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FEATURES OF FILM TITLE TRANSLATION

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Abstract. This article considers the features connected with film title translation. Methods of translation are analyzed with the aid of particular examples. Assessment of adequacy is explained. Examples of translations that are considered unsuccessful are given. A conclusion is made on the necessity of the translator achieving suitable localization for film titles and having a deep knowledge of language and a multicultural mindset.

Keywords: film title; cinematography; translation; localization.

Introduction

In this age, cinematography is a highly profitable branch of economy. In most countries cinematography is also an essential part of culture. Films are shot in different languages in different countries and then are quickly distributed all over the world.

Translation and dubbing of films for viewers from other countries is an important industry. Many specialists work in order to let viewers enjoy with pleasure one or another foreign picture. The title of the film is the first thing that a cinemagoer sees on a poster. It is known that a consumer needs about 1.5-2 seconds in order to decide whether the topic is of interest or not [1: 160]. That is why the translation of the title is very important. The relevance of the research is determined by the fact that due to translators' incompetence the actual translation looks absurd in particular cases [2, 3]. Translation is a complicated and multifaceted type of human activity where different cultures, different personalities, different mindsets, different literature, different eras, different development levels, different traditions and habits may face each other [4: 23].

Seeing that films are the material for research, it is necessary to define the given phenomenon. A film may be defined as a frame sequence fixed on a film stock or other information carrier presenting photographic or hand-drawn animation, which is usually followed by audiotape (speech, music, noise). In other words, a film is a digital string of a continuous section of text or a chain of frames, according to which, a frame is a unit of a film text.

During the film, translators in most cases have access not only to the subtitles, but also to the entire film [5, 6].

Methodology

What features are inherent to title translation? Actually, many factors play their role. This is convenient for the specialist when the original title does not have an idiom, joke, little-known quotation or other obstacles. In this case, it is possible to use a literal translation. For example, the titles “Twilight” – «Сумерки» (“Sumerki”), “Burn after reading” – «После прочтения сжечь» (“Posle prochteniya szhech”), etc. But in most cases the titles are invented in such a way that it is quite a difficult task to adapt the foreign name and simultaneously take into account a people’s mentality, its traditions and habits or to convey inner meaning. Literal translation only causes harm here. Translators have to use word-play, search for phrases with analogous sense in the recipient language, use calquing, transliteration etc. Apart from that a translator ought to remember the euphony of the title and its capacity in order not to get from “Die Hard” the heavy «Умри тяжело, но достойно» (“Umri tyazhelo, no dostoino” – “Die hard, but worthily”), which later disappeared and was substituted to «Крепкий орешек» (“Krepkiy oreshk” – “A hard nut to crack”). That is not all so far. At the end of work the title has to be suitable in terms of marketing and commerce, because profit is far from being the last goal in film production. Unfortunately, with such a large number of tasks it is not always possible to reach the main goal – to fully and properly convey the title’s sense and mood.

Results and analysis

Here are presented original film titles and their official translation into Russian below with our assessment of adequacy.

“The Revenant” is an American Western, which sounds in Russian like «Выживший» (“Vyzhivshiy” – “The Survivor”). The initial meaning of the word “revenant” is one that returns after death or a long absence. But “The Survivor” is not someone who came back to life or returned after being absent for a long time. There exists an opinion that a more suitable variant could be «Возвращенец» (“Vozvrashchenets” – “The Returner”). This word conveys the author’s idea for the film in a more exact way. Unfortunately, people in Russia do not speak in such a manner, furthermore, it sounds somewhat funny. Such a title could cause harm to the success of the film. That is why the translators chose “The Survivor”, although it does not allow an understanding of the whole deep sense, but it is euphonic for the Russian language. This case demonstrates loss of sense in order to save the form.

“Dan in Real Life” has no difficulty for those who have a basic knowledge of English to translate this title. It is interesting that after professional translation it became «Влюбиться в невесту брата» (“Vlyubit’sya v nevestu brata” – “To fall in love with your brother’s fiancée”). Obviously, the trivial title «Дэн в реальной жизни» (“Den v real’noy zhizni” – “Dan in Real Life”) is unsuccessful in terms of marketing. It is possible that a viewer would not like to buy a ticket in order to just watch a film about somebody called Dan. What a difference when there is something intriguing in the title or a piece of description heightening the viewer’s interest.

“Oblivion” – «Обливион» is another interesting example of how the original title could be changed. An alternative film title is «Забвение» (“Zabvenie” – “Oblivion”). In this case, the translators preferred to use transliteration instead of translation. A similar approach may be seen in the picture «Дивергент» (“Divergent”), though in Russian “divergent” translates as «расходящийся», «отклоняющийся» (“different”, “aberrant”). We see the same situation in «Интерстеллар» – (“Interstellar”), which means «межзвездный» (“interstellar”, “intersidereal”). What is the motivation for such a decision? The transliterated variant is unusual, stands out in speech, and attracts attention – the exact function of a film title. In addition, «Интерстеллар» (“Interstellar”) and «Обливион» (“Oblivion”) sound more scientific and official, creating an atmosphere of futurism. «Дивергент» (“Divergent”) already sounds beautiful and mysterious in Russian, whereas «Расходящийся» (“Different”) is inferior to it.

We ought to add that some titles are adapted with the help of transliteration because it is impossible to localize them or there would be a pun or foolishness as a result of localization. For example, the film “Terminator” – «Терминатор». Starting from a verb “to terminate”, in Russian we get «расторгать», «прекращать» (“dissolve”, “cease”. The name “Ceaser” on a poster would amuse many people passing by. Of course, there is the option to familiarize oneself with the original version of the film, get creative and localize it as “Liquidator”, but the transliterated variant is simply more harmonic in this case. In addition, we should mention “Oldboy” – «Олдбой». This is an American remake of the popular South Korean detective film, a revenge drama. Literal translation into Russian sounds very foolish; it does not suit the film topic. “Oldboy” – «Олдбой» is an example when there is no way to localize or translate the title.

As previously noticed, translators are not always successful in performing a communicative task during work with titles. This could lead to confusion among viewers who expected to see one thing, but received something completely different. A famous example is the film by Quentin Tarantino “Death Proof” mistranslated as «Доказательство смерти» (“Dokazatel’stvo smerti” – “Proof of Death”). The translator erroneously assumed that the word “proof” in this context meant to prove something. In the film itself, we can

see the “death proof” car of a maniac-stuntman chasing women. “Death proof” here has a similar meaning to waterproof, bulletproof etc. Another example is “Silver Linings Playbook” – «Мой парень – псих» (“My paren’ – psikh” – “My Boyfriend is a Psycho”). Although this film is partly a comedy, the translators, so it seems, decided to remove from the title such characteristics as “romantic” and “drama”. This romantic comedy-drama by David O. Russell has a deeper sense, which the original version reflects. In the adapted title, the sense is so removed from the reality that first of all there comes to mind a story about a man with a thought disorder, but nothing else comes. Only the trailer would provide a full understanding of the film’s mood, its romantic and dramatic elements.

Conclusion

Analyzing different translations of film titles, we can make a conclusion that there is a great importance of working with the title during its localization. The sense can become completely different from the original one in case of misunderstanding and unsuccessful translation. In addition, we can confirm that the task which the translator deals with during the working process is very difficult. It requires a deep knowledge of language and a multicultural mindset.

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