Translation of Cinema Text
Word of Play

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Sometime we watch a comedy that does not seem as comic to us as the DVD package promised at the rental shop. The first scapegoat we blame is the scriptwriter, then the director, followed by the actors, their mentors at Acting School, etc., and only experienced and bilingual/multilingual people suspect that a translator of the dubbed version may not be the last person on this black list. It is unfortunately true that humor is the frequent thing to disappear from comic and not so comic films/TV series. Once said the phrase 'In order to translate a joke, one needs to understand it in the first place' again reminds us that a sense of humour is a rather subjunctive thing in terms of comprehension by an individual. However, we assume that professional translators are linguistically, socially, and psychologically apt and perceptive enough to see the joke not only when it is sitting under a huge billboard with neon lights saying so, but to be able to read between lines the most subtle hints. Moreover, when translating a movie, it is not only reading, but listening and seeing between lines, a huge advantage compared to a written book. What can be more 'neon-lightish' and obvious than the background laughter accompanying the replicas of the TV series protagonist? So, in spite of being amusing and true, the second part of this saying is not as much in the spotlight for us, as its first part, the translation process itself.

The problem with translating the text of movies and TV series lies in the complexity of the text in question, its synthesized nature, which means that the part of the information is channeled via different sources: language, static picture or dynamic movement, sound, etc. Being synthesized, the cinematic language comprises a visual component that is easy to perceive, and the verbal component which is still incomprehensible without translation. The verbal part still prevails, especially in TV series where the dialogues is frequently the dominant part of the script, as well as in the movie genre such as a comedy; and nothing is

more verbally twisted thing to be translated or sacrificed on the altar of the quick and pressed translation than the play of words.

Although a word play is often used in jokes as such, we are more interested in it as a device for creating toponyms, personal names (namely, charactonyms), antroponyms, as well as acronyms and abbreviations, forcing a grand dilemma upon translators: translating them or not translating. The problem with the units listed above is that it has dual or/and multi-function: (1) purely nomination, and (2) characterizing, a kind of 'extended nomination', via making allusion, creating a comic effect, adding a touch of irony, etc. It has to be noted that in this article we are not attempting at identifying more layers to this phenomenon that may be found beyond nomination and colorful characterization.

Thus, translators have to take decisions at two levels: translate it or leave it in its nominative function only (1) or function (2), or attempt to maintain functions (1) and (2). Due to the fact that wordplay mechanism may be based on different elements (e.g. semantic and morphological, semantic and phonetic), a translator has to decide if the original technique will work in the target language and what to sacrifice if needed.

In this article we do not deal with the natural aptonyms like *Carpenter, Butcher, Плотников, Рыбак, ᲓᲦ�d3ᲐᲜ�, ᲛᲒᲔᲚᲐᲫᲔ*. Neither are we interested in debatable issue of transferring proper names in literary texts via transcription, transliteration, literary onomastic translation (*Alicein Wonderland* transforming into *Аня, Алиса* or *ЭлисвСтранеЧудес*). More interesting for us are word-play based names such as N.E.W.T., Knockturn Alley, Voldemort, Grimmauld Place, etc. and the way they have been treated in Harry Potter series translation mainly in the Georgian and Russian languages. J. K. Rowling's world is very specific and being a wizard in this world, also means a world full of wordplays and linguistic challenges for translators who translated all her books and films into Georgian among other languages.

To certain extent, audio-visual translation (or 'script translation' here, which stands for translating the source text for subtitling or dubbing) can be compared to interpretation; but the genre of the former is rather specific and except for documentaries, it is mostly the language that is close to the literary register. Apart from this, audio-visual translators rarely deal with the text unprepared, and live translation they sometimes deliver (e.g. the common practice in BIAFF film festival in Batumi, Georgia) is still not the real time interpretation like in case of simultaneous or consecutive interpreters.

It has to be noted that the techniques for explaining the wordplay in movies and cinemas in fact overlap and differ at the same time. What can work on the paper of a book

may also work or be completely dysfunctional in the text in the film. In fact, this leads us to the eternal problem of 'untranslatability' of some language units/textual segments due to objective (the grammatical, lexical, and phonological asymmetry of the source and target languages) or subjunctive reasons (lack of professional or language competence of translators). If we consider the techniques applicable to word play, it is obvious that it is not translation in its classic sense, but mostly transformation in attempt of finding/creating an equivalent variant of the ST unit in the TT, via mimicking, adapting, replacing the SL verbal foundation mechanism of a wordplay.

The techniques for such transference comprise mainly the following: word play is replaced by the same or similar word play; by any other rhetorical device in an attempt to imitate the effect of ST; by not word play, which can be omitted but further compensated in the text wherever the word play seemed possible; by not word play, which can be commented in the footnotes or otherwise explained within the text; by a completely new word play, again in attempt to imitate the ST effect.

Although audio-visual translators share some techniques with interpreters, they do not have the same repertoire of techniques due to the synthesized nature of the movie script as described above. Nevertheless, they have their similar yet modified methods of handling the problem - sometimes rather unconventional for audio-visual translation, though effective ones. For example, the unauthorized translation of the Japanese anime series *Gintama* is rarely dubbed but mostly subtitled. It has to be noted that *Gintama* is beloved by its fans, first and foremost, for its sophisticated humour in addition to its story line. Its highly intelligent or 'dumb' yet hilarious dialogues, employing all possible kinds of word-play, add to the intertextuality of the entire script alluding to numerous references to the Japanese culture in general and current events in particular. This makes the entire series a real challenge for translators which they solved by introducing a technique that is more common for written texts rather than movies/TV series. They have applied a system of headers and footnotes, dividing their functions: the lower part was traditionally subtitles of the spoken text, which were often complemented by the lines in the upper part of the screen, commenting on the content of the subtitles and providing additional information vital for understanding the core and humour of the situation or/and statement. Judging by number of growing fans in other countries admiring the sophisticated language of the script, it can be assumed that the approach worked.

As good as it sounds, there are probably objective reasons why more professional script translators do not use this technique. Some may question how acceptable this translation is: it is unauthorized while the regulations will not allow such liberal approach to the screen space. It has to be admitted that the additional headers together with the 'lawful' subtitles sometimes took quite a significant part of the screen (depending on the complexity of the word play or allusion explained). Typically, subtitling follows strict rules like number of lines on the screen, the duration of their display, the intervals, etc. Leaving this issue aside, the other matter of concern is that such approach may be explained by the lack of time or desire of translators to properly translate the source text, as the method may seem to be slightly overused. This may be a hint for us that the translators chose the easier way out: commenting instead of melting their brains in attempt to find or/and create invariants in the target language to convey the meaning of the source text at all its levels (semantic, connotative, etc.) within the target text, rather than taking it outside the translated text dimensions, in the form of comments. Considering that anime translation is quite often made by fans under time pressure, it is not surprising that these translation enthusiasts enjoy more 'freedom' than professional translators.

Interestingly, 'the Gintama approach' overused or not, suited any kind of word play including explanations of the toponyms, charactonyms, antroponyms and acronyms. Even if such method was accepted for official translations have to deal with them differently and can not use the same methods all the time. Especially, considering that J. K. Rowling's books and respective series offer a wide choice so that translators can apply a range of techniques. As mentioned above, first they have to decide how crucial it is to keep the wordplay in such names. Rowling often employs more than one technique in one name: e.g. Severus Snape, Salazar Slytherine, Rowenna Ravenclaw, etc. the first and the second names start with the same letter and both may represent a wordplay characterizing its bearer. When it comes to the Georgian approach, a variety of methods were used: There are so many examples of such '*nyms'* that even a poor translator who abuses the escapist approach, i.e. shunning and omitting a wordplay, cannot avoid translating at least some of them. The weight of and respect towards such '*nyms'* by the movies creators themselves are demonstrated by the efforts they took to maintain the wordplay in names the book fans love so much.

In this respect, *Knight Bus* from the series is a rather interesting example since it required additional attention from the movie creators to keep it. In the scene when Harry catches a bus that rescues him in the pitch of the night, we see an ordinary bus but instead of

the destination on the dot screen on its front, we read *Knight Bus*. The words *night* and *knight* are practically twins in writing and pronunciation, so it had to be written on it so that people who have not read the books can also enjoy the pun. Probably this is the reason for specifically allowing movie viewers a glimpse of the *Knockturn Alley* written on the wall in one of the scenes although Hagrid has already pronounced the name in his talk with Harry. *Knockturn Alley* is a rather controversial item for understanding even, not to mention translation. Interestingly, the Russian version can easily imitate another alley in the books/movies - the *Diagon Alley* which is commonly associated with the word *diagonally*: *ДиагонАллея (ДаягонАллея) - диагональный* keeping its morphological structure as in the original; the Georgian word for diagonally also sounds similarly დიაგონალურ, but the *Alley* part of the wordplay is tricky, and may be even misunderstood by Georgians if left untranslated, since the word *alley* in the meaning of a narrow street is not translated as ალეა in Georgian. The most natural thing for toponyms is to be trans-littered or transcribed, as i.e. nomination, is their primal function, i.e. function (1) as above; but due to the aforementioned reasons, the Georgian text chooses to translate them. Thus, we have მრუდექუჩა (diagonal street) as an equivalent.

Similarly to *Diagon Alley*, *Knockturt Ally* was linked with an adverb *nocturnally*; however, it is more complicated and we share other interpretations that apart from the phonetic similarity additional wordplay is involved: *Knockturn Alley* can be interpreted as the turn to the alley, where you can be knocked, turned down, i.e. a dangerous street is awaiting you just round the corner. So, in the case of Knockturn Alley, the Georgian translators' focus on the meaning is not only consistent with the previously selected approach, but is probably more justified: ხლხმრავალიქუჩა. Though, its equivalence as a translation unit is questionable. ხლხმრავალიქუჩა in fact means *crowded street,* which is a rather forced association with the dangerous one, especially when followed by Hagrid's warning that Harry may be suspected of being up to something evil just being seen in Knockturn Alley; and saying so, Hagrid leads Harry to the safer and 'proper' Diagon Alley, which is as crowded. So, the Georgian interpretation seemed appropriate but its implementation turned out to be a little far from the translators' original intention. The Knight Bus discussed above also shared the same faith - the second function was taken as the basis, purely function, so that even the semantic component was replaced by the contextual meaning, and was transformed into მაშველიავტობუსი. Whomping Willow enjoyed the whole repertoire of techniques:

მრგვგვინავიხე (only contextual meaning without alliteration to the same kind of tree as in English Wheeping willow – ტირიფი); the Russian translators suggested more versions some of them borrowed from the book translations: ПлакучаяИва, «Гремучаяива»,«Дракучаяива, immitating the word play at the lexical and grammatical level, and keeping the initial semantics of the tree willow - ива.

In case of acronyms and abbreviations (N.E.W.T., O.W.L., S.P.E.W.), the Georgian version shows the common approach for such examples: deciphering the full name of the organization and then creating another acronym in the TL. Unlike the other acronyms, this task was again complicated by the necessity to keep the comic effect, therefore, the full version of the acronyms changed in the Russian, Georgian, and almost any other language into which they were translated, so in case of NEWT we got ЖАБА - ЖуткоАкадемическаяБлестящаяАттестация, ТРИТОН - Типично Решаемый Изнуряющий Тест - Оценка Навыков. Unfortunately, S.P.E.W. (Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare), was not illustrated in the movie as it was cut out of the script by the movie creators themselves; though it was moderately successfully translated in the book using the same model (ელფთადამოუკიდებლობისადდგენისორგანიზაცია,,,ედამ"-ი (referring to the wordელამი).

So, we can see that in case of the names denoting places and institutions translators of the movies preferred to focus more on the function (2) 'an extended nomination', so that the word is no longer a pure toponym for example (as it not transcribed), but still a nominator and at the same time characterizer. The acronyms mostly were substituted by the equivalent technique but the changed semantics, in attempt to maintain the element of humour and keep the function of the acronym intact.

As for the character's proper names, they can be divided into two main categories in their translation form: translated or transcribed (a kind of phonetic borrowing). Borrowings allowed maintaining the trick loved by J. K. Rowling - starting the first and the second name with the same letter: so we get Severus Snape, Salazar Slytherine, Minerva McGonnagal, etc. intact - სევერუსსნეიპი, სალაზარსლიზერინი, მინერვამაკგონაგალი.Mostly phonetic borrowingwas applied rather than literary, onomastic transaltion; however, nicknames were respectively translated like in case of *Moaning* Myrtle - მტირალომირტლ.Thus, the Georgian translators respected the function (1) in case of such proper names, there have been examples of the semantic substitution in other languages (e.g. Ravenclaw - Когтевран (Ru),

Ludovic Begman – Ludovic Verpay (Fr), etc.), it did not cover major characters. In case of the latter, the translators respected the first function (nomination) as the ultimate. It is worth mentioning, that fans able to read and watch Harry Potter in the original really enjoy Rowling's love for the charactonyms, and continued her tradition in their own, fan-made texts, so called *fanfiction* genre, where they keep modifying the proper names in translation fallowing Rowling's approach (e.g. Poppy *Pomphrey* - Поппи*Помри*). However, it is rather questionable that translating (semantically substituting) Voldemort, for example, is justifiable, when even a French language expert admitted in her article that she realized the possible interpretation of Voldemort's name can be *the flight of death'* only when she was reading the fourth book of the series; English speakers may have even less chances associating the roots with the possible meanings. Prioratizing the function (1) seems to be more acceptable and natural in most cases with the proper names.

To sum up, the examples of the script translation analyzed demonstrate the prevailing techniques applied for translation of names (geographic, proper, institutional acronyms, etc.) based on the word play in movies/TV series, very depending on their dominant function. Due to their dual purpose, translators have to prioritize the function first, specify the mechanism of their creation and then select the translation technique. The same approach may not be maintained throughout the movie/TV series as the format of the dubbing or subtitling somewhat limit the range of techniques applicable in written texts (e.g. explanations, footnotes, etc.), and the overall approach may not remain consistent, and is frequently based on the subjunctive evaluation of each case separately.

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