



Strategies and Difficulties of Translating American Film Headlines in Russian

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Abstract

This article explores the main methods and strategies for translating American film headlines into Russian (150 units), released in Russian distribution from 2009 to 2019. The relevance of the topic is confirmed by the fact that today the popularity of foreign films headlines to the need for a high-quality translation of the film titles into another language. Inaccuracies often arise when translating foreign headlines, which leads to many differences in the content of the film and its headline. The purpose of this work is to identify and thoroughly describe the most used translation transformations when translating American film headlines into Russian. The main research methods were analysis, comparison, statistical method.

Keywords: Language; Communication; Linguistics; Film Headline; Translation.

1. Introduction

A person in the course of his life constantly interacts with the outside world. Collision with various kinds of tasks leads, at first, to the fact that he forms a certain point of view, an opinion about reality. A person is gradually creating an understanding of the world, which in modern philosophical and linguistic literature is interpreted as a picture of the world.

The Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) in his famous «Logical and Philosophical Treatise» first used the term picture of the world. He defined the term as "a system of ideas about the reality surrounding us." (Wittgenstein, 1958). In his opinion, our world is a totality of facts, and it is determined only by facts. Human thinking reproduces images of facts, which are a concrete model of our reality.

Today, cinema has long become one of the sought-after trends in the art world. Talentedly created films influence our picture of the world, showing us the most pressing problems of our time, forming new aesthetic preferences in us. Previously, cinema was only entertaining in nature, but now it is actively shaping the worldview of its viewers, showing them other life values, behavioural patterns of both their culture and foreign (Evseeva & Kozlova, 2016; Lagutina, Lagutina, Boychuk, Vorontsova, & Paramonov, 2019; Müller, 2007; Posin, 1955).

According to RBC, more than 50% of the films produced are in American studios. In the Russian box office, one foreign film accounts for four foreign films (Bondarchuk's, 2019; Gaenssle, Budzinski, & Astakhova, 2019). Nevertheless, the success of American films often depends on the correct translation of the titles of the films, since acquaintance with any film begins with its name. Therefore, the exchange of spiritual values between countries is always relevant, and the translation of film headings plays a large role in the exchange of thoughts.

The word translation is ambiguous. By definition, V.S. Vinogradov, translation is a kind of verbal art. This art is always "secondary" since the translator conveys the contents of the original using the means of another language. In addition, the translation has two terminological meanings. The first is a mental activity; the second is the result of this process - written or oral text. Such unity is not conceivable without each other (Vinogradov, 2001).



It is worth noting that cinema was invented in the 19th century. At first, the duration of the film barely exceeded several minutes. These were images that described the everyday life of the hero; the plot was simple and clear to the viewer. Basically, the headlines were not subject: they looked more like headlines of newspapers, but not like the names of theatrical performances (Ellis, 2002). Later, when the newspaper headline was a means of verbal influence on the reader, the title of the movie began to perform the same function.

Explanatory Dictionary T.F. Ephraim defines the term heading as “the name of a work (literary, scientific, musical, etc.) or its individual parts; the title ” (Efremova, 2006).

Together with the term film, the term film mononym is used. A film mononym is a category of proper names denoting the names of films. It should reflect the content and artistic intent of the film, and it needs to be clear, concise and attractive to the potential audience, therefore, when translating it, it is important not only to prevent a communicative failure, but also to take into account the tasks of the filmmakers, including commercial ones (Aleksandrova & Nikolayeva, 2016; Sakaeva, Yahin, & Rinatovich, 2019).

Consequently, the translation of film names becomes a very difficult task for the translator (Bai, 2018; CHI & MA, 2018; Xianhui, 2001): the title should simultaneously convey the idea of the creator, be catchy, memorable, match the target audience, and perform an advertising function.

1.1. Research Objective

The purpose of this study is to recognize and explain in detail the most common translation changes when translating American film headlines into Russian.

2. Material and Methods

The main research methods were analysis and comparison, namely: analysis of scientific literature, lexical-semantic and comparative-comparative analysis of film titles. Inherent aspects of word meaning and the semantic connections between terms are concerned with lexical semantics, as well as the ways in which word meaning is related to syntactic structure (Stringer, 2019). The article provides a study of American film headlines (150 units) 2009-2019 in percentage terms.

3. Results and Discussion

There are different opinions among translators about the functions that movie titles perform. Based on our research, we can distinguish four essential functions of film phonyms:

- 1) Nominal function (the name acts as a name);
- 2) Informative function (carries information about the content);
- 3) Evaluative and expressive function (induces curiosity);
- 4) The semantic function (the main idea of the film stands out).

Moreover, referring to the model of understanding the *AIDA* text (*attention, interest, desire, action*), developed by E. Lewis in 1896, we can talk about another heading function - advertising. The heading draws attention (*attention*), then interest (*interest*), after which it attracts desire (*desire*), and in the end motivates to action (*action*), that is, to purchase (Sakaeva et al., 2019). In addition, the advertising function completely changes the name of the film, which leads to the creation of a new one. The way to instantly attract the attention of the viewer, to arouse his interest is dictated by choice of language means. In addition, marketers extensively use in their practice *ai-stoppers* (eye-stoppers from English - an eye trap).

Additional factors that may influence the translation of film names include time (different periods, different ideas about the correct, for example the American film “*Some like it hot*” was translated into Russian as “*V dzhaze tol'ko devushki*”). Censorship (in different the categories of acceptable countries differ, for example, the American film “*The Hangover*” (“*Hangover*”) at the Russian box office translated “*Mal'chishnik v Vegase*” because the word hangover has a negative connotation). The American film “*Captain America: Civil War*” into Russian translated “*Kapitan America:*



Pervyj mstitel'", as the translation "*Civil War*" from the Russian and American viewers gives rise to different associations. At the same time, specifies M.A. Yakhin, the use of transformations in the translation of multicomponent terms is influenced by grammatical differences between the English and Russian languages, which we can say about the translation of foreign names of films (Sakaeva et al., 2019).

Therefore, when translating film names, the translator needs: to maximally preserve the linguistic closeness of one language to another, not forgetting the functions of the headers, including advertising, and at the same time try not to contradict the inner content of the film.

A huge selection of material affects the quality of the translation itself, and errors often occur, inaccuracies in the process of translating American films. The translator faces many difficulties in adapting film titles.

The first extralinguistic factor in translating movie titles is the requirements of film companies. This factor includes a picture of the world of the author himself, his personality factor, aesthetic preferences, the idea of work, and an emotional tone.

L.K. Latyshev points out that it is necessary to attach importance to the social orientation in translation since translation activity is determined by the social norm, on which the choice of translation strategy depends (Latyshev & Semenov, 2003).

The second factor that affects the translation of film names is linguoculturological. E.S. Shubina adds that the linguocultural barrier in interlanguage communication is an obstacle that prevents the native speaker (translating a language) from understanding the text in a native language (source language) (Shubina, 2007).

The linguocultural barrier consists of the following components:

1. The mismatch between the two language systems - TL and SL. This includes not only language formations, but also formations that are created by the language system.

2. The language norm. This can include everything that is in grammars, reference books and is the foundation on which the language system rests.

3. The speech norm (*uzus*). From Latin *Uzus* is a habit, a custom. The language norm differs from the *Uzus* in that it either separates the right from the wrong, or the *Uzus* separates what is appropriate in this case from what is inappropriate.

4. Inconsistency between the extra-linguistic judgments of native speakers who belong to different national cultures. By culture is meant the historically established set of material and spiritual values of society. Culture and language are expressed in the sphere of the ostrich very brightly. Nevertheless, knowledge of temporary phenomena in interlanguage communication, the so-called "variable" pre-information, is also important.

S.A. Sergeyenkov in his work, adds that before the film is shown how it will be released; translators need to provide a Russian headline to the advertising company for 7-9 months. Depending on the expectation of a well-known film, the time gap between the release date of the film and advertising is widening. Usually, translators have to translate blindly; at best, they can use the description of the film in 2-3 lines (Sergeenkov, 2015).

To sum up, it can be noted that the names of the films perform various functions and can be influenced by different translation factors. One of the essential translation strategies is transformation. V.N. Komissarov adds that "translation transformations are called transformations by which the transition from original units to translation units is realized" (Komissarov, 1990). This is a special kind of paraphrasing. Russian translators' resort to three strategies when translating the names of films:

1) Direct translation. There are not untranslated culturally-specific components; translation into another language is simple and understandable, for example: "*Fight Club*" - "*Bojcovskij klub*", directed by David Fincher; "*Four Christmases*" - "*Chetyre rozhdestva*", directed by Seth Gordon; "*Aviator*" - "*Aviator*", directed by Martin Scorsese. This translation strategy also includes translation techniques: transcription and transliteration.

2) Title transformation. When translating, transformations are caused by various factors (functional, pragmatic, stylistic, lexical), which, in turn, leads to a transformation of addition or omission. Omission: "*Resident Evil 3*:"

Extinction” - “*Obitel' zla 3*”, directed by James Wong; “*Victor Frankenstein*” - “*Frankenstein*”, directed by Kenneth Branagh. Addition: “*Brave*” - “*Hrabraya serdce*”, directors: Brenda Chapman, Mark Andrews. Lexical-grammatical transformation (lack of similar grammatical constructions in languages: descriptive translation, modulation, synonymous replacement, concretization, generalization), for example: “*Flushed Away*” - “*Smyvajsya!*”, directors David Bowers, Sam Fell; “*Lucky Number Slevin*” - “*Schastlivoe chislo Slevina*” directed by Paul McGuigan.

3) Full replacement of the header. The translation preserves semantic-structural equality, which is determined by the cultural characteristics of the country, for example: “*Carrie*” - “*Telekinesis*”, directed by Kimberly Pearce; “*Inception*” - “*The Beginning*”, directed by Christopher Nolan; “*Fair Game*” - “*Game without rules*”, director Doug Liman; “*The Sinderella Man*” - “*Knockdown*”, directed by Ron Howard; “*The lovers*” - “*Out of Time*”, directed by Roland Joffe.

Nevertheless, the translation of the names of films is a complex process, and often the translator makes inaccuracies and mistakes when translating film names. The reasons for which the translation lost the meaning of the title can be divided into:

1) *Lexical errors* (the film “*Moonrise Kingdom*”, directed by Wes Anderson, in Russian, will sound like “*The Kingdom of the Rising Moon*”, because moonrise is the moonrise, but the title was incorrectly translated as “*Kingdom of the Full Moon*”).

2) *A literal translation of the name* (the American film “*Expendables*”, directed by Sylvester Stallone, at the Russian box office it was translated as “*Neuderzhimye*”, which is understandable, the film tells about the soldiers, but here is another meaning of this word in the English dictionary supplies).

3) *Independent decision to change* (the American film “*Hugo*”, directed by Martin Scorsese, was translated “*Time Keeper*” in Russian, although the film is not about time at all; the film “*Tropic Thunder*”, directed by Ben Stiller, was translated into Russian by “*Soldiers’ failures*”, although the film could be translated as “*Grom v tropikah*”. Another example: the American film “*Capone*” in the Russian version translated “*The Scarface*”. Why translators decided to translate this title in this way is unknown).

4) *Ignorance of the phraseological unit* (the American film “*Silver linings*”, directed by David O. Russell, was translated into Russian as “*My boyfriend is crazy*”, although in English there is an idiom *a silver lining*, which means *a ray of hope*). It becomes clear that structural differences are described by specific grammatical forms of each language and the features of their functioning (Akhmetova et al., 2019; Nurgalieva, Ibatulina, & Khisamova, 2019).

Therefore, a professional translator should be careful about translation strategies for movie titles, while avoiding free interpretation as much as possible, as this will most likely lead to many inaccuracies in the translation. His duty is to pay attention to the smallest details, carefully select information about a foreign culture in order to correctly be able to convey not only words but also the colourfulness of another country, its special vision of the world.

4. Summary

Following all the rules of translation strategies and paying particular attention to inaccuracies in the translation of film names, we selected 150 units of American films from 2009-2019. During the analysis of the obtained data, the most used methods of translation from English into Russian were identified, namely:

Direct translation - 90 out of 150 (60%), of which: *the literal translation* (“*Once Upon a Time ... In Hollywood*” - “*Once ... in Hollywood*”, directed by Quentin Tarantino, 2019; “*Glass*” - “*Glass*”, directed Knight Shyamalan, 2019) - 69 (78%), *transcription* (“*Deadpool*” - “*Deadpool*”, director Tim Miller, 2016) and *transliteration* (“*Split*” - “*Split*”, directed by Knight Shyamalan, 2017; “*Interstellar*” - “*Interstellar*”, directed by Christopher Nolan, 2014) - 21 (22%). *Transformation by omission* (“*The Judge*” - “*Judge*”, director David Dobkin, 2014, “*The other woman*” - “*Other woman*”, director Nick Cassavetes, 2014) or *addition* (“*Coraline*” - “*Coraline in the country of nightmares*”, Director Henry Selick, 2009; “*Barefoot*” - “*Barefoot around the city*”, director Andrew Fleming, 2014) - 22 (14%). *Lexico-grammatical transformation* (“*The fault of our stars*” - “*Vo vsem vinovaty zvezdy*”, director Josh Boone, 2014, “*American Hustle*” - “*Afera po-amerikanski*”, director David O. Russell, 2014) - 16 (11%), *where concretization* (“*Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*” - “*Fantasticheskie tvori i gde oni obitayut*”, director David Yates, 2016) - 7 (5%). *Full lexical*



and semantic replacement (“Campaign” - “Dirty company for fair elections”, directed by Jay Roach, 2012; “The World’s End” - “Armageddets”, directed by Edgar Wright, 2013) - 15 (10%).

5. Conclusions

Thus, translating movie titles is very delicate work. When carefully considering strategies, translation methods, reasons, which may cause inaccuracies in the translation process of film titles, translators will avoid future errors that may remain in our history. The article revealed that the most applicable translation strategy is the direct translation (60%). This is due to the fact that film titles are often lexically and grammatically simple. The second place in demand is lexical and grammatical transformation (16%). For better understanding by native speakers of the translating language, the headings have to be adapted lexically, grammatically. In third place is the full lexical-semantic replacement (10%). This includes words with untranslatable grammar, puns. Then transform by omitting or adding. Fewer translators use them (14%). Although by adding, translators translate by 8% and omission by 6%. The translation of movie titles is a very interesting topic and therefore served as the topic of our study, where many aspects and difficulties that arise in the process of translation of film names were identified.

5.1. Contribution

This article discusses the key methods and techniques published in Russian distribution from 2009 to 2019 for the translation of American film headlines into Russian (150 units).

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