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**The Dubbing of Animated Films in Croatia**

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## **Abstract**

*This descriptive study offers a detailed description of the process of dubbing animated films into Croatian. Considering the large number of animated films dubbed into Croatian and the surprising lack of data about this industry in Croatia, this paper aims to present a thorough description of all stages of the dubbing process, from the initial request of a dubbed version of an animated film until the moment the final product of this process reaches the audience. In this description of the state of the art in Croatia, special attention is given to the role of the translator in the dubbing process. The description of the Croatian dubbing practices is based on semi-structured interviews conducted with people employed in the dubbing industry, as well as on personal observation of a dubbing session at Croatian Radio and Television (HRT), Croatia's public broadcaster. Finally, the dubbing process in Croatia is compared with the dubbing practices of Western Europe's most developed dubbing industries, leading to a conclusion about the state of the art not only in Croatia but also in other European countries.*

## **Key terms**

*dubbing process, animated film, audiovisual translation, translator's role*

## 1 Introduction

Dubbing, also known as lip synchronization, is defined in filmmaking as "the replacement of the original speech by a voice track which attempts to follow as closely as possible the timing, phrasing and lip movement of the original dialogue" (Luyken et al. 1991: 31, qtd. in Baker and Hochel 2001: 74-75). Along with subtitling and revoicing, it is one of the "best known and most widespread forms of audiovisual translation" (Baker and Hochel 2001: 74). While subtitling is the most widespread of these three forms of AVT in Croatia, being used for almost all live-action films and television series, dubbing is regularly used for animated films. Many other European countries have developed much stronger dubbing industries due to the fact that they dub everything of foreign origin, including live-action films and television series, documentaries, animated films, etc. Of course, dubbing and subtitling both have their relative strengths and weaknesses, and the choice regarding the most prevalent mode of translation for audiovisual media is rather a question of tradition. In Croatia, the tradition of dubbing animated films began in former Yugoslavia and continued to this day. Nevertheless, despite the large number of animated films dubbed into Croatian, little is known about the process behind the final product. Admittedly, there has been more talk and, subsequently, more research about animated films in the last decade than was the case in the years before. However, these debates have mostly focused on the sociological and sociolinguistic dimensions of animated films, which are usually based on the final product rather than the dubbing process. It may seem that the main steps of the dubbing process are quite similar everywhere, but there are significant differences depending on the country and even on the dubbing studio.

The first part of this paper describes all the stages of the dubbing process in Croatia, starting from the initial request for a dubbed version of an animated film, up until the moment the final product reaches the audience. Most attention will be given to translation, adaptation and other possible changes the material that is to be dubbed for the Croatian market goes through in the course of every dubbing process. I am particularly interested in the role and importance of the translator in this process. I will attempt to shed light on the major difficulties that people involved in the dubbing process of an animated film face while carrying out this task. In the second part of this paper, the final description of the dubbing process in Croatia will be put into a wider perspective of the state of the art in Europe's biggest dubbing countries. Before that, I will present a short overview of the existing research on dubbing practices, and describe the methodology used for the present research.

## 2 Literature overview

The few studies that have been conducted on animated films in Croatia focus on the sociological and sociolinguistic dimensions of animated films. The most comprehensive and most important work of this kind is Ivo Žanić's (2009) *Kako bi trebali govoriti hrvatski magarci? O sociolingvističkim animiranih filmova*<sup>1</sup>. He explains that standard Croatian was used for dubbing in the past, but since the use of regional varieties became a tendency in the last decade, many debates have ensued as to whether this change is a positive or a negative trend. Žanić studied viewers' reactions to this new trend and their perception of regional varieties. He came to the conclusion that the problem was in the stereotypes this tendency seemed to encourage, and that many viewers found it prejudiced and offensive (Žanić 2009: 10-11). The most recent study of this kind is Mario Perić's (2014) paper "Perception of Regional Dialects in Animated Films Dubbed into Croatian". The author tried to examine whether there is a connection between a person's regional and social background and the way they perceive various nonstandard varieties of Croatian. The results of this empirical research suggest that there is a possible connection between a person's background and their perception of nonstandard varieties of Croatian as well as their perception of characters who speak in these varieties. An entirely sociological study has been carried out by Irena Oroz Štancl (2014). The aim of her study was to determine the existing level of product placement in animated films broadcast in Croatia. Her content analysis showed that a high percentage of various kinds of product placement are present in animated films broadcast on Croatian television.

The existing research outside Croatia can be broadly divided into two types: studies focusing on the state of the art, and those dealing with translation and adaptation of the audiovisual source material that is to be dubbed<sup>2</sup>. Frederic Chaume (2007), in his article "Dubbing Practices in Europe: Localisation Beats Globalisation", offers a detailed description of the dubbing practices in four of Europe's biggest dubbing markets (France, Germany, Spain and Italy). His study is based on observation, describing how people working in this field implement the practices of their country and what challenges they face in doing so. His objective was to show that, even though globalisation is favoured by new technologies in all areas of translation, dubbing demonstrates a reluctance to accept this trend, which explains why each country has its own dubbing norms and practices, sometimes quite different from others

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<sup>1</sup> How Are Croatian Donkeys Expected to Speak? On Sociolinguistics of Animated Films

<sup>2</sup> A notable exception is the recent work by Charlotte Bosseaux (2015), which explores dubbing from the point of view of film and sound studies.

(e.g. in text segmentation and dubbing symbols). Xènia Martínez (2004) offers a very short overview or a beginner's introduction to the stages of the dubbing processes in Europe in her article "Film Dubbing: Its Process and Translation".

Studies belonging to the second type focus on the source text, which is in this case an animated film. They are mostly case studies listing strategies used at different stages of the dubbing process and offering a closer perspective on the changes made to the text at each stage (e.g. the language revision stage, the recording). Examples are used to show the changes that translations undergo before they reach the audience. One such work is Anna Matamala's (2010) paper "Translations for Dubbing as Dynamic Texts: Strategies in Film Synchronisation" and Patrick Zabalbeascoa's (1993) PhD thesis *Developing Translation Studies to Better Account for Audiovisual Texts and Other New Forms of Text Production*. These studies were very important for the formulation of my research objectives as they offer insight into the role and influence of the translator in the dubbing process. The role of the translator in the dubbing process has also been investigated by Chaume (2004). His paper "Synchronization in Dubbing: A Translational Approach" focuses on the translational aspects of dubbing. He is interested in synchronization as a key feature in dubbing, which has a direct impact on both the translation process and the final product as it forces the translator to put his or her creative skills to full use.

Some of these studies and many other papers on the topic of dubbing can be found in volumes edited by, among others, Pilar Orero (2004), Mona Baker (2001), and Jorge Díaz Cintas and Gunilla Anderman (2009). These edited volumes offer a variety of perspectives on dubbing, as well as on other forms of audiovisual translation, and they are an excellent source of further reading on this topic.

### **3 Research objectives**

The aim of this paper is to offer an insight into the dubbing practices in Croatia, which seem to be largely under-researched, and to compare the findings on the state of the art in Croatia to the state of the art in Western Europe's most developed dubbing industries.

## **4 Methodology**

The description of the dubbing process I will offer is based on semi-structured interviews conducted with people employed in the dubbing industry. The interviews were conducted in June and July 2015, the first with Vlatka Briški, a dubbing translator, and the second with Branko Sviben, a dubbing director. Both interviewees have rich experience as they have worked on numerous dubbing projects for HRT, the Croatian public broadcaster. As there is no previous research of dubbing practices in Croatia that this paper could rely on, only the general topics and some open-ended questions were prepared in advance, since this is the best way to explore opinions and gather unexpected data. The general topics and open-ended questions were based on existing research on dubbing practices in Europe's biggest dubbing industries. The existing research on dubbing practices in Europe mentioned in the preceding paragraph was also used as a frame of reference against which the dubbing process in Croatia will be compared with the dubbing processes of Western European countries (see chapter 7). The data about the dubbing of animated films in Croatia that was gathered through the semi-structured interviews was further supported by personal observation of a dubbing session of the animated film series *Matt Hatter Chronicles* (*Kronike Matta Hattera*) at HRT in August 2015.

## **5 The dubbing process in Croatia – findings**

### **5.1 Legal matters**

The dubbing process in Croatia begins when a television network or a film distributor decides to broadcast a foreign animated film. When the designated broadcaster is a television network, the person with whom everything begins is called an *editor*. He or she is the head of one of many editorial offices within the television network in question (e.g. editorial offices for sports, news, children's programme, etc.). Editors visit film festivals and similar events that are held all over the world about 50 times a year. These festivals are places where representatives of various film production companies and animation studios gather to sell rights to broadcast their films. Editors are allowed to pursue their policy in the sense that the choice of animated film is entirely in their hands. The editor thus chooses the film, meets up with the representatives of the animation studio owning the animated film in question, and negotiates the purchase of the rights to broadcast the desired film. The editor's job is thus easier the bigger the television network he or she works for is, as these can afford to experiment by purchasing material from

less known animation studios. The price of the rights to broadcast the desired film depends on the size of the market the animated film is going to, i.e. on the country's population, the number of television subscribers in that country, the average number of DVDs sold in a period of time, etc. The purchased rights are valid for a pre-determined number of broadcasts and only for that specific geographical area; in other words, the rights have an expiration date. This means that the animation studio continues to be the owner of the original material and the dubbed version as well, despite the fact that it is the broadcaster who pays for and/or carries out the dubbing of the animated film in question. The owner, or their representative in a given country, can sell the rights to broadcast the dubbed version of an animated film to another broadcaster in that country after the expiration date has passed, which is why the same dubbed version of an animated film can later appear on other television channels in the same market. Broadcast rights can also be bought by independent recording studios that want to gather their own dubbing team and then sell a dubbed version of an animated film to either a television network or a film distributor in the country.

## **5.2 Gathering the team**

When the legal part is completed, it is again the editor's job to find and hire a *dubbing director* and sometimes even the rest of the crew (e.g. a sound engineer, a translator, etc.). The director's job is to manage all the activities necessary to carry out the dubbing of the animated film. All directors must first be studio- and network-approved, as most of them are not permanently employed at the television network but are rather outsourced. Some are employed at independent recording studios, and others are freelancers. The practice in Croatia seems to be to hire one of the limited number of directors who have proved themselves over the years. The director's first, and possibly most important, task is casting the voice actors. However, sometimes the tasks of hiring a translator and/or some other crew members fall on directors as well, which is why it is not unusual for them to first hire an *assistant director*.

Most big television networks and film distributing companies have their own recording studios. If a television network does not have its own recording studio, it is again the editor's job to find an adequate independent recording studio which will carry out the dubbing process. Even if a television network does not have its own studio, it probably has one or several it regularly works with. For example, HRT, the Croatian public broadcaster, has its own studio, but it also works with some independent studios. The reason for this is the fact that the time of recording and all relevant aspects of dubbing sessions can be arranged in the way that best suits



all parties involved in the dubbing process, while in order to use a television network's own recording studio, the director has to book the time slot and make all the arrangements far in advance. He or she has to draw up a schedule, making sure that the set time slot works for everyone involved. Many recording studios do not have their own directors, so either the editor (if the future broadcaster is a television network), or the person in charge (if the future broadcaster is a film distributing company), only books a recording studio and has to bring their own director, who then proceeds with gathering the rest of the cast and crew.

At this point, the translator is hired as well, but this part of the dubbing process will be dealt with in more detail in a separate section (see chapter 6). The translator produces a translation and sends it in. This version of the script will most likely be somewhat different from the so-called *as recorded script*. Having passed proofreading and editing, many copies of this script are made: one for the director, one for the sound engineer, one for every voice actor. If there happen to be more people involved, they each get their own copy.

The next step is casting. The director decides about the cast and crew if the dubbing is done at a television network, but independent studios may have their own reasons, commercial or other, to insist on hiring the actors they want. Before *voice actors* can be hired, big film production companies and animation studios, such as Disney, Pixar or DreamWorks Animation, usually ask for a *voice test* in order to make sure that the Croatian voice actor chosen will have a voice as similar as possible to the original actor's voice. This means that the recording studio receives a few short pieces of the animated film that is to be dubbed, usually just pictures and some text to be read, which serve as the material for an audition. Voice actors of approximately the same age, personality and voice as the original actors are usually the first choice, as it is considered crucial to transfer personality traits and the temperament of the character. Usually three or four voice actors are recorded for each of the main roles. The voice test is usually done for lead roles only and it is based on the idea of *character synchrony*. This means that, as Chaume (2004: 44) explains, when a character's way of speaking (e.g. speed, pitch, etc.) and the voice itself are well-known and recognisable to the audience, the synchronisation between the voice and the image should be retained if possible. Voice actors are usually professionals, but exceptions can be made if the director feels that he or she has a perfect person in mind and if that person later passes the voice test if one is required (e.g. the rapper Edo Maajka was chosen for the dubbed versions of *Chicken Little* and *Ice Age 2: The Meltdown*). Exceptions are also made when it comes to child voice actors, but it is often the

case that adult voice actors dub child characters. Voice actors are usually trained stage actors, and many will also have experience of acting for film and television.

These recordings, called *voice clips*, which contain different emotions and moods, are then sent back to the production company or animation studio. The authors of the film then listen to these and decide which voice actor best fits the original character. Sometimes, if the director already has voice actors in mind, only their recordings will be sent for approval and auditions will be held only if the animation studio does not agree with the choice of a voice actor. Hence, the recording studio does not receive the entire film immediately, but rather some sketches of main characters and a *creative letter* with very strict guidelines. This is done in order to make sure no information about the film is leaked. The letter contains important data about the film, such as the time and place of the plot, character description and things to pay special attention to while dubbing. The animation studio provides the broadcaster with a special recording containing all other sounds (e.g. traffic, thunder) except those made by humans (e.g. sneezing), as they are what the recording studio needs to take care of. Before deciding to hire a recording studio, or to approve the one chosen by the television network or a film distributor, the animation studio also checks the equipment the studio has at its disposal to carry out the dubbing process.

The voice actors who are hired get the script with their respective parts marked. Sometimes they get the script in advance or they take it home, but this is not a rule. As it has been previously mentioned, clients often have confidentiality concerns, which is why the script is sometimes given only to those who are thought to absolutely need it. It also seems that some actors prefer not to focus too much on the script outside their working hours, so that they can have some room for improvisation. This is especially the case with experienced voice actors, as they can read the script to get acquainted with the character and then leave the rest to the "moment". Many well-remembered lines were in fact the result of improvisation (for some examples of a high degree of improvisation see the English language version of the anime series *Ghost Stories*).

Representatives of the client company are sometimes present throughout the entire recording process, usually in order to ensure maximum commercial success. In such cases, if the client representative suggests a different interpretation, the voice actor may be asked to repeat a line. Such client involvement may be positive, but it can easily become problematic if the representative has a change of heart halfway through the dubbing process and starts

changing the conditions. Dubbing sessions done at television networks rarely have to deal with this, but those done in independent studios might. However, the representative is most often present only at the beginning and the end of the dubbing process, to give instructions and later to give approval. People employed in the Croatian dubbing industry point out that dubbing is done in reversed order, i.e. most animated films they dub are done in the way that the selected voice actors' roles are first recorded, and only then are the characters drawn and animated according to the voices, meaning that the appearance and many other features of a character can be adapted to the voice. It is therefore not surprising that the representatives have high expectations regarding the voice actors chosen for the dubbing of their animated film. However, this can be extremely difficult as dubbing is done the other way around, and there is no much room for improvisation now that the characters have already been drawn and animated.

### **5.3 The dubbing process begins**

On the day of the first dubbing session, the director talks to the voice actors about the takes they are about to record. Sometimes they discuss their thoughts and interpretation of their character or the entire animated film. After this, the voice actors one by one enter a booth or a soundproof room, from which they read the translation aloud. Sometimes the actor's partner in a particular scene enters the booth as well, to help the actor get into the spirit of the scene. All of this is done under the director's supervision and with the help of the sound engineer, both sitting in the recording control room. The sound engineer records the lines and occasionally gives hints to the director relating to sound quality or speech errors that may require repeating a line. Sometimes, if the director suggests so, several versions of a scene are recorded and the best one is chosen later in the montage. The voice actors have their copy of the script on a desk or a lectern set up in front of the microphone and a small television set. They read their lines aloud while at the same time looking at the screen and hearing the original actors. They also work with a pair of headphones through which they hear the original version and the instructions given to them by the director or the sound engineer. The voice actors are mostly seated; however, some prefer to stand as they can make gestures more easily that way, imitating the characters' body movements.

The technology today requires that voice actors should be recorded one by one. Even though this means that this part of the dubbing process may last longer, the final result will be of much higher quality. The technology has also made it possible to change and improve some details in the cutting process. In the past, whole scenes had to be re-recorded and actors called

in again if a mistake was discovered at a later stage of the dubbing process. Mistakes were not easily noticed, as one tape would contain the sound and another one the images. In Croatia, VHS tapes were used up until a few years ago. These were quite old and in poor condition as they were used repeatedly, which means that new content would be recorded over the older. Nowadays, everything has been digitalized.

Once all the work is done on a given animated film or episode, the sound engineer compiles the original sound and music with the dubbed dialogues into a single sound track. Today's digital technology makes this *cutting process* much easier, not to mention that this phase can be done much faster and much more efficiently as a result. This version is then edited and called the *final mix*. The recording studio can now send the track back to the client for approval. Once the track has been approved, the animation studio finally mixes in this *international tone* – i.e. the sound tracks containing dialogues in different target languages which the animation studio receives from dubbing studios in different countries – into the sound track containing other sounds which will remain the same in all languages after the final post-editing. The film can then be sent back to the film distributor, which is usually the case only with blockbusters. If the dubbing process is done at a television network and does not require the client's approval, the final mix is only sent to the editor (the same person with whom everything begins) for a brief check-up. He or she sends the material to the archive along with the information on what parts are to be broadcast and when. The archive then forwards it to the service in charge of actual broadcasting, which finally plays the animated film.

It is difficult to say how much time a dubbing process can consume, but usually it takes a few months to complete the entire process, from the initial request of a dubbed version of an animated film to the moment the final product is ready to reach the audience. People employed within this industry point out that the amount of time needed depends a great deal on the cast and crew. Considering the large number of people involved, who are all equally important for the process, it takes a single weak link to compromise the speed and quality of the entire process. Another factor is the animated film itself. If it is well written well and the people involved in the dubbing process can connect with it, the whole process goes much faster.

## **6 The translator's role**

### **6.1 Before dubbing**

When a director is chosen to lead the dubbing process, one of the first tasks is to hire a translator so that he or she can start producing a translation immediately and send it in before the central part of the dubbing process starts. This is because translating this kind of material is a lengthy process, and the translation has to go through proofreading and sometimes further editing before multiple copies can be made and sent to all the people involved in the dubbing process.

There are no special or official competitions for this job. For example, HRT, the Croatian public broadcasting company, has a special service within the television network that has a list of translators standing at editors' and directors' disposal. The service also hires freelance translators as external associates for a particular assignment. Since the director is the one making all the final decisions about the cast and crew, and has complete responsibility in this, he or she can hire a translator on their own.

Just as there is no special job competition, there is also no specific training translators have to pass in order to become dubbing translators. They do not get a set of instructions, but rather learn everything along the way in a practice-makes-perfect manner, which can obviously be difficult. Usually the only instructions they get depend on the director. Directors may have their own preferences regarding the language used, sometimes because they already have a voice actor in mind and are thinking ahead. The director's requests may have to do only with text formatting, in order to make finding one's way in the script easier for everyone involved in the dubbing process. These requests can include font size, writing of the names of characters in capital letters followed by a colon but without quotation marks, and so on.

### **6.2 Coping with audiovisual source material**

The translator usually works with two sources: the animated film itself and a copy of the written script. It can happen that the script is incomplete or that it is a flawed transcription, and in some cases that there is no script at all. The recommended way to begin one's work on translating audiovisual material is to watch it while paying close attention to the prosody – intonation, tone, stress, and rhythm – as a dubbing translator's hardest task is fitting the text into the melody. This is especially problematic if one works with languages belonging to different language families. It is advisable to read the translation aloud while listening to the dialogue, repeatedly

if necessary, because the text alone on a piece of paper does not mean much in this area of translation practice. The vocabulary of the source text is usually not problematic here; the translator can often understand the material without major difficulties. However, the problem is to find a suitable target language equivalent when bound by the constraints set by the audiovisual material. The most important piece of advice for dubbing translators is to try to say everything aloud. If the speaker is *off camera*, meaning that he or she cannot be seen on the screen, the translator can be very free and creative. But if the speaker is *in lip*, i.e. visible on the screen, today's animation technologies make a dubbing translator's job more difficult. All vowels, pauses and characters' idiosyncrasies in speech are visible as if being uttered by real people. This means that the translator should follow some basic guidelines when trying to write down speech, so that this script can later be turned into speech again. Here are some examples of such guidelines provided by my interviewees:

- Write down everything you hear, not just utterances, but also cries, sighs, coughs, yawns, and the like. If there is a long sigh, mark somehow that it is long. Use onomatopoeia or give such information in italics in brackets.

E.g. "Aaaaah... Danas je tako dosadno." (*zijeвне*) ["Aaaaah... It's so boring today." (*yawns*)]

- Pay attention to the number of syllables. Make sure that the number of syllables in the source text coincides with the number of syllables in the translation as often as possible because the voice actor is restricted by the duration of the sentence. He or she will have trouble uttering six syllables if the original only has two. The numbers do not have to coincide at all times, but deviations that are too big must be avoided. It is important to transfer the gist of the utterance.

E.g. "Please stop!" as "Prestani!" instead of: "Molim te, prestani!"

- Organise the sentence so that it follows the original. When there is, for example, a pause in the source, make a pause in the target.

E.g. "My name is, umm... Daisy." → "Zovem se, ovaj... Ivančica."

- Use the same vowels. If an utterance in the source ends in a stressed 'o', make sure it does so in the translation as well. Of course, this rule does not have to be obeyed if the speaker does not appear on the screen or if the audience cannot see the character's facial expressions.

### 6.3 The post-translation process

The translator who is hired for the dubbing process usually only translates the material and sends it in, i.e. he or she is usually not present during the dubbing process. This is because almost all dubbing translators are freelancers (or at least freelancers in the sense that they are translators available for hire within the dubbing industry for a particular assignment) and translating for dubbing is not their only job. The tempo of a dubbing process is often difficult to follow. It is useful if the translator can attend the recording sessions and they are not prevented from doing so, but in practice they rarely do. Translators therefore deliver a "written version of the original film taking into account it is to be interpreted orally by actors and to be received audiovisually by the audience" (Matamala 2010: 103). As Matamala continues to explain, the translator's job is "to capture all the nuances of the original audiovisual product and transfers them into the target language, delivering a version which mimics the features of the original in terms of language variation and adequacy" (2010: 103). This means that the criterion for a dubbed animated film to be considered successful is met when the original character "appears to be actually speaking the translated dialogue, in other words, when the translation is made invisible" (Chaume 2004: 36).

The translation is usually produced while the animated film still does not have its voice actors. This means that the translator's version of the script that reaches the director after proofreading will most likely be somewhat different from the final, *as recorded script*. The text is likely to be modified several times during the dubbing phase. This is usually so because the director may wish to make certain adjustments according to personal taste. Voice actors are also allowed to change the text through improvisation; as already mentioned, some of the best and most remembered lines from animated films were the result of improvisation. In fact, it is desirable for voice actors, sound engineers and other people involved to offer suggestions. As Martinez (2004: 5) explains, "it is virtually inevitable that the translation initially delivered by the translator will undergo modifications. Indeed, audiovisual translation is probably the discipline in which the text undergoes most change from start to finish". The text will be changed at least three times: first in the translation itself (e.g. syllables, word order), then during proofreading (correcting errors), and finally during the recording phase (e.g. style, register, vocabulary, voice actors' improvisation, director's interventions). Thus, all stages of a dubbing process allow and involve some degree of manipulation of the text originally submitted by the translator. This means that, as a consequence, translators do not have much of a say in the end.

It would be a positive change if translators were to attend the recordings, or if they were available for consultation during the recordings.

## **7 Comparison of dubbing practices in Croatia and Europe**

While new technologies seem to "favour globalisation in many areas of translation, dubbing shows a reluctance to embrace this trend of globalisation" (Chaume 2007: 203). This means that although dubbing practices in Western European countries in which dubbing is the most popular type of audiovisual translation usually roughly follow the routine outlined and described in chapters about dubbing practices in Croatia, there are also some practices in each of these European countries that differ strikingly from the practices in other countries. However, the most prominent differences in contrast to Croatia seem to be shared by these countries despite the fact that each country takes pride in its own steps in producing a dubbed version of an animated film.

First and foremost, it is important to make clear that Europe's biggest dubbing industries (Germany, France, Spain and Italy) dub films, television series, documentaries and animated films, while the Croatian dubbing industry focuses almost solely on animated films. Since the largest part of these countries' broadcast programmes is dubbed, it is not surprising that their dubbing practices developed in a somewhat different manner than those in Croatia.

### **7.1 Different people involved**

Chaume (2007: 205) points out that the most prominent differences in the dubbing processes of various countries are especially visible in the number of human agents involved. France, Germany, Spain and Italy (further in the text: Western European dubbing countries) all have a post called *dialogue writer*, meaning that they have two people working on the text. In Croatia, it is the translator's job to produce the target text and prepare it for dubbing. Excluding the person doing proofreading from the count, the translator is the only person who prepares the text for the voice actors and the rest of the crew. Croatian translators have to think about everything and take on a bigger responsibility, while in the Western European dubbing countries, translators produce a rough translation and leave it to the dialogue writers to adapt the text and prepare it for recording. However, according to Chaume, this tendency is beginning to change in those countries as well, and "now translators are increasingly writing dialogues, thus making this activity more profitable by speeding up the process and reducing costs" (2007:



204). Chaume (2007: 216) also believes that it is in fact better to have only one person taking care of the target text, even if we step away from economic plus sides and take only the quality of the final product into consideration. He claims that the task of dialogue writing can be better done by the translators themselves. While "dialogue writers manipulate the draft translation submitted by translators in order to make the translation sound fresher and more natural, and also to attain lip-sync" (Chaume 2007: 216), they are not always proficient in the source language. As Chaume puts it, although "they are very good professionals in what they do and have an excellent command of the target language, especially regarding its oral registers, they can completely change the meaning of the film for the sake of naturalness and lip-sync" (2007: 216).

In order to compare how much of a say in the whole process translators in Croatia have to how much of a say translators and dialogue writers have in Europe, it should be pointed out that the director has the final word in all of these countries. Despite the fact that many countries rely on more people to prepare the text for dubbing than it is the case in Croatia, their job remains strictly delivering words on a piece of paper. It can easily happen that a particular phoneme or word poses problems of pronunciation. In such cases, "it is the director's responsibility to replace the word with a synonym, while at the same time logically respecting the original meaning of the utterance" (Chaume 2004: 37). This means that the director may modify the target language solution proposed by the translator and/or the dialogue writer at any point in the course of the dubbing process, in an effort to make the final product sound more natural.

Another person that takes part in the dubbing processes in Europe's largest dubbing industries is a *casting director*. A casting director's duty is to be familiar with voice actors standing at disposal for a particular job. In Croatia, it is mostly the "regular" director's job to gather the entire cast and crew. Some casting directors are employed, but this is mostly the case when the animated film to be dubbed is owned by a big animation studio, making the animated film in question nearly a blockbuster, with many characters originally voiced by famous actors. The casting director, when there is one, is usually the main link between the director, the actors and their agents, as well as between the animation studio and the broadcaster. It is the casting director's job to organize auditions for particular roles. The casting director may already have some voice actors in mind; in this case, only their recordings will be sent for approval and auditions will be held only if the film production company or animation studio decides it does not agree with the choice of a voice actor. Western European dubbing countries seem to have

less of a problem with disagreements as in these large dubbing markets, it is often the case for a voice actor to specialize in a single voice, i.e. he or she always dubs a specific actor and in that way becomes a kind of specialist for that voice. Their job is becoming easier as it is usually famous Hollywood actors (rather than various Broadway actors, as was the case in the past) who lend their voices to cartoon characters. Hollywood stars are commercially viable as they attract viewers, and since their work is virtually omnipresent, it is easier for voice actors to train their skills.

A *voice coach* is another post that is sometimes necessary to help a voice actor to bring a character to life. The dubbing process in Croatia does not involve a voice coach, but it should be pointed out that this post is not a norm in all other European countries either. Despite it not being a norm, it is not unusual for directors in Western European dubbing countries to hire a voice coach to work with one or more voice actors, especially if their role involves singing. A voice coach's job mostly includes teaching singing techniques to voice actors or helping them develop their voice, but he or she often also helps by teaching them breathing techniques, as well as prosody and pronunciation.

Countries with developed animation industries which export a large number of animated films sometimes have a post of *language supervisor*. This person's job is to supervise dubbings of that country's films in the world, i.e. an animated film's international postproduction, in order to keep an eye on the language variety, register and the like, used in the dubbed version of the animated film in question. This post is akin to the aforementioned post of a representative of the client company. Croatia does not make use of this post, as we do not export nearly as many animated films into other countries. When there is no language supervisor, it is the dubbing director and the voice actors that decide on the features of the language used in the dubbed version of an animated film.

## **7.2 Voice test**

Countries that are bigger markets than Croatia also have to make voice tests much more often because they dub animated films owned by big companies more often, and also because they have a much larger number of voice actors. This is hardly surprising considering that the biggest dubbing countries dub almost everything they broadcast. The voice test is one of the reasons why dubbing is such a lengthy process. Another problem with the test is that the recording studios working on the dubbing often get, as has been mentioned earlier, a very short piece cut

out of the animated film in order to keep the chances of information about the film leaking to a minimum. The voice test is used just to see whether the voice fits the character. The problems can occur once the recording studio gets the entire film. What if, for example, the original character speaks fast and the voice actor has problems delivering? Or what if there is a part in the film that needs to be sung? The recording studio is now forced to hire the actor that passed the test, i.e. the one the animation studio wants, despite the fact that most likely nobody in the animation studio speaks Croatian, or is even of linguistic profession so that he or she could understand early on how important the differences between languages can be in this context. Cultural differences can also come to question here. For example, in some countries, there is a tendency to give all child characters in an animated film a nasal voice. In Croatia, nasality does not denote children; it simply means that the character has a cold.

### **7.3 Dubbing symbols**

Dubbing symbols do not seem to present an important difference in the whole dubbing process, as they are not obligatory. However, when the guidelines on textual material are not respected, it can lead to confusion among all the people involved in the dubbing process. Chaume (2007: 210) defines dubbing symbols as "indications that dialogue writers or dubbing assistants include in the translation to help dubbing actors imitate the screen actors' gestures, paralinguistic signs, pitch, volume, primary qualities of the voice, etc." Each of these dubbing symbols is usually used to "call the actor's attention to some important dubbing constraints. Thus, bilabials can be marked (...) with a symbol placed below the consonant, so that the dubbing actor does not miss the closing of the original actor's lips" (Chaume 2007: 211). The Croatian practice does not seem to make use of these symbols at all. Perhaps they are considered unnecessary because Croatian voice actors hear the original soundtrack in the background and they also watch the video inside the recording room while they are recording their roles. That way they see the scene and they can imitate their character without difficulty. To help them even more, translators are often asked to write directions before the line, next to the character's name (e.g. yawning, whispering, etc.).

### **7.4 Text segmentation**

Another important difference between Croatia and Western European biggest dubbing countries is text segmentation. In the latter countries, the translation is divided into segments, i.e. chunks of text called *takes*, and these are defined as "portions of text with different lengths

and layouts in Western European dubbing countries" (Chaume 2007: 206). Historically, takes were used to help voice actors because they had to memorise all the dialogue lines they were to utter. Translations would therefore be divided into short portions of text, meaning that each take has a limited number of lines (Chaume 2007: 206). As Chaume (2007: 206) explains, dialogues were split into these dubbing units, known as takes, "enabling dubbing actors to concentrate fully on the screen actors' movements and mouths. If their lines were too long, actors would have to look down at the printed version of the translation in order to read their lines aloud". If the actors constantly have to look down, it is easy to lose focus on the original actors' body movements and mouth articulation, and this would then "result in their missing the screen actors' mouth articulation and kinesic movements and, eventually, in blatant dischronies regarding isochrony or equal duration of utterances" (Chaume 2007: 206).

The introduction of takes to the dubbing process helped achieve better synchronisation and a faster pace in dubbing sessions. This is an important factor in the economic sense as well because "the faster dialogues can be dubbed and recorded, the lower the dubbing costs are" (Chaume 2007: 206). According to Chaume (2007: 206), the differences between text segmentation and layout are progressively becoming more pronounced, and the number of lines per take varies from country to country. In Croatia, there is no established limit for the number of lines permitted per take. Our translators are not required to split utterances into takes. Instead of this, they follow what Chaume (2007: 208) calls *audiovisual narrative criteria*: action breaks, scene changes, or fade-ins and outs; a new take begins only after one of these criteria. "An audiovisual punctuation mark, then, generates a new take. Scene cuts and sequence cuts marked by these audiovisual devices represent the end of one take and the beginning of another. Temporal, spatial and narrative cuts in the plot also require a new take" (Chaume 2007: 207).

Actors are paid according to the number of takes they dub, i.e. according to the number of lines they read aloud (Chaume 2007: 207). Since there are no takes per se in Croatia, voice actors are paid by performance, which means that they are paid according to the number of lines their character has. The pay is unpredictable for translators as well, as it depends on the amount of dialogue that needs to be translated for recording.

## 7.5 Different practices in every country

The list would be quite long if one were to list all the differences between Croatia and Europe's most developed dubbing industries. It seems to be true that, as Chaume (2007: 210) claims, "globalisation has not yet reached the dubbing industry". His examples from various countries, and even various dubbing studios within these countries, show that dubbing practices are not generalized, but rather quite particular. In order to illustrate this, here is an example of a practice in dubbing that can be found only in France – *la bande rythmo*. It is a track on the screen into which the translation is typed. Chaume (2007: 205) explains that this track is added onto the film for dubbing purposes only and will never be seen by the final spectator. "The track is added at the bottom of the screen and dialogues and dubbing symbols are typed into it, so that dubbing actors can read the dialogue lines aloud while they are looking at the screen and hearing the original actors" (Chaume 2007: 205). The dialogue lines run from right to left like scrolling and paint-on subtitles, and the actors read their lines from these subtitles, rather than from the printed script. "When the text crosses a red (green, black) vertical line in the middle of the track (*barre de précision*) it signals to the actors that they should begin reading" (Chaume 2007: 205). This technology is not used in Croatia or in other large dubbing industries either, as it is specific only to France.

## 7.6 Training

A similarity that should be pointed out is that neither the voice actors nor the dubbing translators/dialogue writers receive official training in any of these countries. They simply learn by doing and by watching other professionals in their trade. As Chaume (2007: 216) explains, "courses on dialogue writing for dubbing are very scarce. This increases the risk of atomisation, in the sense that each professional and each dubbing studio have their own conventions". It can be induced from Chaume's research that there are courses offered at some universities in Western European dubbing countries. However, they seem to be few, and voice actors and dubbing translators/dialogue writers mostly have to rely on the instructions they receive for each particular dubbing assignment.

As translators are increasingly trained at the university level, introducing courses on translating for dubbing would improve the industry. Chaume (2007: 216) feels that the solution is to have translators do the dialogue writing, which is a practice already commonplace in Croatia. In this way, their knowledge and experience could be shared more easily because

"information flows better among translators than among dialogue writers and dubbing companies". Chaume (2004: 37) also believes that the changes introduced to the translated text should be made only by the translator, because he or she is "the sole link in the dubbing chain that is able to make such changes and at the same time take into account both the source and target texts, as he or she, unlike the dialogue writer or the director, is the only person who is familiar with both languages at stake". Moreover, he believes that if dialogue writing were taught at universities, this would change the pace of old local practices as well. "Undoubtedly, dialogues written by translators would help to homogenise and globalise dubbing practices and cast off old local and capricious conventions" (Chaume 2007: 216).

## **8 Conclusion**

To conclude, "the audiovisual dubbing process comprises several closely linked phases, which must follow an established order and rhythm, something akin to a production line. If one of these phases is delayed or runs into problems the entire line may be affected" (Martinez 2004: 3).

As far as translation goes, translating for dubbing is a complex process because it deals with audiovisual source material characterised by a number of features that cannot be altered (e.g. gestures, facial expressions). It is clear that the source influences the target in every kind of translation, but this is even more pronounced in the field of audiovisual translation due to the fact that the visual part of the source material is constantly present and cannot be changed. Translation of this kind of material requires a multisemiotic transfer, which makes translating this kind of material even more difficult. If we take into consideration that any kind of translation is impossible without a cultural transfer accompanying the necessary linguistic one, throwing a multisemiotic transfer into the mix makes the whole process much more complex. The text produced by a translator is never the same as the final script; it is rather a draft version, which is then refined and adapted along the way. Martinez (2004: 3) explains that the "translator produces a text which will serve as the starting point for a lengthy and complex process during which the text will pass through many hands and operations, which may be more or less respectful of the original translation". This implies that translators have not been given an important role in the entire process.

A conclusion can be drawn from the second part of the paper that different countries have different practices in trying to produce a successful final product. "While translation for

subtitling is becoming increasingly homogeneous and globalised in terms of layout and subtitling conventions, translation for dubbing is still heterogeneous and localised in these terms" (Chaume 2007: 215). Chaume (2007: 216) also points out that "little research on dubbing technology is being carried out in universities. This also obstructs the flow of information among dubbing companies".

It is not only about technology, either. Specific training for the posts of voice actors, translators and many other roles involved in this process does not exist. These have not yet become professions in the true sense of the word, and people trying to make a career in dubbing can only try to learn along the way.

Despite the large quantity of animated films dubbed into Croatian, the knowledge about the process behind the final product is scarce. I hope that this paper will encourage both my colleagues and those working in the field of film studies to start conducting research on various aspects of dubbing, both in Croatia and in general, and as a result to make this industry more visible to the wider public.

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