

SUBTITLING PECULIARITIES IN THE LITHUANIAN TRANSLATION OF THE DOCUMENTARY FILM “SUPER SIZE ME” BY MORGAN SPURLOCK

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Introduction

Communication among different cultures has been always vital, therefore the need for intercultural communication has increased many times in the recent decades and technical achievements gave us a possibility to approach different cultures even more closely, herewith it required some new tools to transmit information. “The late twentieth-century transition from a paper-oriented to a media-oriented society has triggered the emergence of audiovisual translation as the most dynamic and fastest developing trend within translation studies” (Orero, 2003, 3). The increasing interest in this area was obvious evidence that this discipline is going to set the schedule for different theories, research and practices of translation. *Audiovisual translation* (AVT) is one of translation spheres, which sometimes makes it a real challenge to transmit the source content adequately because of various restraints and limitations within the audiovisual field. Translatability of television and films increased the demand for language transfer that initiated greater attention to the most popular AVT methods – subtitling, voice-over and dubbing.

Currently this field is not thoroughly researched, especially in Lithuania, and much needs to be done to materialize screen translation, multimedia translation or the wider implications of AVT. “But digital technology is modern friend which helps to expand human potentials” (Karamitroglou, 2003, 2). AVT as an area of interlingual and intercultural communication plays an essential role, as it eliminates the linguistic boundaries between different cultures and enables to cognize each other better. The translator is forced to employ various translation transformations in order to transmit the *source language* message into the *target language* or to render cultural realias revealed in films as clearly as possible. Thus, the intercourse between different cultures has triggered the occurrence of such terms as *cultural translation*, which might be described as transcultural communication. The above-mentioned issues are the subject of our further linguistic investigations.

The subject of the work is the audiovisual translation of the documentary film “Super Size Me” (2004) by Morgan Spurlock from English (SL) into Lithuanian (TL).

The aim of the article is to investigate the lan-

guage and material culture transfer of the film “Super Size Me” through the AVT method of subtitling.

In order to achieve this aim, the following *objectives* have been set:

1. To present a brief theoretical overview on the issues of the AVT methods, paying special attention to the subtitling method;
2. To introduce ideas and problems of the material culture in the aspect of translation;
3. To investigate translation transformations and their occurrence in the target film;
4. To find mismatches in the film comparing the original language of the film with a subtitled version in Lithuanian and to suggest an adequate translation version.

The situation regarding audiovisual products market is in great request today, that is why it is **relevant** to expand the area of AVT investigations to the realm of documentary film subtitling. The translation theory has already been investigated by many foreign linguists and researchers, such as Baker M. (2000); Newmark P. (1988). Lithuanian linguists (Ambrasas-Sasnava, 1978; Armalytė, Pažūsis, 1990) have also greatly contributed to the general translation theory. AVT methods were explored by Karamitroglou F. (2003), Orero P. (2003), Baravykaitė A. (2006). The area of cultural translation was analysed from different angles by Mizani S. (2005), Newmark P. (1998), Baranauskienė R., Staškevičiūtė D. (2005). The works of Butkuvienė K. (2004), Blaževičienė R. (2008), Baranauskienė R., Kriščiūnaitė I. (2008) explored the translation transformations.

Research methods: descriptive analysis, contrastive analysis and statistical analysis.

1. Subtitling method

“Audiovisual texts are built according to the conventions of film language, a complex language that overcomes linguistic communication and has its own rules and conventions” (Chaume, 2004, 2). Subtitling is a method of AVT, when speech of the SL is replaced by a written form in the TL. The method of subtitling is not just about rendering the semantics of the phrase or sentence, but a much greater number of interrelated parameters are being involved (cueing, editing, layout, positioning, format). “In order

to provide a maximum appreciation and comprehension of the target film as a whole [...] subtitled text undergoes various processes which are generally accepted as subtitling standards” (Karamitroglou, 1999, p. 5). Vallejo J. D. P. (2006) mentions that translation must take into account constraints that include context, the rules of grammar of the two languages, their writing conventions, and their idioms. Proposed subtitling standards mostly correspond to general translation theory which is applied to printed materials, such as punctuation, except those areas that are inherent only in the audiovisual field – text layout, subtitles duration. These AVT standards, unnoticeable to an ordinary viewer, need to be clarified in a greater detail in order to obtain sufficient knowledge about AVT process. Subtitles are positioned at a lower part of the screen, so that they take place which, in comparison with centre, is of lesser importance and does not distract viewers’ attention in case subtitles are needless. Subtitles usually consist of one or two lines of an average maximum length of 35 characters. “It is common that subtitles are placed at the bottom of the picture and are either centered or, if it is a dialogue, left aligned, because as far as punctuation rules are concerned dialogues are initiated by dashes and dashes are accepted to be left aligned” (Karamitroglou, 2003, 6). According to Chiu (2006), timings are of particular importance to subtitles for the most obvious reason: to ensure the correct synchronization of subtitles to the video and audio playback. Subtitles are not allowed to remain on the screen for more than two seconds after the end of the utterance, even if no other utterance is initiated in these two seconds. Karamitroglou F. (2003) claims that type characters should be coloured pale white, because a too bright colour would make them tiring to the viewers’ eye. Another important issue is punctuation, which is similar to those in printed materials, but undergoes certain changes in subtitling. The biggest part of punctuation marks has the same purpose as in printed materials, these are full stop, question mark, comma or colon, but other punctuation marks such as sequence dot, italics, dash gain other function for the purpose of convenience in the text comprehension. In order to achieve the economy of the text, “...simpler syntactic structures should be preferred than categories of complex syntactic structures” (Karamitroglou, 2003, 6).

2. Cultural translation

Translation is not just a linguistic procedure; it also involves a series of SL cultural issues. According to Hofstede (1997, 10), “Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, re-

ligion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.” Usually linguists in describing culture invoke classification of cultural realias. Consequently, English scholar Newmark P. (1988) claims that words denoting cultural realia should be classified into the following categories:

1. Ecology (flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills);
2. Social culture (words defining work and leisure);
3. Habits and behaviour;
4. Material culture or artefacts (national food, clothes, footwear, houses, towns, transport, customs; political, religious, artistic life) (cited from Staškevičiūtė, Baranauskienė, 2005).

The above-mentioned classification proves that culture is a complex phenomenon. Every culture realizes its own phenomena, systems, past stories in a particular way. According to Mizani S. (2005), the major concern has always been words and phrases which are strongly adhered to in their own culture so that they are almost impossible to translate into the terms of another. Long discussions have been held over when to coin a new word, when to transcribe or when to use the nearest equivalent. Consequently, various linguists (Mounin, 1963; Nida, 1964; Vermeer, 1980; Newmark, 1998) have introduced different theories so that the TL would fully convey the information of the SL. Cultural translation is a new area of interest in the field of translation studies. The aim of this translation is to initiate a dialogue between different specific cultural communities. Cultural translation bridges the gap between two different cultures. In the realm of cultural translation the category of material culture is the widest one. The source film under investigation is concerned with food, thus it is crucial to scrutinize the subcategory of the material – *food* – culture more attentively.

2.1. Food Culture

The uniqueness of each culture lies in various aspects of life, such as habits, customs and traditions, religion, values, etc. One of the most fundamental aspects in defining the culture is food, which being the source of survival, has gained one of the most important roles, which itself has own traditions and culture.

Meanwhile the most prominent and contradictory is a fast food culture that appeared in America in the middle of the past century and has made a great progress since then by spreading worldwide like no other food culture. “Fast food for a fast world” conveys the main idea of the fast food, its popularity

and why it is still widely consumed in spite of its negative effects.

The growth of fast food industry was triggered by the fundamental changes in the US society. According to the online *Wikipedia Encyclopaedia* "Since the 1970s there has been a steady decline in the hourly wage. Additionally, more and more mothers in the US were working outside the home and in 1975 about 1/3 of mothers with young children held jobs. That ratio has risen to 2/3 at the beginning of the 21st century." Among other factors that conditioned massive popularity of fast food was that "McDonalds introduced a way to eat food without knives, forks or plates" (Schlosser, 2001, 6). Fast food is convenient, inexpensive and saves a lot of time. Moreover, the implementation of wise marketing steps – establishing drive-ins, putting toys to fast food sets, creating playgrounds for children at McDonalds restaurants made McDonalds massive attraction centres. The hazards of fast food are universally known, but still a lot of people sacrifice their health by consuming this food, because the increasing life tempo dictates its rules. Many educated people talk about the harm of fast food. In 2001 journalist Eric Schlosser wrote a book "Fast Food Nation" where he urges people to refuse fast food for health's sake. But unfortunately fast-food culture is still popular all over the world, because of its speed and catchy idea.

"Americans spend more money on fast food than on higher education, personal computers, computer software, or new cars" (Schlosser, 2001, 2). Fast food seems to be like massive epidemic; as unofficial survey shows that at least one quarter of Americans eat fast food every day.

Open borders and globalization process accelerated the interchange of ideas and the progress of society. The world has become flat, while we are becoming plumper and plumper. The problem in such a world is that the idea of fast food, no matter good or bad, spreads equally quickly, says Maskoliūnas R. (2009, 1). Fast food becomes a fashion. Maskoliūnas R. (2009) claims that one can see the paradox with a naked eye we live better, but we eat worse and worse.

The globalization process did not leave Lithuania behind, though not long ago the situation regarding fast food in Lithuania was quite different. The first McDonald's restaurant was established in 1993, but it did not receive great attention because of high prices and different food culture. Lithuanian lunch could not be imagined as eating a hamburger on your way to work. Eventually, only 9 "McDonald's" restaurants are established in our country, which proves that Lithuanians are not fast food enthusiasts. In the later years more and more fast food restaurants start-

ed coming to Lithuanian market. This influenced the drop of prices and greater consumption of this kind of food. The biggest concern is that the consumers of fast food are mainly teenagers and children. It was proved that even intellectual faculties depend on nutrition, and that is why these facts are worrisome.

Fast food culture is about people who do not belong to a particular country, they are the victims of fast modern world.

3. Empirical Investigation of the Translation of the Documentary Film "Super Size Me" from English to Lithuanian through Subtitling

3.1. Investigation methods

The aim of the translator is to preserve the meaning of the SL text. Whenever necessary, the receptor language form should be changed so that the SL meaning would not be distorted. Since the meaning expressed by a particular form in one language may be rendered by a different form in another language, it is often necessary to change the form when translating. For the particular reasons various translation methods evolved. To enhance the understanding of subtitling processes the blended version of two grammatical and lexical classifications will be used, one proposed by Butkuvienė K. (2004) and the other one by Baravykaitė A. (2005), the latter was further elaborated by Blaževičienė R. and used in her master thesis (2008). In our investigation of the examples taken from the subtitled translation of the documentary film "Super Size Me" from English to Lithuanian we will use the modified version of two above-mentioned classifications:

1. **Paraphrase** – the case when the SL thought is expressed with the help of different kind of lexical units in the TL. (cited from Blaževičienė, 2008, 33).
2. **Retention** – the case when all meaningful SL elements are transferred into the TL (cited from Blaževičienė, 2008, 33).
3. **Transcription** – a representation of sounds by invoking corresponding characters of the TL alphabet.
4. **Addition** – addition of a certain lexical element because of absence of formal expression in TL or to enhance understanding (cited from Butkuvienė, 2004, 7–11).
5. **Omission** – omission of words, the meanings of which might be known or understood in the text without them, in order to avoid repetition. This kind of transformation is also used when there is no equivalent in the TL or to facilitate the TL text compression (cited from Blaževičienė, 2008, 33).

6. **Generalization** – change of SL lexical units which have narrow meanings into the TL lexical units of broader meanings (cited from Butkuvienė, 2004, 7–11).
7. **Concretization** – a process when words and collocations, which have broader meanings, are replaced by those with narrower meanings (cited from Butkuvienė, 2004, 7–11).
8. **Transposition** – alteration of semantically independent language elements' order in the process of translating (cited from Butkuvienė, 2004, 7–11).

3.2. Data Analysis

The investigated examples prove the predominance of the *omission* strategy, which is due to the text compression in subtitling.

SL English text	TL Lithuanian
Example 1: Is fast food really that bad for you ?	Ar tikrai greitas maistas toks žalingas?
Example 2: That's more than the entire population of Spain.	Tai daugiau nei Ispanijos gyventojų.

The second most popular method was *paraphrase*, because expressions in the TL and the SL most often are different.

SL English text	TL Lithuanian
Example 1: At least you're close when the coronary kicks in .	Bent jau būsite vietoje, kai ištiks širdies smūgis .
Example 2: In 2002, a few Americans got fed up with being overweight.	2002-aisiais saujelei amerikiečių atsibodo būti nutukusiais.

Translation strategy *retention* shows that the translator managed to find the corresponding equivalents, the examples below illustrate that:

SL English text	TL Lithuanian
Example 1: Would it be unreasonably dangerous?	Ar tai būtų neregėtai pavojinga?
Example 2: Your reflexes are perfect	Jūsų refleksai tobuli.

There were cases when some words or phrases were translated more explicitly and broadly, so that they could be fully understandable (*concretization*):

SL English text	TL Lithuanian
Example 1: And we never ate out .	Ir mes niekada nevalgydavome mieste .
Example 2: I walk past three golden arches just on my way to the office.	Pakeliui į darbą praėjau pro tris "McDonalds" restoranus.

Transposition was applied in cases when word-by-word translation was inappropriate because of different writing conventions in the TL.

SL English text	TL Lithuanian
Example 1: ...and corporate responsibility begin?	Ir prasideda kompanijų atsakomybė?
Example 2: Are the food companies solely to blame for this epidemic?	Ar dėl šios epidemijos galima kaltinti vien tik maisto bendroves?

The essence of *transcription* is rendering the SL word sound by using the TL alphabet.

SL English text	TL Lithuanian
Example 1: Say "ah."	Sakykite aaa .

In translation sometimes it is necessary to add extra words, so that the SL ideas would be fully conveyed (*addition*):

SL English text	TL Lithuanian
Example 1: The fattest state in America?	Kokia riebiausia valstija Amerikoje?
Example 2: as far as your cholesterol going up, it probably will	Cholesterolio tai jo tikriausiai padaugės

There were cases when the SL words that were meaningless in the TL were replaced by more general words (*generalization*):

Example 1: They're everywhere... Wal-Mart's , airports, rest stops, train stations.	Jie visur.. Prekybos centruose , poilsio, vietuose, degalinėse, stotyse .
Example 2: Your urinalysis is great.	Tyrimų analizė – nuostabi.

3.3. Mistakes

The translators of audiovisual films must apply a variety of translation transformations in order to achieve the equivalence of the lexical and

grammatical language structure as well as to preserve culturally marked items. Trying to achieve these complex goals AV translators relatively frequently make mistakes. Table 1 given further includes the

mismatches taken from the source film “Super Size Me” script. Translation mistakes prove that subtitling as one of AVT methods causes difficulties even for an experienced translator.

Table 1. *Cases of Unjustified Semantic Shifts in the Subtitled text “Super Size Me” by Morgan Spurlock (2004)*

No	ST Discourse	TL Discourse	Short Comments	Alternative Translation
1.	I had one McMuffin and I had one sausage biscuit .	Suvalgiau “Makkiaušiniene” ir biskvitą su dešra.	<i>Biskvitas</i> in Lithuania refers to a product used with sweet addings.	Suvalgiau “Makkiaušiniene” ir bandelę su dešra.
2.	I’ll sit next to him while he eats Mc’Donald’s .	Sėdėsiu šalia, kol jis ris “ bigmakus ”.	It is wrong to concretize Mc’Donald’s food only to bigmacs as its menu is wide.	Sėdėsiu šalia, kol jis ris “ Mc’Donald’s ” maistą .
3.	Your calorie needs are gonna be averaging about 2500 calories a day.	Stenkitės neviršyti maždaug 2500 kalorijų per dieną.	Inaccurate interpretation. There is no warning about exceeding the 2500 calories.	Jums reikės vidutiniškai apie 2500 kalorijų per dieną.
4.	So, if you had, like, a bacon , egg, and cheese your cholesterol would be way high.	Jei suvalgysite lašinių , kiaušinių ir sūrio, cholesterolio lygis bus aukštas.	<i>A bacon</i> refers to the salted and smoked meat, rather than a piece of lard. It should be translated as šoninė or kumpis.	Jei suvalgysite kumpio , kiaušinių ir sūrio, cholesterolio lygis bus aukštas.
5.	There are more Mickey d’s in Manhattan than anywhere else in the world.	“McDonald’s” restoranų Niujorke yra daugiau nei bet kur kitur.	Manhattan is one of the five boroughs of New York City. Generalization cannot be justified.	“McDonald’s” restoranų Manhetene yra daugiau nei bet kur kitur.

Conclusions

1. The method of subtitling is relatively frequently used in film translation in Lithuania. This method serves as a means of domestication of the translation. It means that subtitling bridges the gap between two different cultures and is especially conducive for foreign language learners. Watching the subtitled text a viewer can develop his listening comprehension skills as well as expand his linguistic and socio-cultural competence.
2. In total 250 instances were selected and investigated. Samples were taken from the documentary film “Super Size Me” (2004), which served as the data source for the empirical investigation, where a sentence was considered to be the unit of translation.
3. The AVT of the documentary film revealed the frequency of translation methods: omission 30%, paraphrase 21%, retention 19%, not translated 8%, addition 7%, transposition 7%, concretization 6%, generalization 2%, transcription 0%. The preference of omission procedure and the fact that 8% of the documentary film was not translated exhibits the essence of subtitling, that not all meaningful items of spoken out utterances can be rendered in subtitles due to the text compression. A large part of the subtitled

text had corresponding equivalents in the TL.

4. In 250 examples 17 translation mistakes were found, which makes 6.8% of the translated film. Cases of negligent translation of the plot and cultural realia of the SL evidence inconsiderate attitude towards the original text and prove that subtitling sometimes fails to convey adequate semantic and pragmatic message.

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Summary

The article deals with the peculiarities of subtitling as a method of audiovisual translation. The aim of the paper is the investigation of transfer of language and material culture of the film “Super Size Me” through subtitling. The theoretical part of the article overviews specificities of subtitling, cultural translation and rendering of material cultural realia – food. The empirical investigation of the documentary film language revealed that the translation transformations of omission, paraphrase and retention prevail. The preference of omission procedure and the fact that 8% of original text was not translated exhibits the essence of subtitling, i.e. not all meaningful items of spoken utterances can be rendered in subtitles due to the target text compression. Cases of translation discrepancies evidence inconsiderate attitude towards the original text and prove that subtitling sometimes fails to convey adequate semantic and pragmatic message.

Keywords: subtitling, cultural translation, material culture, translation transformations.

LIETUVIŠKO VERTIMO SUBTITRAVIMO YPATUMAI (MORGANO SPURLOCK DOKUMENTINIS FILMAS “SUPER SIZE ME” (2004))

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Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjami subtitravimo kaip audiovizualaus vertimo metodo ypatumai. Straipsnio tikslas – ištyrinėti dokumentinio filmo „Super didelis aš“ (2004) kalbos ir materialiosios kultūros perteikimą per subtitruotą filmo vertimą siekiant nustatyti vertimo procese vartojamas transformacijas ir klaidas. Teorinėje straipsnio dalyje apžvelgiami subtitravimo ypatumai, kultūrinio vertimo samprata bei specifiniai materialiosios kultūros (maisto) aspektai.

Empirinėje darbo dalyje aprašoma tyrimo eiga ir metodai. Iš filmo vertimo analizės matyti, kad anglų ir lietuvių kalbų skirtumai bei subtitravimo, kaip audiovizualaus vertimo metodo, ypatumai lėmė vertimo transformacijų vartoseną.

Prasminiai žodžiai: subtitravimas, kultūrinis vertimas, materialioji kultūra, vertimo transformacijos.

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