

Audiovisual Translation: Conception, Types, Characters' Speech and Translation Strategies Applied

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Abstract. The article presents the conception of audiovisual translation and its main characteristics, describes its types and steps of performance, as well as translation strategies applied and constraints caused by technical and linguistic peculiarities of audiovisual products which translators face while translating. Films, animated films and series have become an integral part of an average person's life. All of them have different functions and are targeted at different groups of people but all of them are united by the type of translation performed. Audiovisual translation is one of the youngest fields of Translation theory and studies, the investigation of which is aimed at improving the results of translators' activity to meet the expectations of recipients. In contrast to other types of translations, it possesses specific characteristics which require special steps of its performance and translation strategies which can be used. Its main characteristic is synchronization of verbal and nonverbal components which make translators works not only with texts but other aspects of the media art. Translation strategies are viewed not in the situational context but in wider global meaning comprising an audiovisual product as a whole.

Key words: *audiovisual translation, dubbing, subtitling, translation strategy, standardization, adaptation.*

Introduction

We live in the society influenced greatly by the Media. With the appearance of new technologies there appeared also new forms of international and intercultural communication which led to new forms of translation. Cinematography, as a part of the Media, has become one of the most widely-spread and influential forms of art. The translation of cinematographical products is called audiovisual translation though one can find many synonymous names as film translation, TV translation, screen translation and many others.

With the social phenomenon of globalization translators face the urgent need to translate films in short periods of time but in a high-quality way. Translation Studies theorists take the challenge to develop the theoretical background and frameworks of performing audiovisual translation and managing possible constrains and challenges. The aim of the article is to give a theoretical overview of audiovisual translation which is defined as the transfer from one language into another of the verbal components contained in audiovisual works and products. Thus, the object of the article is audiovisual translation from Translation studies perspective.

The aim of the article is to analyze peculiarities of audiovisual translation which influence the way it is performed, its types as well as translation strategies applied. **The object of this paper** is an audiovisual translation in theory and practice of translation.

The Conception of Audiovisual Translation and Its Main Characteristics

As a cultural phenomenon cinematograph can be viewed from the semiotic point of view as a communicative process that can be confirmed only with code (Eco, 1988, p.31). Code is a system of knowledge or rules known to

recipients by the means with the help of which correspondence between what a single unit presents and what is presented in general is established. In cinematographic discourse communicative process is completed when film and audience meet due to existing codes and rules. Yuriy Lotman suggested that the power of cinematographic influence consists in variety of constructed, well-organized and maximally concentrated information. In this case information means all intellectual and other structures which are transmitted to the audience (Lotman, 1976).

Audiovisual translation is generally a translation of verbal component of the video. Its main specific feature is the synchronization of verbal and nonverbal components. While dealing with an audiovisual product translators do not work only with text but also with other aspects of media art which are of polyphonic nature. Thus, they work with dialogues/ comments, sound effects, image and atmosphere of the video. G. Gotlieb distinguishes four main channels of information which are taken into consideration while translating:

- 1) verbal audio channel: dialogues, off-screen voices, songs;
- 2) nonverbal audio channel: music, sound effects, off-screen sounds;
- 3) verbal and visual channel: subtitles, signs, notes, inscriptions that appear on the screen;
- 4) nonverbal visual channel: picture on the screen (Gotlieb, 1998).

Co-existence of many semantic signs, that make up a meaning, provides transfer from one semiologic complex into another in the audiovisual translation. In other words, two semiologic complexes are formed: the original and translation (Pisarska, Tomaszkiwicz, 1998, p.214). The concept of equivalence acquires new interpretation and is greatly extended in reference to the multimedia character

of translation. The equality of audiovisual translation is not only equivalence between the linguistic elements in two languages but also adequate link between verbal and non-verbal structures separately in the original work and its translation. German scientist Tomas Herbst suggested in Synchronization theory approach to distinguish three main levels of equivalence: level of text meaning, level of synchronicity and level of text function (Herbst, 1994, pp.227–237).

The level of the text meaning presents the content of the audiovisual product in general and each completed scene. It interprets text as one unity and it should be the orientation in terms of equivalence. This level also covers all meaningful elements as well as includes text in its meaning in one particular speech act which is transmitted in a particular situation. It also deals with grammatical, stylistic and pragmatic acceptance of the translation. At this level the text should be viewed from perspective of its specific cultural background especially if the cultural phenomena in the text are essential for understanding the text meaning.

The level of synchronicity comprises everything resulting from fixed situation and referential frameworks which means both the coincidence of image and sound as well as source and target text. The distinctions are made in qualitative and quantitative lip synchronicity; lip synchronization in respect to speaking tempo; lip synchronicity in respect to articulation clearness; nucleus synchronicity known as synchronicity of stressed syllables and gestures; referential synchronicity meaning direct text reference to the situational context. It is the lip synchronicity between speech itself and visual information which is one of the biggest difficulties of the audiovisual translation. The term “lip synchronicity” is rather understood as possibly exact imitation of the lip movements of the original actors in a way that audience does not notice eye-catching violations at all.

The last level of text function where the text of all synchronized film is considered comprises intended effect aims containing addressee-specific components. It is also not as a matter of principle possible that the target text has exactly the same functions as the original text in the original culture. This level also implies that the text is perceived as the original and thereby the dominating functions of the original texts will be shown.

Types of Audiovisual Translation

Scholars approximately distinguish ten kinds of audiovisual translation. However, they can be united into two larger subgroups: revoicing and subtitling. Revoicing is the term which is used to denote audiovisual methods of translation with the aim of complete or partial cover of the text of the original product by the new text of the target language. Thus, revoicing can be subdivided into the following types: voice-over or half-dubbing, narration, audio description, free commentary and dubbing (Савко, 2011).

Voice-over is a faithful translation of the source message performed approximately in a simultaneous mode that is mostly used in the context of monologue, for example answers to the question in the interview or several replicas

of one person. Voice-over presupposes putting a sound track of the target text over the muffled soundtrack of the original text. In this type of audiovisual translation regional dialects, accents or peculiarities of the speaker are not taken into consideration (Luyken, 1991).

The next type of revoicing is narration which is defined as a technique of audiovisual translation which does not concentrate on the lip movements of the original text and is not aimed at recovering the source text completely but strives for more faithful translation of the source text approximately in the simultaneous mode. Voice-over and narration are very similar but Luyken considers extension of the translation to be the distinguishing feature. Narration is an extended voice-over which is characterized by formal grammar structures or even use of several voices (Mack, 2001, p.156).

Free commentary is a kind of voice-over that focuses neither on the lip movements of the original text, nor on the faithfulness of the target text and also not on the simultaneous mode of the performance but it's a free and often performed in different modes of translation which is usually complemented by different journalistic elements and text is covered partially or completely (Karamitoglou, 2000).

Audio description transforms visual information into words, transfers visual image into spoken language complementing in this way sounds and dialogues from the film. Audio description performs two functions. On one hand it represents audiovisual sign of the film which the blind have no opportunity to comprehend. On the other hand it complements “the whole” with explanations of sounds which are understandable only through their connection with the images similarly to subtitles. Audio description includes intersemiotic processes of transfer which are beyond language or cultural definitions of traditional concepts of translation. Effectiveness of audio description depends on the way all those signs are connected with each other. Audio description is a descriptive method of inserting explanation and description of setting, characters and action that take place in different audio visual means when this information about these visual elements are not offered in the regular audio presentation (Vero, 2006).

The golden rule of audio description suggests “describe what you see”. Audio description visualizes people, objects, actions and, which is more important, reflects mood and emotional influence in the scene. Viewers should be able to have their own opinion and make own conclusions. Thus, it is very important not to change or interpret but always describe only the most significant features of the plot lines and actions. Audio description of high quality uses vocabulary and syntactical constructions which are oriented at the audience as well as at peculiarities of the described materials and searches to convey at least part if not all visual signs of the film or record. Language used in audio description should be exact, significant but not abstract (Vero, 2006).

Dubbing as the Most Used Type of Revoicing

Dubbing is a type of interlinguistic audiovisual translation which presupposes complete change of the sound track of

the source language into soundtrack of the target language with the aim of broadcasting in countries where the original language is not their mother tongue. Another important point of dubbing is equivalent influence on the target language audience as the original audiovisual product has on its recipient audience. Thus, dubbing is oriented at the target audience that makes the translator adapt the source text which in the end has to meet the standards existing in the target language or country (Diaz Cintaz, 2009).

The whole process of dubbing can last from several days to a month depending on the type of audiovisual production which is under consideration (a feature film, a television programme, a computer game and so on), difficulties of the original script, increased standards of quality, etc.

British scholar G. Luyken in his research work "Dubbing and subtitling for European audience" reveals main steps of the dubbing process (Luyken, 1991, p.78):

- Check and mapping the script and dialogue sheet, working out the temporary draft copy with the mapping and marking;
- First preliminary translation which serves the basis for further work;
- Selection of dubbing actors' voices;
- Special text layout and translation processing, synchronization with the actors' mimics;
- Process of recording;
- Editing and confirming a finished translation of an audiovisual product.

To understand the work of the translator better it is important to review all the stages in detail. After receiving the film copy and script the media company gives it to a translator. The translator works simultaneously with texts (script) and video. Scripts are composed according to certain rules and show indication on the part of text or video, text length (so-called time code), its intonation surrounding (exclamation, pauses and so on). The text of translation is worked out in analogical way. It is worth mentioning that sometimes text of the script does not correspond to the text of a film partially or completely. In this case, the translator works exclusively with the video.

The first stage of the translator's work is called detection or, in other words, finding out peculiarities of the sound track (language image, sound and noise effects) and video track which also includes decisions about grade of the necessity to transfer these or those elements of the linguistic system of the audiovisual text. Bearing in mind the three-component structure of a word the translator starts his work dealing with each of these components. On one hand, scripts help a lot as translators do not need to rely only on their ear. On the other hand, translators, in particular beginners, focus mostly on the written variant which serve as a basis for them neglecting at the same time audio and video context which is necessary not only at the stage of detecting but also during other stages of translation (Reich, 2006).

The final stage of translator's work with an audiovisual text is synchronization. Mostly the main problem for a translator consists in the way the target text should be

synchronized with the original one that syntactic constructions of the original texts are not preserved in the translation.

Robin Paquin, Canadian philologist and translator, summed up that his first translation was well-synchronized from phonetical point of view but it had a number of grammatical and lexical deviations meaning not formal mistakes but awkward foreign constructions (Paquin, 1998, p.11). Attempting to maximally synchronize text of the original and that of the translation translators often become hostages of the target language which leads to language interference. As a result, the original language interferes into the language system of the translation that is observed even when translating into the dominant native language and can infringe any language level.

Two kinds of dubbing are distinguished:

- Every character is dubbed by one dubbing actor (nevertheless, several characters can be dubbed by one and the same actor but only professionals in this field can see that fact);
- All male roles are dubbed by one and the same dubbing actor and all women parts are correspondingly dubbed by one and the same actress.

Labially synchronized dubbing which is also known as lipsync is the most widely-spread type of revoicing of feature films which are in mass distribution and mostly it is performed by professional actors. During selection of dubbing actors original voice, temperament of the character and voice age are taken into consideration.

Work of translators in dubbing can be limited to production of the dialogue lists in the target language when attention is paid to phonetic synchronization. They perform word by word translation with comments and variants of one and the same word or phrase. According to Czech scholar P. Reich the translation for dubbing is not the final product which will be offered to the audience, it is "a half-finished product" which requires further work (Reich, 2006). Dubbing author, who does need to know the original language, edits the text by identifying sounds which are pronounced in close-up shots and chooses from all offered translations one which fits the actors' articulation. Sometimes translators perform the function of dubbing author and adapt the text.

When the adaptation is ready, film dialogues are divided into episodes. These episodes serve as working material during recording the track with dialogues which are supervised by dubbing director and sound producer. Modern technologies allow to use method of digital lip movement change of the real actors that leads to complete synchronization of the translated dialogues so that audience does not have to distribute their attention among the spoken text of the original and dubbing.

Subtitling

Subtitling is defined as a presentation of dialogue translation in a film in the form of titles usually at the bottom of image or shot on the screen (Hurt, Widler, 1998). Subtitles usually appear and disappear in correspondence to original

dialogue part and almost always are added to the image on the screen later as a result of post-production part.

Gotlieb (Gotlieb, 1998) in his research work following R. Jakobson's classification of texts worked out his own classification of subtitles and divided them into the following groups:

- Intralingual that are also called vertical subtitles as they change perceptive modality (spoken text is converted into written without any change of change);
- Interlingual or so-called diagonal type of subtitles which change both perceptive modality and language;
- Open or non-optional represented which are integral physical part of a film or tele programme;
- Closed or optional which are represented in form of teletext which you can view using correspondent decoder.

Specific character of subtitles is caused by its three peculiarities, namely correspondence between image, sound and text (transmittance of the translated message should coincide with dialogue in the source text; subtitles should not contradict what characters do on the screen); change of spoken language into written one (this peculiarity often makes translator omit lexical units in translation); temporal and spatial restrictions specified by the usage sphere (size of a real screen is limited and subtitle text should be adapted to the width of the screen taking into account possibility to read subtitles).

In practice a line of subtitles should contain not more than thirty-five signs. As only the lowest part of the screen can be used only two-line titles are considered. Thus, the volume of the text per one replica is limited by seventy signs. Such a small number is caused by the fact that subtitles should cover visual information as little as possible and should comprise not more than 20 % of image on the screen (Reiss, 1971). From grammatical point of view, each line and every title should make up meaningful unit. While subtitling it is perfect that title appears at the beginning of the speech and disappears at its end. The maximum number of showing is six seconds. It is quite enough for an average person to read a two-line subtitle which consists of 60 or 70 signs.

In terms of technical peculiarities of performance, D. Sanchez distinguishes four methods of subtitling: preliminary translation – adaptation-spotting; preliminary translation – spotting-adaptation; adaptation – spotting-translation; translation\ adaptation- spotting (Sanchez, 2004).

Spotting or timing is time marking according to which film is divided into time parts and beginning and end of a phrase are marked. The time units used are hours, minutes, seconds, miliseconds and shots. Time marking except beginning and end of the characters' replica can include names of film heroes and phrase duration.

The first method presupposes at first procedure of translation performance and adaptation and only then spotting, mostly it is used when translators are limited by time and there is no video available. In this case it is possible to do preliminary translation. Then the other person, subtitler, or subtitle expert converts the text into subtitles working with

electronic system of processing or directly with the programme, then he performs so-called adaptation making sure that the meaning of the source replicas are conveyed adequately. Next he determines the time of appearance and disappearance for every subtitle.

While using the second method at first as in the previous method preliminary translation of film dialogue text is performed but later time marking for every subtitle is provided by subtitler and then the final step is adaptation.

The third method of subtitling is used to prepare subtitles in different languages. In this case the subtitles are created in the source language and are immediately divided into time periods and later are translated into different languages. Thus, translators can choose a ready shortened text in the source language or individually and independently perform translation and adaptation using sound and video track and making the text shorter.

The last of the above mentioned methods of creating subtitles requires translation with simultaneous adaptation and spotting at the final stage or vice versa. According to this method the work of translator and subtitler is united, in other words it is performed by one and the same person at all its stages.

To sum up, it can be said that such type of audiovisual translation as dubbing (if it is of high-quality) is more pleasant and easier for the audience to perceive because it does not distract attention from the video and is the most adapted to the culture of the target recipient culture. Among other advantages of dubbing the least grade of reduction of the original dialogue in comparison with subtitling and voice-over can be highlighted.

Constraints of Translating Characters' Speech Peculiarities

The target audience of the audiovisual products is heterogeneous by nature which means that the treatment of the language is also heterogeneous and should be appropriate for the age and status of the intended audience. The language means of the audiovisual products can vary according to the genre. The task of a translator is to determine the genre and its main features to be reproduced in the translation.

The distinguishing trait of most audiovisual products is the use of dialogues. Dialogues are characterized by lively, spontaneous language which can make the work of a translator much more complicated. Some dialogue features which can be challenges for translators are the following: the frequent use of exclamations and interjections, use of rhymed scenes and different jokes, elliptical sentences, grammar deviations. All of the above mentioned should be reproduced in the translation else the spontaneity of dialogues could be lost (Zubiria, 2013).

Moreover, characters represent the nucleus of the most genres of cinematographical products. The first constrain is names of the characters. In some cases, they have their meaning which comprises information about characters or their life. Translators need to find the way to convey that additional meaning into the target language or the pragmatic effect can be partially lost.

Another constraint is that very often creators of films, especially animated cartoons, “colour” the characters with different kinds of dialects, accents and slang to make them brighter, funnier and closer to ordinary people. They don’t represent perfect language standards but due to their language deviations grab attention of the target audience. It should be pointed out that even choice of dialects or accents is not random. They are based on social stereotypes which are deeply-rooted in people’s mind. Numerous researches show that the tradition can be tracked in speech peculiarities of Disney films (Sonnensyn, 2011). Thus, for example, characters who are not very intelligent get South American dialect and negative characters usually get foreign speech characteristics. Higher percentage of characters who have foreign accents have negative roles than those who speak Standard American or British English.

Now the translators face not only the challenge of representing the plot in a proper way but also reproducing the nuances of characters’ speech which contribute to the general atmosphere of an audiovisual product. Characters with their “unique languages” get in the forefront and mostly the pragmatic effect depends on the proper reproduction of those “unique languages”. Thus, the task which translators face is that of choosing the right translation strategy to fulfill their functions in the most successful and proper way.

Translation Strategies Applied

In Translation studies the term “strategy” has a narrow and broad interpretation. Some scholars correlate the concept of strategy with the corresponding concept of problem. Thus, translation strategy is viewed as a mechanism or method which is used to solve a particular problem in translating the original text (Krings, 1986). It is usually assimilated with translation technique or procedure. In this article we are going to consider translation strategy in the broader meaning as a set of rules and principles which a translator uses to reach the aim determined by the translation situation in the most effective way. The difference between translation strategy and technique is the level at which they are used. Translators can use all available techniques and procedures in particular situations to adapt the texts to the target language and culture but follow one global translation strategy.

Nowadays modern Audiovisual translation theory pushes forward the question of choosing global strategies which translator should follow regarding all the product. In other words, the focus is made not on a single situation but the audiovisual product as a whole. As it was mentioned before, characters’ speech peculiarities full of dialects, accents and slangs become real constraints for translators. They face the challenge to choose the way how to reproduce all cultural and language peculiarities in the translation or ask if to reproduce them at all. In this context F. Federici distinguishes two global or macro-strategies: standardization, reducing the relevance and significance of language features, and adaptation as a creative impetus to solve the impasse in entirely different way (Federici, 2011).

Standardization is one of the strategies or procedures of translation distinguished by G. Toury. Standardization is defined as a translation strategy when a translator uses the standard variant of the language not reproducing or conveying peculiarities of the original text (Brett, 2009).

When we talk about this translation strategy it is needed to define what standard or standard language is. Standard language means usage of the language that corresponds to general criteria of grammar, proper use of language means. Any standard language is a certain language variant that in the historical development due to some political or national context received a special advantage over other language variants (Bourdieu, 1991). Other languages are interpreted as marginal in respect to the standard one. (Erkazanci-Dumus, 2011). Thus, translators choose ideology that puts emphasis not on the idiosyncratic but even and smooth translation with elimination of bulky parts, following the strategy of language variants in the translation (Venuti, 1995).

Although, many scholars highlight negative effects of this translation strategy, Leppihalme underlines that not all effects are negative. He claims that all elements which were lowered or lost in the process of translation are not certain to fail when the recipient experience is satisfactory in this way. The translator compensates loss meeting the recipients’ expectations who can be less interested in the realizing such nuances as dialects than focusing on the film plot (Leppihalme, 2000).

Another translation strategy which is commonly used while translating is adaptation. It is defined as a set of certain translation procedures to convey the original text preserving the pragmatic effect of the original with linguistic, social and cultural peculiarities of the original text and target audience. Any translation presupposes adaptation but it can comprise all above mentioned aspects as well as one or some of them (Демецька, 2008).

Bassnet and Lafevre distinguish two micro strategies of adaptation: domestication and foreignization. Domestication is based on analogy as the simplest form of interaction between cultures (Bassnet and Lafevre, 1990). It is a translation strategy that consists in smooth, idiomatic and transparent conveying that eliminates all foreign characteristics of the original and adapts it to the needs and values of a target culture. As a result, all foreign elements are assimilated by the dominant target culture and in this way the emphasis is put on the target culture and makes text closer to the target audience.

The next microstrategy is foreignization. It is interpreted as a translation strategy which is characterized by underlining and highlighting foreign identity of the text which removes the target culture to the background (Venuti, 1995). It should be pointed out that in terms of translating dialogues in an audiovisual product foreignization also includes the use of cliché foreign phrases or language to reveal the national or regional origins of the characters. Such cliché phrases, language means or even language deviations usually may correspond to the stereotypes or expectations of the audience.

Conclusion

The work presented here is an attempt to summarize the results of investigations of audiovisual translation in the field of Translation theory and practical experiences. We have outlined the main particularities of this kind of translation which should be taken into consideration while translating an audiovisual product. It is the synchronization of verbal and non-verbal components which is the main characteristic of audiovisual product and translation that requires working not only with text but with image, sound and so on. Moreover, equivalence is distinguished not only in respect to meaning and function but also synchronicity of image and sound, lip movement and speaking tempo.

There are ten types of audiovisual translation which can be united into two larger groups: revoicing and subtitling. Dubbing which is the most widely-spread type of revoicing is defined as a complete change of the original soundtrack into the soundtrack in the target language. There are certain rules and steps of performing dubbing which should be followed to produce an audiovisual product of the high quality.

While translating a film translators face many constraints. One of them is the lively speech of the characters that mostly constitute the nucleus of the film. Characters' speech characteristics usually demonstrate frequent use of dialects, accents and other language varieties and registers. Thus, translators face the challenge of choosing the right strategy to reproduce or eliminate those peculiarities. In audiovisual translation we distinguish two possible strategies: standardization and adaptation. Standardization is aimed at replacing the dialect forms with forms which comply with norms and rules of a standard language. In contrast, adaptation presupposes finding the language forms and variants in the target language and culture which have equivalent function or effect as the original. Adaptation is divided into two micro strategies: domestication and foreignization. It is the task of translators to choose the strategy that will correspond to the expectations of the audience as well as the norms and traditions prevailing in their countries.

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Audiovizualusis vertimas: koncepcija, tipai, veikėjų kalba ir vertimo strategijos

Santrauka

Straipsnyje pateikiama audiovizualiojo vertimo koncepcija ir jos pagrindinės charakteristikos, aprašomi jo tipai ir etapai, taip pat vertimo strategijos ir techninių bei lingvistinių audiovizualiųjų produktų apribojimų, su kuriais susiduria vertėjai savo darbe, ypatumai. Meniniai ir animaciniai filmai bei

serialai jau tapo neatskiriama paprasto žmogaus gyvenimo dalimi. Visi jie atlieka skirtingas funkcijas ir yra nukreipti į skirtingas žmonių grupes, tačiau juos visus vienija atliekamo vertimo būdas. Audiovizualusis vertimas yra viena naujausių vertimo teorijos ir studijų sričių, kurio tyrimas turi tikslą gerinti vertėjo darbo kokybę ir tenkinti žiūrovų bei klausytojų lūkesčius. Priešingai negu kiti vertimo būdai, jis turi specifinių bruožų, reikalaujančių tam tikrų jo atlikimo žingsnių ir strategijų. Pagrindinės jo savybės yra verbalinių ir neverbalinių komponentų sinchronizacija, todėl vertėjas dirba ne tik su tekstais, bet ir su kitais medijų meno aspektais. Vertimo strategijos čia nagrinėjamos ne situacijų kontekste, bet platesne globaliaja prasme, žvelgiant į audiovizualųjį produktą kaip visumą.

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