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TRAINING FOR A TRANSCULTURAL WORLD

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Foreword

This issue asked for contributions focussing on research, models, strategies, and also practical exercises which either break new ground on classic linguacultural divides, or are able to reach beyond static, stereotypical 'cultural differences' and make some headway in improving communication and mutual understanding in an increasingly transcultural and virtual world. As we had such a response, boosted through the active contribution of SIETAR Europe papers given at Krakow "Interculturalism Ahead: Transition to a Virtual World?" (September 2011), instead of our usual 5-6 papers we have 10 but, sadly perhaps, no interview this year.

The first papers in this issue offer specific frameworks or models, all of which move us on from the static cultural-difference models, and chart how the transcultural turn is developing; while those on university training and translation give us a stark reality check. Though there is some light, and much investment in training, especially through foreign study, the picture regarding student perception of the training and of 'the Other', along with actual professional translation highlights the fact that there is still some way to go before we can talk of a real 'transcultural turn' in practice.

We hear much about EU supported initiatives in education and training. In particular there is FREPA a Council of Europe 'Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures' (Daryai-Hansen & Schröder-Sura) and INCA, the "Intercultural Competence Assessment" suite of tools (Cano). From the business world we have a fusion of cultural dimensions with the Reiss Life motives (Konigorski), rhizomatic (rather than tree diagram thinking) embodied in the analogy with the Mobius strip (Hale); WorldWork's 'International Profiler' (IP) and International Preference indicator' (IPI) (Ewington & Hill) along with a more communication focussed enhancement (Spencer-Oatey and Stadler).

Areas of perception of cultural difference include a German-American study of Facebook (Reeves), the intercultural benefits of EU supported 'Applied Language Europe' (ALE) European university study exchange

(Morón-Martín) and the 'Mobility in Higher Education' project (Cano). With regard specifically to translation and transculturality there is a discussion on the use of corpora and travel insurance texts (Peruzzo and Durán-Muñoz) and a case study on the translation of film titles.

David Katan
Cinzia Spinzi

Film titles and cultural transfer

David Limon

Abstract

Many small European nations are now subject to one-way cultural traffic with regard to film and television production and Slovenia is no exception to this, since its TV schedules and cinemas are dominated by English-language (mainly American) programmes and films. Most of these products are subtitled, which has led to a great demand for translators working as subtitlers; the focus of this paper, however, is on the translation of the titles of these products. Why is it that the Slovene translations of the titles of English-language films and television programmes so often differ both semantically and stylistically from the original? Who is responsible for these translations, what translation strategies are employed, and is the frequent criticism of the quality of such translations justified? A corpus of film titles translated from English into Slovene for Slovenia's main television listings publication will be compiled and examined for evidence of translation strategies such as explicitation, standardisation, disambiguation and simplification. We shall also see how cultural references and stylistic elements such as allusion and word play are dealt with. To understand the underlying reasons for the translation strategy applied some sociological research will also be carried out into the translators involved and the institutional environment in which the translations take place, i.e. film distribution and television companies. To what extent was translation strategy guided by a specific brief, and to what extent were the translators adapting to prevailing norms within the target culture? More specifically, is there any evidence of risk avoidance involved, i.e. the translator assuming that ambiguous or cryptic titles would lead to (reader) complaints? The aim here is to offer a detailed description of a very specific translation situation involving cultural transfer.

1. Introduction

Like the other new EU Member States, Slovenia has undergone many dramatic socio-cultural changes over the past two decades. In the field of

film and television it is now subject to one-way cultural traffic, with its TV schedules, especially commercial channels, and cinemas, with the exception of art cinemas, dominated by English-language programmes and films. With the more recent exception of films for children, which are sometimes dubbed, most of these products are subtitled, which has led to a great demand for translators working as subtitlers. The focus of this paper, however, is a much narrower one: the translation of titles. The initial motivation for this piece of research was curiosity as to why the Slovene translations of the titles of English-language films are often surprisingly different from the original. Why is it, when in most contexts Slovene translators tend to take a rather non-interventionist and risk-averse approach (Limon 2004), they seem to be willing to intervene quite radically with regard to such titles? Why, for instance, did the gently evocative title *Snow Falling on Cedars* become *Sovražniki za vedno* [Enemies Forever]?

I was also motivated by the awareness that, just as there is a great deal of criticism of the subtitling of American and British films and TV programmes, with sites which specialise in collecting subtitling 'errors', there is also a generally negative attitude to translated film titles. In one online forum discussion on this topic (<http://www.racunalniskenovice.com/forum/lofiversion/index.php/t23957.html>) there was a wide measure of agreement that film titles were “stupidly” translated and that it would be best to use “the original title” – i.e., the English one. Presumably, such forums are mainly frequented by young people who are used to downloading and watching English-language films and TV programmes, as well as popular songs, and simply do not see the need for translation. An even more negative attitude was prevalent on another forum (<http://slo-tech.com/forum/t25960>), where the question was posed as to why “they have to ruin films by the way they translate the titles” and the comments in response ranged from agreement that “the Slovene translations usually have no connection with the content” to the more extreme “nearly all the translations are a load of crap” (all forum comments translated from Slovene by the author). The interesting thing is that in cinema and television listings it is the norm in Slovenia to give the original title in brackets, so that no-one is entirely dependent on the translation, which makes the indignation expressed on this topic that much harder to understand (although it also helps explain how and why the criticisms arise in the first place).

2. The corpus

In order to look into this matter more systematically I decided to put together and examine a corpus of 1000 titles of English-language films (mainly American) appearing on Slovene terrestrial television channels over a 10-month period, as they appeared in the main Slovene TV listings magazine *Vikend*. The key questions I wished to answer was what kinds of translation shifts took place and how they could be characterised, plus what these could tell us about mediation between the two cultures concerned.¹ I also wanted to establish whether the frequently-voiced criticism of film titles on forums gave a fair picture of the translation situation. A further research question was why the titles had been translated in the way they had – were the translators following a specific brief or guidelines, or was their strategy based on independent decision-making?

3. Direct translations

In analysing the translations, the first step was to decide which could be categorised as 'direct' translations involving little or no intervention by the translator. The criterion here was that back translation was likely to produce the English original or something very close to it. The proportion of such translations, perhaps surprisingly in the light of the frequent criticisms mentioned above, was two-thirds (668 out of 1000 or 67%).

The clearest examples of zero intervention by the translator were film titles based on personal names, in which spellings had not been adapted to Slovene conventions. Examples include: *Alfie*, *Annie Hall*, *Dolores Claiborne*, *Emma* and *Jerry Maguire*. In some cases, it is possible that the connotations of the English name might be lost on the Slovene public: e.g., *Major Payne* (the homophones Payne-pain; comedy film) and *Maverick* (rebellious individual). Place names, real or fictional, were often transferred directly: e.g., *Gallipoli*, *Gosford Park*, *Manhattan* and *Northanger Abbey*. Similarly, certain words or expressions were seen as transparent enough or perhaps well-known enough to transfer unchanged: e.g., *North*, *Silverado* and *Top*

¹ For a comparable discussion of the translation of titles of films distributed in Italy see Viezzi (2004).

Gum. In some cases spelling changes were made to bring the title into line with Slovene conventions: e.g., *Casino/Kasino*, *Magnolia/Magnolija*, *Titanic / Titanik*. However, the majority in this category required minor changes in line with lexico-grammatical differences, such as:

The Queen / Kraljica
 Mrs Harris / Gospa Harris
 Dragonfly / Kačji pastir
 The Getaway / Pobeg
 Wayne's World / Waynov svet
 The Wind in the Willows / Veter v vrbah

4. Indirect translations

The remaining third of translations (332 or 33.2%) in the corpus involve an overt intervention by the translator. These were further divided into the following categories, representing the apparent translation strategy involved:

explicitation – where something is spelled out or clarified by the translator, including when the film genre is made more explicit;
simplification – where some of the complexity of the original or information is lost, including rhetorical effects such as allusion, pun, rhyme and alliteration; also included here are examples where disambiguation of the original title occurred;
unmotivated – where a semantic shift or change of register has occurred for which the motivation is unclear, or an unmotivated insertion or omission.

The result of the analysis is summarised below:

<u>type</u>	<u>no.</u>	<u>% of indirect trans</u>	<u>% of all</u>
<u>translations</u>			
explicitation	137	41	13.7
simplification	121	37	12.1
unmotivated	74	22	7.4

The term “explicitation” was first used by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958;

quoted in Klaudy 1998: 80) to refer to "the process of introducing information into the target language which is present only implicitly in the source language, but which can be derived from the context or the situation". The notion of explicitation was suggested by Blum-Kulka (2004), who looked at cohesive explicitness in a corpus of translations from English into French and Hebrew as a possible translation universal or inherent in the process of translation itself. It was Toury (1995: 224-5) who noted that "the requirement to communicate in translated utterances may impose behavioural patterns of its own", prompting the search for probabilistic laws as to what translators are likely to do under different conditions and thus what the resultant translations will tend to be like. The methodological starting point for descriptive-explanatory research which might lead to the identification of empirical laws of translational behaviour is always, as here, a corpus of translated texts (cf. Laviosa 2002). Two such laws proposed by Toury are the law of *interference* – "phenomena pertaining to the make-up of the source text tend to be transferred to the target text" (ibid.: 275); and the law of growing *standardisation* – translators tend to naturalise and normalise, and translations are characterised by "flatness" of language (ibid.: 268-270). Although Toury (ibid.: 256) prefers the term "laws" because they are not inevitable and are conditional (e.g. if X, then the greater / the lesser the likelihood that Y) the more widely used term is *universals*. Baker (1993: 243) defines these as "features which typically occur in translated texts rather than original utterances and which are not the result of interference from specific linguistic systems". In other words, universals are both general characteristics of translator behaviour and generic features of translations as such, rather than non-translated texts. Baker (ibid.: 180) suggested *simplification* as a possible universal, whereby the translation is characterised by less lexical variety and lower lexical density than the original, as well as by heavy use of high-frequency items. Simplification may also involve other factors, including syntactic and, as in the present study, stylistic ones. (For other studies of simplification, see Blum-Kulka and Levenston 1983, Ghadessy and Gao 2001, Paloposki 2001; and for further discussion of translation universals, see Mauranen 2000, Sollano 2008, Mauranen and Kujamäki (eds.) 2004 – especially the papers by Chesterman and Tirkkonen-Condit).

5. Explicitation

In the corpus there were 137 instances (41% of direct translations) where the translation was more explicit than the original. This was mainly a matter of clarifying the genre of the film, making explicit to potential viewers that it was a crime, horror/thriller, comedy, romantic (comedy) or action film. Such explicitation was often achieved through standardisation (cf. Toury 1995: 268-270), whereby the translator normalised the title through the use of key words (see below) that make the genre more obvious to the reader. Thus an ambiguous title like *Fall Time*, where the first word might suggest autumn as well as the expression ‘taking the fall’ for something, is translated by *Bančna roparja* [Bank Robbers – the dual form indicating there are two of them] and *Stander* by *Bančni ropar* [Bank Robber]. Similarly, the title *So Close*, which does not point to a particular genre, becomes *Poklicni morilki* [Professional Killers – the dual feminine form indicating there are two female killers]. Other examples involving crime films include:

Sleepers	Prestopniki [Offenders]
Summer of Sam	Poletje, ko je moril Sam [The Summer When Sam Killed]
The Foreigner	Smrtonosna pošiljka [Deadly Package]
Cold Steel	Hladnokrvno maščevanje [Cold Blooded Revenge]

With regard to horror films or thrillers, explicitation was achieved through the use of key words such as *groza* (horror), *srhljiv* (creepy), *strah* (fear), *tema* (darkness) and *skrivnost* (secret), for example:

Lighthouse	Svetilnik groze [Lighthouse of Horror]
Campfire Tales	Srhljive zgodbice [Creepy Stories]
Cabin Fever	Koča strahu [Cabin of Fear]
Bless the Child	Izbranka teme [The Dark's Chosen One (female)]
Arlington Road	Skrivnost Arlington Road [The Secret of Arlington Road]

In the case of comedy, obvious lexical genre clues are *smeh* (laughter), *nor* (crazy) and *cirкус* (farce):

The Mouse That Roared	Invazija smeha [Invasion of Laughter]
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Ace Ventura: Pet Detective	Ace Ventura: Nori detektiv [Ace Ventura: Crazy Detective]
Down Periscope	Cirkus pod vodo [Underwater Farce]

Popular colloquial phrases such as *fant od fare* ('jolly good fellow') or *da te kap* (which implies that you suffer a stroke due to shock or over-excitement) may also indicate to the reader that comedy is the genre:

Prime	Snaha, da te kap [A Mother-in-Law to Give You a Stroke]
Company Man	Fant od fare [Good Old Boy]

Titles of romantic comedies also become more explicit, as in the following examples:

Breathing Room	Ljubi – ne ljubi [S/he Loves Me, S/he Loves Me Not]
Still Breathing	Za vedno skupaj [Together Forever]
Whatever It Takes	Jaz sem ti [I Am You]
View from the Top	Števardese letijo v nebo [Stewardesses Take to the Sky]

With regard to genre standardisation, the words most frequently inserted into Slovene translations of titles were: *ljubezen* (love) 7, *morilec* (murderer) 7, *nor / norčija* (crazy / craziness) 6, *smrt* (death) 5, *polica / policist* (police officer) 4, *usoden* (fatal) 4, *skrivnost* (secret / mysterious) 3, *mafija / mafijski* (Mafia) 3, *srce* (heart) 3, *groza* (horror) 2, *nevarnost* (danger) 2, *ropar* (robber) 2 and *smeh* (laughter) 2.

There were surprisingly few examples of cultural explicitation – only five in the whole corpus – where some aspect of the source culture is spelled out to the Slovene audience. In some instances the implication of the original title may have also been lost on non-American native speakers of English, such as the Big Easy as a nickname for New Orleans (like the better known Big Apple for New York) or the Babe as a reference to the famous baseball player:

The Big Easy	Žločin v New Orleansu [A Crime in New Orleans]
The Babe	Babe Ruth [Babe Ruth]

The expression 'the red eye' for an overnight flight from the States to Britain is more widely known but the code expression CQ, meaning 'seeking you', used by wireless operators is rather obscure, as is the Jamaican slang expression 'shottas' for gangsters:

Red Eye	Nočni let [Night Flight]
CQ	Iščem te [Looking for You]
Shottas	Gangsterji [Gangsters]

6. Simplification

This involves cases where some aspect of the original title is lost during translation, rendering the title simpler, either stylistically or in terms of content. The corpus contains a total of 92 examples, plus a further 29 examples of disambiguation (see below), giving a total of 121 or approximately 37 per cent of indirect translations.

In the following examples the original title is also the title of a well-known popular song, or a slight adaption (Madonna's *Material Girl*), but the allusion is lost in the translation:

Every Time We Say Goodbye	Pilotova ljubezen [The Pilot's Love]
Jingle All the Way	Nori božič [Crazy Christmas]
Super Troopers	Super policaji [Super Police]
Material Girls	Vse za denar [All for Money]

Another example involves loss of allusion to a nursery rhyme (Little Miss Muffet):

Along Came a Spider	V pajkovi mreži [In the Spider's Web]
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In a number of cases the allusion to a saying or idiomatic expression is lost:

When in Rome	V Rimu [In Rome]
Money Talks	Vonj po denarju [The Smell of Money]
The Whole Nine Yards	Morilec mehkega srca [The Killer of a

	Gentle Heart]
Cheaper by the Dozen	Velika družina, veliko smeha [Big Family, Big Laughs]
Baby Boom	Mama po sili [Mum By Necessity]

In the following four examples, the allusion lost, respectively, is to a USA Supreme Court doctrine, to Zola's intervention in the Dreyfus Affair (J'accuse), Biblical language and a colloquial phrase:

Clear and Present Danger	Neposredna nevarnost [Direct Danger]
I Accuse	Obtožba [Accusation]
O Brother, Where Art Thou?	Kdo je tu nor? [Who's Crazy Here?]
Something's Gotta Give	Ljubezen je luštna stvar [Love is a Lovely Thing]

Sometimes a pun or play on words is lost. The first three instances below involve homophones (tale-tail, clause-Claus, slay-sleigh) and the following three homographs (bear, second, eating):

Shark Tale	Kraljestvo morskega psa [The Kingdom of the Shark]
The Santa Clause	Božiček se mora poročiti [Santa Must Marry]
Santa's Slay	Božičkov pokol [Santa's Massacre]
Bear With Me	Moj medvedek [My Teddy Bear]
Second to Die	Druga smrt [Second Death]
What's Eating Gilbert Grape	Kaj daje Gilberta Grapa [What's Bothering Gilbert Grape]

There were also 29 English titles featuring a play on words that have been reduced to a single meaning in Slovene. (These examples of disambiguation could perhaps also have been categorised as explicitation, as the disambiguated title is more explicit). In most cases, it is difficult to see how the double meaning of the original could have been conveyed by the translation. Thus the action thriller *Cliffhanger*, in which the main character is a mountain climber, was translated as *Plezalec* [Climber], losing the meaning 'a suspenseful situation in which the outcome is uncertain until the very last moment'. The title of the action comedy *The Pacifier*

played upon the fact that the noun can suggest someone that pacifies a situation, perhaps through forceful means, or in American English a child's dummy; the Slovene title *Misija: Cucej* [Mission: Dummy (Br. Eng.)] tries to convey some of this play on words through insertion, but the second word in the title remains monosemantic. In the case of the romantic comedy *Failure to Launch*, the Slovene title is a pretty explicit summary of the main character's situation: *Čez 30 in še pri tatarih* [Over 30 and Still with the Parents]. However, in the case of the 2006 romantic comedy *Blind Dating*, the main character of which is blind, the less ambiguous *Ljubezen za slepe* [Love for the Blind], which excludes the meaning of 'a date between two people who have not met before', could have been replaced by *Zmenek na slepo* [Blind Date], which has the same meaning (although this title was used for the film *Blind Date*, released in 1987, which is not in the corpus).

In the following cases, the rhyme or alliteration present in the original title is lost in translation:

Funny Money	Zamenjan kovček [Switched Suitcase]
Dennis the Menace	Denis Pokora [Denis Penitence]
Rodger Dodger	Zmuzljivi Roger [Slippery Roger]
Blast from the Past	Ljubezen iz sanj [Love from Dreams]
A Lot Like Love	Več kot ljubezen [More Than Love]
What Women Want	Kaj ženske ljubijo [What Women Love]

7. Unmotivated shifts

There are 72 translations in the corpus (22% of the indirect translations) involving an omission or insertion, a change of register or a semantic shift that cannot be explained as explicitation or simplification, and for which the motivation is unclear. In all of these cases the title could have been translated in another way, so the reason cannot be that the translator had no choice. Nine of these involve only minor shifts, so that, for instance, *Fifteen and Pregnant* becomes *Noseča najstnica* [Pregnant Teenager], or *Meet Joe Black* becomes *Ko pride Joe Black* [When Joe Black Comes]. There are also five cases of insertion (see underlinings), none of which make it clearer to the reader what the film is about: e.g., *The Duke* / *Vojvoda Dingwallski* [The Duke of Dingwall], *Frequency* / *Prava frekvenca* [Correct Frequency]

Omission is slightly more common, with 11 examples. In a few instances, this has no effect with regard to the content of the film – for instance, when *The Mask of Zorro* becomes simply *Zorro* or *Hating Alison Ashley* becomes *Osovražena Alison* [Hated Alison]. However, in some cases the translated title omits useful information conveyed by the underlined words, for example:

Mercenary <u>for Justice</u>	Plačanci [Mercenaries]
The Astronaut <u>Farmer</u>	Astronavt [Astronaut]
How the Grinch <u>Stole Christmas</u>	Grinch [Grinch]
Romy and Michelle's <u>High School Reunion</u>	Prijateljici [Girlfriends]

There are only four examples of implication in the corpus. It is not clear why the first two explicit English titles below have been translated by more elusive Slovene titles or the third by a proper name; the fourth film is set in Spain and involves the accidental uncovering of a terrorist cell.

Shark Attack	Smrtonosna modrina [Deadly Blueness]
City Hall	Golo mesto [Naked City]
Point of No Return	Nina [Nina]
Face of Terror	Špansko odkritje [Spanish Disclosure]

There are several examples where a more colloquial title is translated using formal neutral language, for example:

Love Don't Cost a Thing	Ljubezen je zastonj [Love is Free]
Love Stinks	Bedna ljubezen [Pathetic Love]
Soldier Boyz	Vojaki [Soldiers]

There are also some instances where the language of the translated title is more colloquial than that of the original, for example:

A Life Less Ordinary	Odštekano življenje [Whacky Life]
Rush Hour	Ful gas [a colloquial expression meaning 'acceleration']

Town & Country	Mestna srajca [Town Shirts, idiom meaning 'town people']
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There are 29 films where a semantic shift has occurred during the translating of the title. Most of these involve relatively minor changes, which probably have no impact on the reader's understanding of the content of the film or its genre. Thus, for example, the action film *The Fast and the Furious* becomes *Hitri in drzani* [Fast and Daring], the drama *In the Belly of the Beast* becomes *V žrelu zveri* [In the Jaws of the Beast] and the drama *Water* becomes *Jezero* [Lake]. In some other cases the connotations of the original and translated titles are different, for example: *Killing Me Softly* / *Ubij me strastno* [Kill Me Passionately] or *Something to Talk About* / *Čenče* [Gossip].

In some cases the shift involves different information being offered to the reader, but it is unclear why. It is hard to work out what the translator's motivation was in the following cases, where far more direct translations would have been possible:

David's Mother	David in Sally [David and Sally]
Poison	Obsedena hči [Obsessive Daughter]
Life During Wartime	Alarmni system [Alarm System]
The Whistle Blower	Izdani vohun [Betrayed Spy]
No Code of Conduct	Zakon zločina [Law of Crime]

Finally, there are seven instances where there seems to have been a misunderstanding of the original title by the translator. The drama *Mystic River* was translated as *Skrivnostna reka* [Mysterious River], but the original refers to the name of an actual river that runs through Boston, where the film is set, rather than a river that is mystical or mysterious in some way; the norm in Slovene is not to translate the names of foreign rivers but only to adapt them to Slovene spelling conventions, e.g. Thames - Temza. *A Murder of Crows* is the title of a thriller, but 'murder' is also a collective name in English for a group of crows; the Slovene title, *Umor vran* [Murder of Crows] is a literal translation of the original without any meaning beyond the obvious one. A similar example is the literal translation of the title *Legal Eagles*, which makes use of a well-known colloquial phrase for lawyers, by *Pravniški orli* [Legal Eagles], which is not a Slovene expression. It is likely that when translating *My Family and Other Animals* as *Moja družina in naše živali* [My Family and Our Animals] the translator missed the joke in

the original title, i.e. that implication his family were also 'animals'. The crime film title *Above the Law* was translated by the unusual word combination *Nedosegljivi zakon* [Unreachable Law], when it could have been translated directly by the expression *Nad zakonom*. The implication of the title *Murder on Spec* is that murder is committed unsolicited, for no payment, in the hope of future business, whereas the Slovene title *Umor po meri* [Murder to Measure] implies that the murder has been commissioned. Finally, the title *The Grifters* refers to conmen or swindlers (*preveranti* or *sleparji* in Slovene), whereas the Slovene translation *Lumpje* [Rogues] implies wrongdoing of a more general kind.

8. Translation situation

The translations of film titles are produced either by the distributors or, where the film has not been in the cinema, by the TV company broadcasting it. In order to find out more about the translators and the context in which they were working, I spoke to four film distributors, as well as contacting the national television company, which operates two channels, and the company that operates the two main commercial channels. Citing business confidentiality, none of the companies involved were willing to put me in direct contact with individual translators, but I was able to talk to some of those responsible for coordinating their work. The situation proved to be a complex one that varies from one organisation to another. The translators involved are usually the subtitlers, but those I spoke to emphasised that this was a team effort which depended on more than familiarity with the film.

In many cases the translation is actually cleared with the film company, using back translation – this is often demanded by studios, who want to have control over every aspect of the marketing of their product. In general, direct or word-for-word translation is preferred by all those involved, but other factors were also mentioned. If a film is based on a book which has already been translated (the Harry Potter series is a good example), then the title will follow the book title and the subtitler will make use of other solutions appearing in the print translation, such as names of characters. How the film title has been translated into other languages – German was mentioned specifically – may also influence the Slovene translation. The translation coordinator at the commercial

television company on whose two channels the majority of the films in the corpus appeared said that they preferred to emphasise the content of the film rather than the original title. An interesting comment from the same source was also that their approach depends on how “serious” the film is.

A similar position was taken by one of the distributors, who said that translation strategy was most influenced by content and genre, with comedy, action and crime being treated with “less respect” than literary films or dramas – meaning that they felt less obliged to translate directly. (And this was borne out by our corpus, where indirect translations largely involved the former three genres, as the examples offered above illustrate.) Finally, the distributors tended to emphasise commerciality: the more commercial the film, the more likely they were to produce an indirect translation; moreover, the translation process might be used to increase the perceived commerciality of the film on the Slovene market. An interesting example given was the film *The Constant Gardner*, which the distributor, Cinemania, had originally translated using the supposedly more 'alluring' title *Globalna zarota* [Global Conspiracy], but this was later changed to the direct translation *Zvesti vrtnar* [The Faithful Gardener] in recognition of the fact that it was based on a book by the respected British writer John le Carré (the commercialised title still appears in the body of the text describing the film at http://www.kolosej.si/filmi/film/zvesti_vrtnar/). The book was later translated into Slovene using the same title as the film.

9. Discussion

The translation situation under consideration and the role of the translator within it are shaped by a number of circumstances. The translator (or translation team) is constrained not only by linguistic and cultural factors, but also by commercial considerations. Two-thirds of the target language titles were direct translations, where back translation would produce the same or a very similar title. However, it is clear that a much higher proportion of the titles could be rendered directly or with only minimal intervention. The largest share of the indirect translations (41%) involved explicitation; almost all of these involved making the genre more specific, rather than explaining cultural elements to the target public, so the decision was presumably motivated by marketing considerations. The second largest category of indirect translations (37%) involved

simplification or loss of some element from the original title. Most of the original titles involved in these translations involve stylistic factors: allusion to a song title, a nursery rhyme, a saying, an idiom, or some other well-known expression; a play on words, usually involving the homophones or near homophones in which English is rich; or the use of rhyme or alliteration in the original title.

Around a fifth of the indirect translations (or 7% of the total) could be described as unmotivated – in other words, it is hard to determine why the title was translated in the way it was. Some of the semantic shifts involved are minor and unlikely to have much impact on the reader's expectations of the film; similarly, most of the insertions and omissions, as well as the shifts of register or stylistic changes, would not hinder the reader's understanding of the film genre or content. There were only seven instances where the translator seems to have misunderstood the original title and thus produced an unsatisfactory translation; there are also five cases involving different information being offered to the target audience and another five where the connotations of the original and translated titles are different. Thus overall, less than 2 per cent of the translated titles in the corpus could be criticised as being misleading in some way, suggesting that the widespread criticism of the translation of film titles into Slovene is unjustified. There are several probable reasons why such a negative perception has arisen. One is simply the unfortunate social fact that it is the 'bad' or questionable translations that get noticed and receive attention (such an observation is not a new one: as long ago as 1405 Leonardo Bruni complained that authors always get the praise for what is good while translators merely receive the blame for what is wrong (Bruni 1928: 102-104; quoted in Pym 2005: 10). Moreover, there is clearly a certain 'entertainment value' in reading about erroneous translations, plus the sense of satisfaction derived by those who spot and report on the errors. However, websites such as *Mojster prevodov* (<http://www.mojster.si/>), which collect examples of poor subtitles, may cite a single subtitle from a one-hour television programme or feature film, while the 99 per cent or more of acceptable subtitles go unmentioned.

Another factor is that the people who post critical comments on such sites do not necessarily appreciate the complexity of the translation issues involved; moreover, they are probably unaware of the situational factors influencing translation decisions. Of course, bad translations do appear, which is perhaps understandable, as over the last decade most subtitling

work has been taken over by agencies that employ students willing to work for low rates and under great time pressures. However, most translators seem to do a good job under the circumstances.

Where the title is not translated directly, the translator's role largely involves explicitation and/or simplification. That this is connected with the translation process itself rather than Slovene cultural preferences can be seen by comparing Slovene film titles. A comparison of the titles of 64 Slovene feature film titles made between 1990 and 2011 (accessible at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Slovenian_films) suggests that these are no more likely to be explicit than English-language ones. The most common genre here (two-thirds of the films) is drama, where titles are perhaps less likely to be explicit, as it is such a broad category and less likely to feature 'key words'. But even in the case of comedy (10 examples) there are none where the genre is clear from the title alone – the potential audience is more likely to know what genre the film belongs to by looking at the director and actors involved, as well as from pre-launch publicity. The decision to make the translated titles of English-language – and in particular the genre – more explicit is thus unlikely to be a cultural one, but due to other situational factors.

We have already noted how distributors and television companies are more willing to use interventionist translation strategies with regard to genres such as comedy, action and crime; as these presumably make up a large share of this films that go straight to television it is not surprising that they are heavily represented in the categories of explicitation and simplification discussed above. If a film has not been publicised and does not feature well-known stars then it is understandable that for pragmatic reasons a strategy may be chosen to make it quickly apparent to the reader what kind of film it is, particularly when terrestrial channels are competing with large numbers of cable channels.

One surprising discovery was how little cultural explicitation was evident in the translations (0.5 per cent of examples): the default approach is that cultural elements are not clarified. There were no signs of a strategy of domestication, for example by replacing source culture allusions and rhetorical features with elements that communicate more in the target culture. If anything, problematic cultural references or stylistic choices were more likely to be omitted than mediated in some way, so in those cases a process of cultural 'neutralisation' or deculturalisation can be observed. However, in the case of the direct translations that make up the majority of the corpus, direct cultural transfer without mediation is the

norm. Moreover, the exposure of Slovene audiences to the American film industry and its marketing arm means that potential Slovene viewers are also likely to base their judgements about a film's content and genre on the director and actors involved – especially where films appear in Slovene cinemas and attract publicity. International publics, including in Slovenia, are in a sense initiated into the source culture through the media, so that Slovene filmgoers and television viewers are likely to know almost as much about those involved in making the film as their counterparts in the USA.

It seems, then, that situational factors have the most decisive influence on the translation choices made. Distributors and TV companies in Slovenia have decided that, when it comes to the translation of certain film genres, transparent titles are best and so they give precedence to clarifying genre, reducing ambiguity, and simplifying stylistically and in terms of content. The translation skopos in this case is to maximise the audience for the film, which is not necessarily achieved by an imaginative and creative translation of the original. It seems likely that risk avoidance, which Simeoni (1998) identifies as a common feature of the translatorial habitus, plays a role in this situation. Pym's (2005) discussion of explicitation as risk management is helpful here. We are looking at a high risk situation (the commercial risk that the film receives a small audience or that the audience feels misled and come to mistrust the channel) where an approach which seems to minimise that risk makes sense, i.e. limiting potential interpretative connections. By making more explicit or simplifying, the translator is reducing or even excluding the risk of one reading by enhancing the likelihood of another; the reader of the TL title thus has fewer interpretive options available. Blum-Kulka (2004: 301) talks about such processes as a kind of damage limitation: “For reader-based shifts, the translator is in the position of the practitioners of preventive medicine: his (sic) role is to foresee the possibilities of 'damage' to interpretation in the TL and to apply means to minimize them.”

The reasons for risk aversion or a 'preventive' approach may vary somewhat according to the situation, but a key factor is the “cultural reward system” (Pym 2005: 1) that structures the work of translators and shapes their habitus. In effect, this means that translators are explicitly or implicitly rewarded for certain kind of translation behaviours (e.g. staying close to the original text) and 'penalised' (for instance, through negative feedback) for others, which leads them to adjust their approach in order to

conform to the prevailing model. The strong sense of responsibility for the success of communication in a new reception situation no doubt contributes, as does also the ethics of “subservience” or the translator's “near-complete submission to the norms effective in the subsector(s) of society in which s/he is professionally active” (Simeoni 1998: 6). There are plenty of reasons for translators to be risk-averse and thus to lean towards strategies such as explicitation, disambiguation and simplification. Furthermore, as Pym (2005: 1) emphasises, translation by its very nature is a (high) risk situation: “since translation involves communication into a context with fewer shared references, it involves greater risks than non-translation, which does not consistently have this feature”.

10. Conclusion

The corpus of translations discussed here arose in a situation of cultural transfer where English-language culture has become a kind of default. In Slovenia, as in many European countries, popular culture – film, television, music and, increasingly, best-selling literature – has been internationalised, but the cultural flow is essentially unidirectional. The role of Slovene translators as cultural mediators in the area we have considered is constrained by a complex of situational factors, the main one being the client's goal of maximising the number of viewers. A key consideration is whether the genre of the film – especially when it comes to more popular kinds of film – will be immediately obvious; the translator's role in this instance is to make the genre more explicit.

Another translatorial task in relation to English film titles is removing cultural allusions and stylistic elements so as to avoid ambiguity or possible misinterpretation – a process we have referred to as simplification. The motivation for some of the translations in our corpus were unclear, but examples of misleading or misguided translation were very few. In the great majority of cases the translators satisfactorily fulfilled the role assigned to them and reduced the number of possible interpretations – a strategy dictated by the client. This is a good illustration of why, when evaluating translations, we need to consider not only interlingual and intercultural differences, but the whole context of situation that framed the translator's decisions.

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