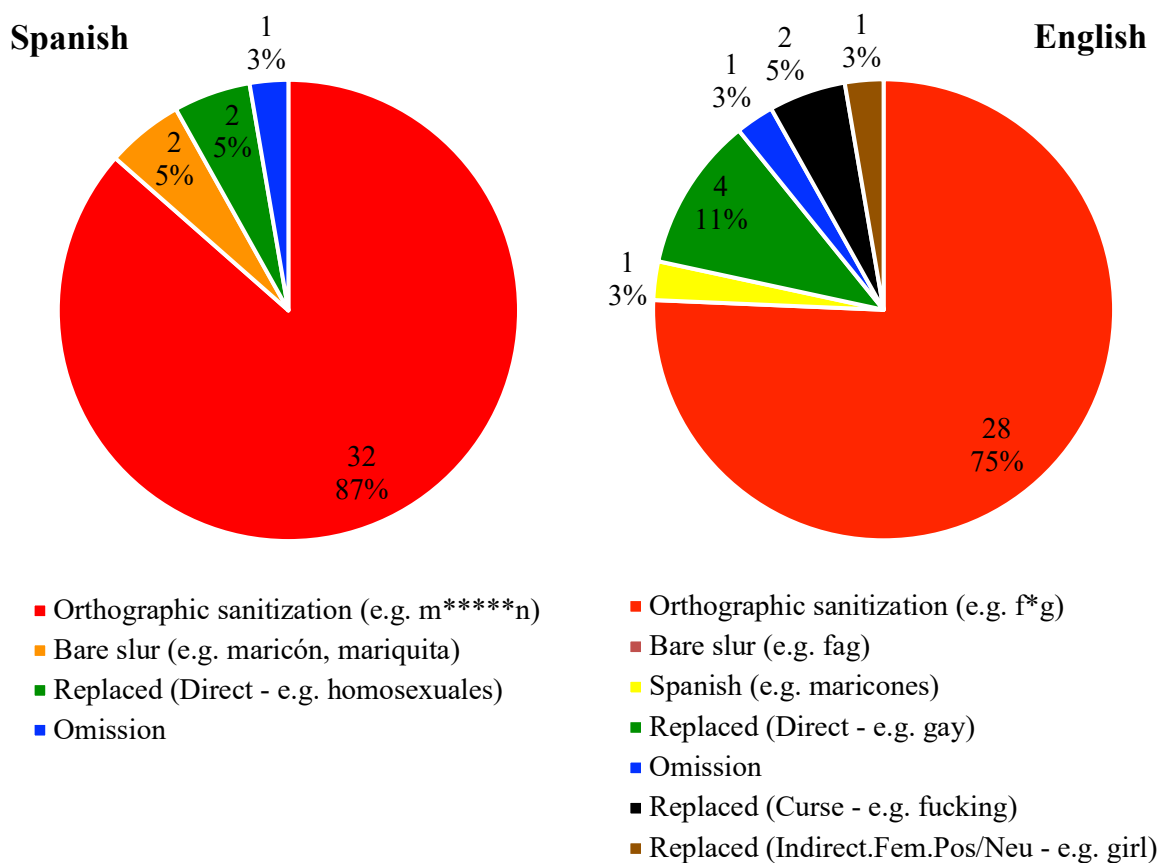


Figure 1. Pie charts depicting the ratio of strategies deployed in the representation of *maric** in the Spanish (left) and English (right) subtitles of Season 1.

While the presence of expletives as replacements for *maricón* may initially seem odd, this is in line with the use of the term as an expletive in the Spanish speech, for example as seen in (2) below.

(2) S1E1 - 16:52

Au: ¡ay, **maricón!**

Es: ¡Ay, **m*****n!**

En: **Shit!**

Thus, in the first season, the subtitlers seem very much in line with contemporary AVT guidance in the sense that they strive to render the terms as closely as possible across the source and target languages, largely retaining the offensive load of the slur (see below for thoughts on orthographic sanitization). While *maricón* has in some other sources been analogized with *queer* (e.g. Valdeón 2010), the majority use of *f*g* suggests that this is in fact seen as the nearest equivalent to *maricón* by these translators. Furthermore, the idea that taboo words are more offensive in subtitles than in speech (cf. Díaz Cintas, 2001) is substantiated here by the finding that, while *maricón* and its variants are freely uttered in speech, they are nearly always rendered with orthographic sanitization (e.g. m*****n) in both the Spanish and English subtitles.

Thus, though the reclaimed, in-group use of the word seems to be seen and understood by the production (it is not bleeped out in audio, as might be expected in correspondence with its sanitization in text), it remains too taboo a word to be presented in writing. This may be due to the link between written language and greater standardization/formality or perhaps due to the perceived (though not necessarily well substantiated) increased offensiveness of taboo words in subtitles (e.g. Díaz Cintas, 2001; cf. Bucaria, 2018), which we argue represents a form of putting them “on record” and therefore making them more noticeable and less ignorable than were they merely to pass quickly in speech. Particularly because of the “unscripted” nature of reality television shows like this one, speech can be understood as natural, off the cuff, and heavily emotion driven (as opposed to scripted television where the use of offensive language has likely been thoughtfully chosen to develop characters, themes, or emotional resonance). Hence, what can pass as thoughtless excitement in speech is understood as deliberately chosen when a subtitler

renders it in text and/or translates it. Thus, such potentially offensive words become less forgivable in written form and hence are obscured by asterisks as a gesture towards propriety and politeness (cf. Diaz-Cintas, 2001). Indeed, the use of the asterisks is a clear indication that the subtitler—who may not be a member of the in-group for which *maric** is reclaimed, or even if they are, may be aware that the audience cannot know that they have such in-group license to reproduce the words—sees these words as potentially offensive and therefore not fully reclaimed, even in Spanish.

This incomplete reclamation became particularly salient amongst Anglophone viewers who, while Season 1 was airing, took to online fora to express shock at the frequency of *f*g*'s appearance in the subtitles. As seen in Example (3) below, not all were necessarily offended or upset by the use of the term, but all marked it as exceptional and unexpected, and some deemed it unpleasant or deterring.

(3) Examples of online discourse on the use of *fag* in English subtitles

a. Fan fora

- i. Is anyone else bothered by how often *f@g* is used in Drag Race España?
(6/6/2021)
- ii. I love how they translate “maricón” to its faultiest, raunchiest meaning when in some cultures *marico*, *maricón*, *marica* (equivalents to the F) are thrown around so lightly. Imagine if we ever get a Drag Race LatAm, people would collapse at the amount of *maricón* used lmao.

And, whilst it seem like a lot, it is tend to be seen that if gay people use maricón is fine, but if a straggot uses maricón, oooooh it's on. (5/31/2021)

b. Twitter/X

User A (3/6/2021): US Drag Race queens: Hey queens, what's up girl?

Draga Race Espana queens: HEY FAG, are you have a fag-day you faggotty faggs?

User B (3/7/2021): We speak like that sorry not sorry

User A (3/7/2021): I love it, it caught me by surprise as I didn't know the extent of the use of the word 😊

c. Reddit

i. *What's up with Drag Race Spain subtitles using the word f**?*

...I'm not offended or anything. I'm really just asking out of curiosity coz it's kinda jarring....are the queens really using a Spanish word that translates to 'fag' and does it have the same stigma/censorship in Spain that it would in an English language season?...

ii. *Question about slur in the subtitles*

...[I] was quite shocked that a lot of the times the queens were calling themselves or each other using a word that was subtitled as "f*g"...Does the word have different, non-offensive connotations in Spanish? Or is this more of a situation where they reclaim the word within the community (such as with "queer")?...

The contestants, on the other hand, seemed unmoved by the online drama caused by their language use, as where Season 1 averaged 4.1 utterances per episode, Season 2 averaged 5.8 utterances per episode.⁷ It is possible that the increase in contestants from ten in Season 1 to twelve in Season 2 may have played some role. However, whereas, in Season 1, there were seven contestants using *maric**, alongside one judge and the host, in Season 2, only eight contestants, one guest, and the host used the term, meaning that there was only one additional user in the second season. Of these users, each season had one contestant that used *maric** more frequently than any other (S1: The Macarena with 10 tokens; S2: Estrella Extravaganza with 20 tokens); however, the difference between these two contestants is best understood through their different durations on the show (2 episodes vs. 11 episodes). In fact, The Macarena has a much higher per episode rate of use than Estrella Extravaganza (5 vs. 1.8). Ultimately then, the increase in Season 2 can be understood as systemic. No one factor nor participant can account for the increase; instead, there are two additional episodes in which to utter the word, one more contestant utters the term, and utterers tend to produce more overall than their Season 1 counterparts. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, after the online discourse in response to Season 1 and the contestants' increased use of this contentious term in Season 2, Season 2's subtitles look quite different, especially in English. As shown in Figure 2 below, *f*g* is now completely absent from the subtitles.

⁷ Cf. "Spanish speakers seem highly tolerant of strong language on screen (Pavesi & Zamora, 2021), more so than English speakers; according to Valdeón (2015, 2020)" (Barrera-Rioja, 2023: 8)

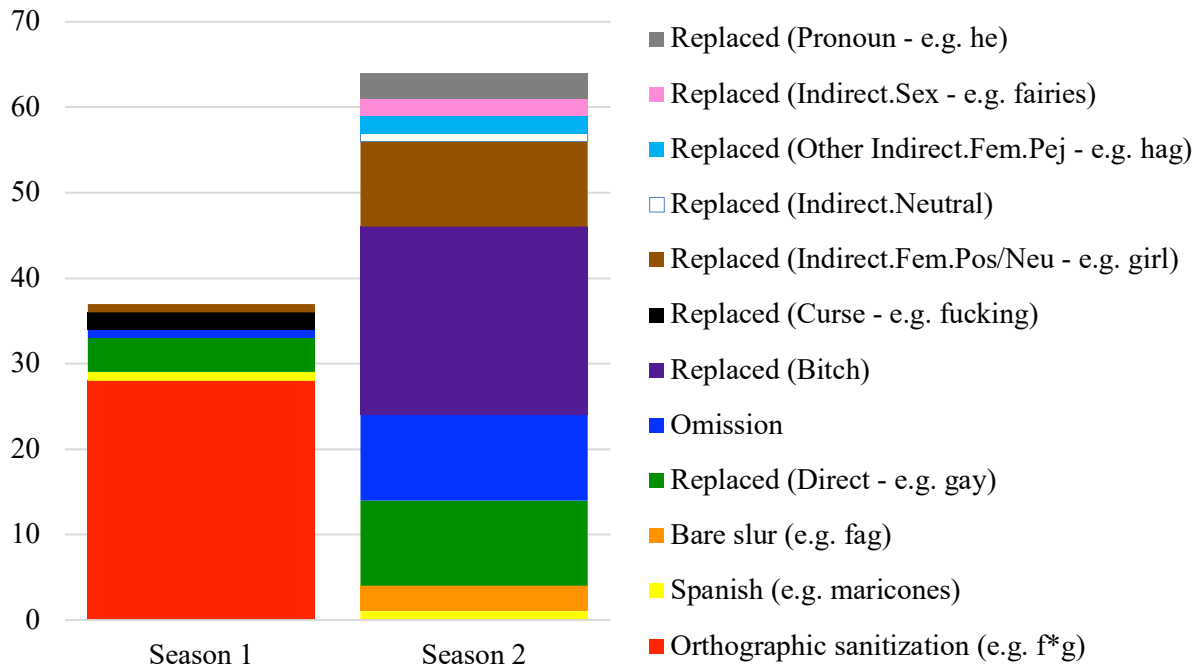


Figure 2. Comparison of strategies for rendering *maric** in English subtitles for Season 1 vs. 2

While the un-sanitized version (*fag*) does appear thrice, it is only in an explicit discussion of the reclamation of the term after experiencing it as abuse from others. Instead, the subtitlers now deploy far greater omission (15.9%, n=10), a single use of the Spanish term (1.16%, n=1) and a strong preference for replacement (78.1%, n=50). Of these replacements, less than a quarter index sexuality (directly, e.g., *gay* n=10; indirectly, e.g. *fairies* n=2), one is a gender neutral term that could arguably index gayness or camp, *darlings*, three are pronouns (1 masculine, 1 feminine, 1 neutral), and the remaining 34 tokens (68% of replacements; 53% of all tokens) are semantically feminine nouns (e.g. *girl*, *hag*, *bitch*). Of these feminine nouns, 10 are positive or neutral in valence, 2 are pejorative, and the remaining 22 are the arguably reclaimed (and therefore multivalent) slur *bitch(es)* (see Example 4).

(4) S2E10 - 18:25

Au: y ser tú **maricón** sé tú!

Es: y ser tú **m-----n**, ¡sé tú!

En: and be yourself, **bitch**. Be you!

While the English subtitles move towards replacement in Season 2, the Spanish subtitles, also undergo a change from Season 1 with substantially more omissions (23.4%, n=15; cf. S1 2.7%, n=1) and greater replacement (15.6%, n=10). Nonetheless, the primary strategy remains orthographic sanitization⁸ appearing in 60.9% (n=39) of cases. In both languages there seems to be an awareness of the viewers' responses to the S1 subtitles and an attempt to almost entirely remove (in English) or at least somewhat reduce the visual presence of *maricón/fag* in the production.

⁸ In S2, orthographic sanitization is carried out with hyphens (e.g. m-----n) rather than the asterisks used in S1. It is also worth noting that in both seasons, the numbers of asterisks or hyphens is not always equivalent to the number of graphemes they are replacing.

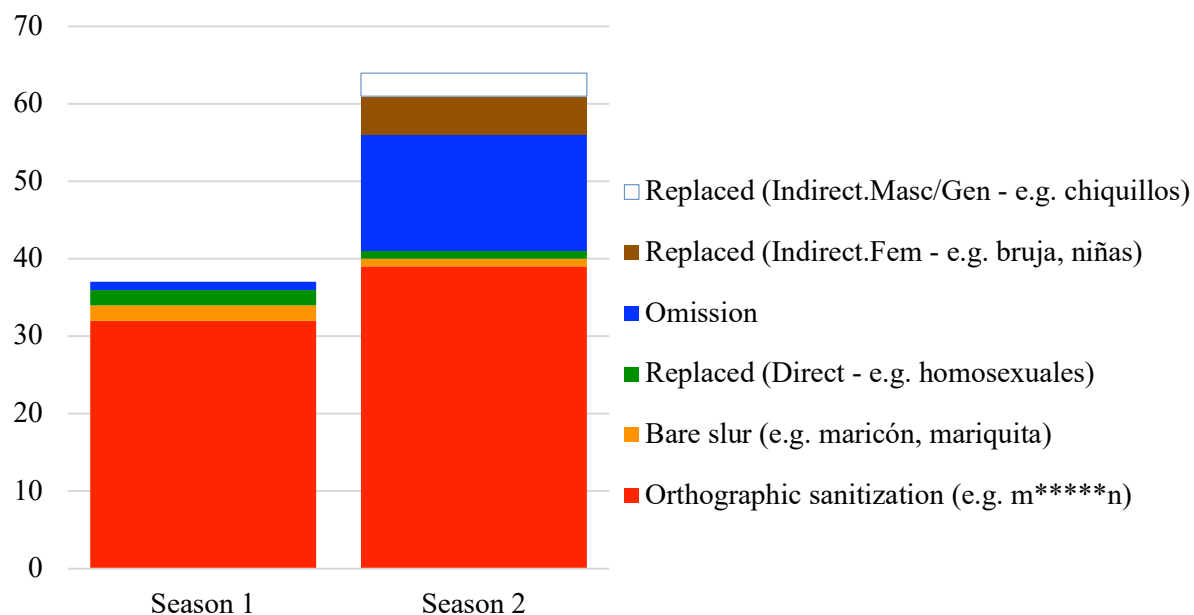


Figure 3. Comparison of strategies for rendering *maric** in Spanish subtitles for Season 1 vs. 2

These new strategies, however, are not evenly distributed across the episodes of S2. Figure 4 shows an episode by episode distribution of approaches.

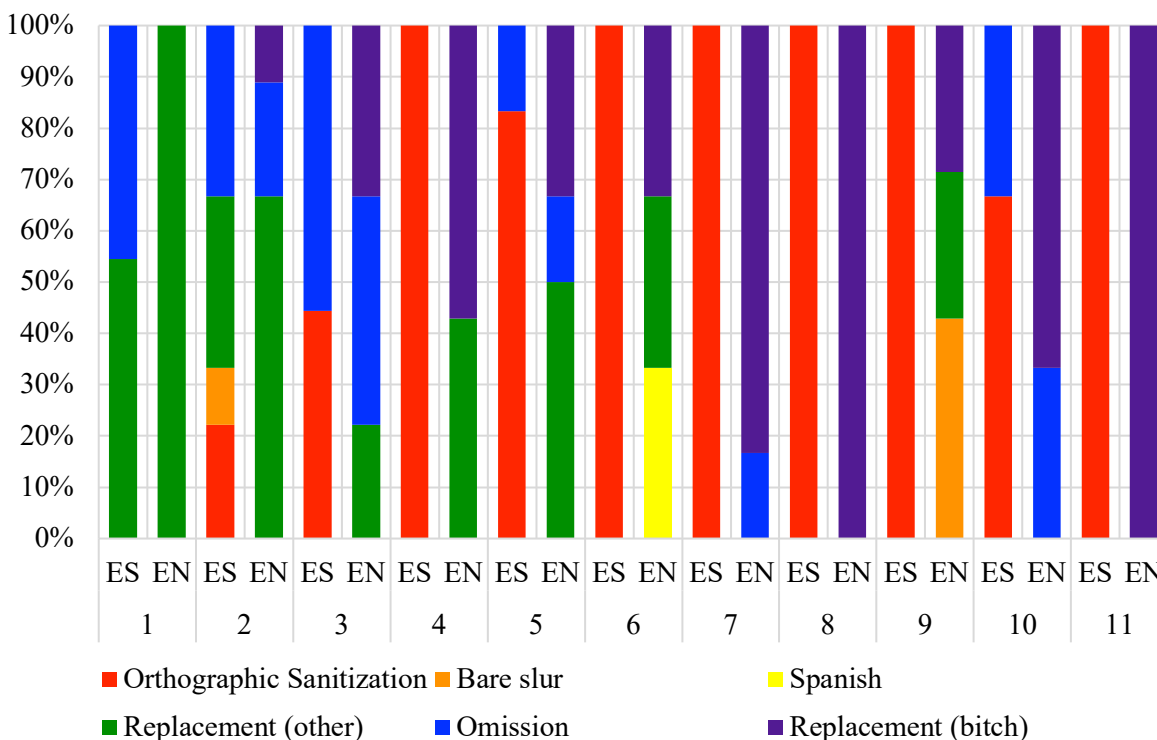


Figure 4. Comparison on strategies for rendering *maric** in English and Spanish subtitles by episode in Season 2

Here it becomes clear that in the first few episodes there was a strong preference for omission and for a range of possible replacements in both languages. As the season progressed, however, these varied replacements become less frequent in Spanish and are entirely overtaken by the single form *bitch(es)* in the English subtitles. By the end of the season, while there are still some omissions, the English subtitles are almost exclusively rendering *maricón* and its variants as *bitch*.⁹ At the same time, the Spanish subtitles have returned to their S1 pattern of nearly universal orthographic sanitization which corresponds to the purported self-censorship common to subtitling such that spoken terms are understood to be more offensive when written out and so are more

⁹ Interestingly, despite the fact that *bitch* is also a potentially offensive term with a history of being used as an insult/slur, it is not orthographically sanitized and is instead rendered in full in the English subtitles.

likely to be omitted or sanitized (Diaz-Cintas, 2001), as well as the complexity of a potential out-group member producing a term that has been reclaimed for in-group, solidarity affirming use, but which still retains its pejorative flavour (cf. Brontsema, 2004; Coles, 2016; Jeshion, 2020). Overall, this pattern matches Valdeón's (2020) findings, albeit in reverse, as the data from S2 seem to show a de-vulgarization of the Spanish text when translated into English subtitles (cf. the vulgarization of English text when translated for Spanish dubbing), reducing the force of the slur from the still contentious *fag* to the more semantically bleached *bitch* by the end of S2. This emergence of such a clear pattern of avoiding *fag* through replacement by *bitch* demands consideration: why *bitch*?

6.2 Why *bitch*?

While some authors (e.g. Valdeón, 2010) suggest that *maric** might be analogous to *queer*, a term more fully reclaimed in English, this translation is complicated by the nature of its reclamation. *Queer* in its adjectival form has been reclaimed and neutralized in such a way that it is “a neutral identity label, available for, though not embraced or used by all” (Jeshion, 2020, p. 115) and able to be spoken without offense even by those who would or could not self-describe as queer (e.g. *queer theory*, *Queer Eye*) (Coles, 2016). However, the noun form retains strong pejorative connotations which facilitate its use as a radical term of self-reference, but one which seems to lack the playfulness of *maric** (Brontsema, 2004). Further, the noun form summons the sorts of vicious out-group abuse that *fag* could similarly be understood as conveying (Valdeon, 2010) and which still often clings to the even more reclaimed *gay* when it is used as a noun (Coles, 2016; cf. Jeshion's (2020) discussion of pride vs insular reclamation). Hence, because *maric** is most commonly used as a noun, *queer* does not necessarily provide a more inoffensive option when

used as the same part of speech, and seems to lack some of the more playful connotations of *maric** regardless of which part of speech is used as.

Instead, *bitch* may provide an option more similar to *maric**; it is reclaimed amongst some women and gay men, including those who take part in the US version of *Drag Race* where the word is commonplace, but retains the edginess of a term that has not been neutralized for general use amongst the broader population (there is no *bitch studies*), despite being perhaps somewhat more reclaimed than *maric** as evidenced by its presentation without orthographic sanitization in the subtitles, unlike *maric** which remains sanitized in the Spanish subtitles. Thus, while a pragmatic solution for translators seeking to produce subtitles that will best facilitate wide reception and appreciation of the show across a viewing population that may be less accepting of vulgarity than Spanish speaking audiences (Valdeón, 2020), what *bitch* lacks is an explicit link to gay male sexuality and accompanying forms of camp femininity. Instead, it draws on a differently transgressive model of tough or aggressive femininity often associated with girl boss aesthetics. While the use of this term by an individual embodied as a man arguably renders it “gay” by virtue of the disjunction between a feminine coded term and a masculine coded body, this “gay” coding of the word is less effective when uttered amongst a cast entirely in (typically feminine) drag. Instead, in this context it contributes to the model of drag gender which we have previously discussed in the US version of *Drag Race* (O’Neill & Slep, 2022; Slep & O’Neill, 2022). This model of drag gender linguistically sublimates the male identity of contestants by identifying them almost exclusively using feminine (pro)nouns and drag names, while relying on visual disjunction through the frequent presentation of contestants out of drag, and in more stereotypically masculine visual presentations, to establish the neither/nor nature of drag gender. By calquing onto this existing “cultural” convention from the US show, the translators omit the uniquely sexuality-

inflected linguistic tenor of using a term that not only points to femininity, but specifically the camp femininity often associated with gay men's performances of drag and sometimes their day to day identities.

Whereas the Spanish queens reclaim a term that has been used to attack the very forms of drag femininity that many of them embody (see section 6.3 for explicit discussion of this reclamation), the US subtitles ultimately suggest that they are not in fact reclaiming a term, but instead borrowing a term reclaimed by women with pointers to an aggressive rather than necessarily camp femininity. Where Valdeón (2010) finds Spanish translations of *Will & Grace* using *maric** to convey both the term *fag* and the negative flavour of *queer* or *gay* used as a insulting slur, here, the translators seems to lack recourse to an English representation for the specifically positive in-group connotations of *maric** as used between the queens on the show and so instead choose a term which loses not only the political power of a reclaimed in-group slur, but also the particular shading of sexuality and gender that may be evoked by *maric**. Hence, we can argue that *bitch* is a misrecognizing translation (Démont, 2017) in the sense that it sublimates connotations of sexuality and queer gender under a broader evocation of aggressive femininity which can be read as cis and straight by mainstream audiences. Such moves are also echoed by Jin and Ye's (2023) finding that the Chinese version of *Bohemian Rhapsody* uses a translation of *fag* that is more literally read as *pussy* (referring to feminine genitalia). Here, once again, the specifics of a word that draws allusions to sexuality and queerness are reduced to one that draws on femininity which in this case can be read as being placed in simple opposition to masculinity and power.

Thus, the choice to translate *maricón* as *bitch* rather than *fag* not only skirts potential offense to viewers, but also performatively co-constructs the Spanish contestants' gender

expression and identity not as a transgressive, queer expression tied up in the reclamation of the complex gendered and sexuality inflected slur *fag*¹⁰ but instead as an expression which crosses from one binary gender (masculine) to the other (feminine) with no denotational reference to queerness or gender plurality. And so we are left with the question: what do the Spanish contestants do when they reclaim *maricón* and, therefore, what does the English audience lose when *maricón* is rendered not as a reclaimed slur targeting queer people but instead as a reclaimed slur targeting women and femmes?

6.3 Reclaiming *maricón*

Despite the consistent censoring of *maricón* through most of the show, in episode 9 of season 2, we see a gay elder, Consuelo, articulating his relationship to *maricón/fag* as one of reclamation. When he begins speaking, his utterance is glossed as *gay*, but when he moves into a sequence in which he makes what is clearly a political claim to the term, we see the only instances of *fag* in Season 2's subtitles (Excerpt 5) and, here, unlike in Season 1 (cf. Excerpt 6) it is not censored.

(5) S2E9 - 22:41

Au (Consuelo): Ningún tipo de bullying por ser ehhe **maricón**

Es: Ningún tipo de bullying por ser **m---n**,

En: or any kind of bullying because I was **gay**.

¹⁰ The first author has shared conversations with young queer folk who position themselves within the broader umbrella of nonbinary or genderqueer but then express an affiliation with the term *fag* not as a sexuality but as a gender identity/expression.

...22:50

Au (Consuelo): ¿Problemas en mi vida por ser **maricón**?

Es: ¿Problemas en mi vida por ser **m----n**?

En: Did I have problems because I was a **fag**?

Au (Consuelo): Porque yo soy **maricón**

Es: Porque yo soy **m----n**.

En: Because I am a **fag**.

Au (Consuelo): Soy de la época de que es **maricón**.

Es: Soy de la época de que es **m----n**.

En: I'm from the time of **fags**.

Au: (Venedita): Sí, yo también.

Es: Sí, yo también.

En: Me too.

Au (Consuelo): Además me- me define muchísimo más que **gay**

Es: Además me define muchísimo más que **gay**.

En: Plus, it fits me much better than **gay**.

While it is difficult to determine the exact nature of the reclamation in this excerpt (arguably, it could be leaning towards a pride or neutralizing reclamation), an earlier discussion of the term's

reclamation (Excerpt 6) strongly suggests that this is a reclamation which remains insular, limited to the in-group, and hinging on the very pejorative nature of the slur.

(6) S1E6 53:37

Au: Creo que por eso nos llamamos **maricones** entre nosotros

Es: Creo que por eso nos llamamos **m*****nes** entre nosotros

En: I think that's why we call each other **f*g**

After a discussion of the challenges of growing up gay, one of the judges (Javier Calvo), utters the above. He says, this struggle, this bullying we have faced as gay men, is the very reason that we use *maricón* amongst ourselves, i.e., as an in-group term. Quite clearly then, it is a case in which the reclamation echoes and “slays” the slur through ironic, mocking repetition of the insult within the in-group (cf. Jacobs, 2002). This reading is also supported by the frequent use of the term as a vocative in the show (e.g. *¡corre, maricón, corre!* S1E1-15:37; *es tu padre, marica hijo de puta* S1E8-10:37; *¡hola, maricones!* S2E1-6:32; *¡arriba, maricones!* S2E7-8:38) which suggests, as Jeshion (2020) claimed, that this is not a reclamation which neutralizes the term and renders it usable by all; instead, it is in fact a term that retains the hurtful connotations of the term and the experiences of being harmed by it as a way to build solidarity and claim political power. Thus, if *maric** retains its pejorative force even as it is used to serve in-group goals, the translation of the term as the out-group available *gay* or *queer* is inadequate to capture the sense and emotional impact of the term.

This inadequacy is identified by Consuelo as he unsettles the hegemony of Anglophone models of LGBTQ+ identities, specifically rejecting the term borrowed from English, *gay*, in preference for the locally salient and locally reclaimed term *maricón*. This moment of queering is captured and matched through the queering translation (Démont, 2017) of the subtitles which, for the first and only time in the first two seasons allow *fag* to stand unobscured in the text. It may be argued that this translation choice can be attributed to the metalinguistic nature of this instance wherein (1) *maricón* is “mentioned” as opposed to “used” and (2) the utterance would be nonsensical if *gay* (as was used at the start of the excerpt) were to be used for both *maricón* and *gay* as they appear in the Spanish text. However, regardless the motivation, this moment of queering throws the domesticated (Espindola & Vasconcellos, 2006) and misrecognizing (Démont, 2017) translation of the rest of the season into stark relief. Where only moments previously the subtitles glossed this elder’s preferred term as *gay* in the subtitles, the viewer now sees that this choice of translation is in fact out of alignment with the individual’s preference. He is not *gay*, he is a *fag*, but, unless the viewer is listening to the Spanish audio and is aware of the particular importance of the term *maricón*, the inconsistency appears to lie not with the translation but with Consuelo’s own words. Combined with the replacement of *maric** throughout the rest of the S2 subtitles, this results in this moment appearing to be a one-off, unsupported by the actual linguistic behaviour of the contestants, when, in fact, the transgressive reclamation of this locally relevant slur is frequently evidenced by its use amongst the contestants—the Anglophone viewer simply is not privy to this pattern.

Thus, while this one subject is given space for metadiscourse in which he reclaims the slur and proudly contests its disciplinary power by claiming it as his own term of self-reference, this agency and potency is denied to all those others who merely use the term, even as we see the

contestant, Venedita, affirming shared affiliation and solidarity with Consuelo's reclamation. Similarly, as seen in Excerpt (6), reclaiming the slur takes away its power to hurt and returns the potency of the word to those who have been harmed by it: you can't hurt me with a word I proudly claim as my own. And yet, in English, proud *maricones* are cast as *girls*, *bitches*, or the relatively neutral *gay*, and either elided or censored in the Spanish subtitles. To borrow Spivak's (1988) famous question: can the *maricón* speak? Perhaps, but we won't understand them, as we transcribe their reclamations into the unseeable or translate them into the relatively inoffensive and politically defanged *gay* or *bitch* in accordance with hegemonic American Drag Race norms.

7. Conclusion

In this study, we explored how *RPDR* subtitlers manage the contentious term, *maric** in Spanish and English across the first two seasons of *Drag Race España* (RQ1). We found that while the term was primarily presented as the orthographically sanitized *m****n*, in Spanish, and *f*g* in English in Season 1, in Season 2, a dramatic change of tactics took place (RQ2). In Season 2, *f*g* disappeared entirely and a variety of different strategies, including elision (in both languages) and, more notably, replacement with a range of alternative terms (e.g., *queers*, *fairies*, *girls*) in English, emerged. By mid-season however, these strategies had coalesced around a return to orthographic sanitization in Spanish and replacement with *bitch* in English. As Cashman (2012) points out, *fag/maricón* is often more about gender than sexuality; so, the shift to a reclaimed gender slur (*bitch*) is perhaps unsurprising, particularly as *fag* remains a potent slur in English (despite some hints of reclamation in gay spaces (Cepollare & Lopez De Sa, 2022; McConnell-Ginet, 2003)). However, this choice of misrecognizing translation has important implications with regard to RQ3, namely, how do these management strategies interface with queer meaning making practices and

what impact might they have on the political potential and risk of using “reclaimed” slurs in discourse made available for broad public consumption. We argue that this choice of translation silences the contestants’ voices of reclamation, as they reclaim not only the transgressive femininity of drag, but also the transgressive gayness that so many of them share. Even in Spanish, another voice (that of the transcriber/translator) intervenes to sanitize the dangerous word, to render it “inoffensive”, and thus take away its very power to, as Butler (1993) puts it, critically queer the space, challenging homophobia through proud reclamation of a pernicious slur.

While *RPDR* is “just” entertainment, the questions of how translation interacts with the specificities of local linguistic politics extend well beyond the walls of “The Werk Room”. How Anglophones come to understand the other linguistic and cultural spaces they enter is often filtered through translation, and so when language is used for political purposes, like the reclamation of slurs, how relevant media treat these reclaimed slurs, and the agency of their utterers, has important implications for enabling or hampering the political projects inherent in such language use. After the first season in which the Anglophone listening subject (to adapt a term from Inoue, 2003 via Rosa and Flores, 2015) “heard” the queens as uttering “shocking”, “bother”some slurs, *maric** was rendered legible for these audiences not in terms of transgressively ludic gay femininities, but in the terms of the US *RPDR*, using *bitch*, a feminine term accessible not only to gay men but also to women as a reclaimed slur. Words are placed in the mouths of the *España* queens, words which may convey roughly equivalent affect, but which are differently reclaimed and fail to pursue the same possible political goals. And hence, this cultural specificity as articulated in Hernandez’s (2014) mariconography is erased for the non-Spanish speaking viewer. To the audience watching in English, the queens are not pushing any new verbal boundaries, instead, like their US-based

peers, they are predominately using feminine and relatively inoffensive terms that draw only indirectly, if at all, on the notion of sexuality.

Considering the relative prominence and power of English (and particularly American English) in global media production, this loss of nuance is not just an aesthetic loss in the translation. In fact, the inadequacy of cross-linguistic equivalencies meant that even when the translation was theoretically closer to equivalence (*f*g*), it was not heard as the same sort of political entity; not as reclaimed, but rather as just a slur. Exacerbated by broader patterns of self-censorship and neutralization in AVT (and particularly subtitling), this resulted in a change in the pattern of translation which divorced the ludic, camp, powerfully playful (and infused with queer joy) uses of the word from its political uses by translating the two uses differently in the English: you can “reclaim” *fag* but you cannot say it. In the global lingua franca, English, *Drag Race España*, like the original US *RPDR* franchise, is populated by bitches, gay bitches, maybe even queer bitches, but not fags, not *maricones*.

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Brittney O'Neill

bkoneill@yorku.ca

York University Department of Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics, 4700 Keele St., North York, ON M3J1P3, Canada

Katie Slemp

kslemp@yorku.ca

York University Department of Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics, 4700 Keele St., North York, ON M3J1P3, Canada