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PECULIARITIES OF SUBTITLING INDEPENDENT FEATURE SHORT FILMS (AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE FILM «SPINNERS» (2014))

Abstract: The article is devoted to the peculiarities of subtitling independent short feature films. The relevance of audiovisual translation is increasing nowadays due to the growth of film industry and Northern American cinema dominating the Russian film market. What stands distinctive amongst the variety of cinema products is independent feature films. One of the types of audiovisual translation is subtitling, which is the widest used means of localizing independent pictures. Independent cinema is a distinctive branch of cinema, characterized by professional production of feature films outside the high-rank Hollywood studios. The article analyses the peculiarities of subtitling such type of films on the basis of «Spinners», a film by the independent studio «Barnacle Films». In the course of the audiovisual translation of this film, we identified a number of peculiarities of subtitling short independent feature films connected with constraints posed by subtitling as a type of translation and the specifics of independent short feature film as a genre.

Keywords: subtitling, translation, short film, independent cinema, feature film, audiovisual translation.

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ОСОБЕННОСТИ СУБТИТРИРОВАНИЯ НЕЗАВИСИМЫХ КОРОТКОМЕТРАЖНЫХ ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫХ ФИЛЬМОВ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ ФИЛЬМА «SPINNERS» (2014))

Аннотация: В этой статье рассматриваются особенности субтитрирования независимых короткометражных художественных фильмов. Востребованность аудиовизуального перевода на сегодняшний день постоянно растёт в силу расширения рынка кино и доминирующие позиции Североамериканских кинолент в российском прокате. Независимые художественные фильмы стоят особняком среди всего многообразия кинопродукции. Именно субтитрирование – один из видов аудиовизуального перевода – широко применяется при локализации независимых художественных кинолент. Независимый кинематограф отличается профессиональным производством художественных фильмов, не связанным с деятельностью крупных Голливудских киностудий. Фильм, выбранный для субтитрирования и последующего анализа – картина «Spinners», снятая независимой студией «Barnacle Films». В ходе работы над субтитрированием данного фильма мы выявили особенности субтитрирования независимых короткометражных художественных фильмов, продиктованные спецификой субтитрирования как особого вида аудиовизуального перевода и особенностями жанра независимого художественного короткометражного фильма.

Ключевые слова: субтитрирование, перевод, короткометражный фильм, независимый кинематограф, художественный фильм, аудиовизуальный перевод.

Nowadays, cinema is without exaggeration the most popular art form. And there is a reason to that: the combination of visual, verbal and musical medium allows for more effective influence on the beholder, delivering a broader range of emotions through a wider range of different artistic means.

Independent feature films stand distinctive amongst the variety of cinema products: they are elite culture products, which, as a rule, are spread not through large-scale film distribution and high-budget marketing campaigns, but through film festivals and with limited run.

It is also worth noting that nowadays western films dominate a fair share of the Russian cinema market. North American motion pictures hold the top spots in a box office, and the TV channels are actively licensing TV series and feature films produced abroad [2]. All of the above facts bear evidence of high demand for film translation.

Russian researchers tend to reduce audiovisual translation (AVT) to film translation, although in reality it is an interlanguage translation of the content of not only films, but also computer programs, television programs and news broadcasts, commercials and theatre plays [2]. As for the place of the AVT in translation studies, the researchers had to admit that it goes beyond the framework of translation theory and should be considered as a separate academic discipline, A.V. Kozulyaev notes [1].

Based on the dynamic translation equivalence, A. V. Kozulyaev defines AVT as «creating a new polysemantic unity in the recipient language based on the unity that has already existed in the source language, so that the new polysemantic unity becomes an element of the culture of the recipient language and is not alien to it» [3]. One of the important parts of the AVT is subtitling.

Subtitling is a translation process that consists of placing written text at the bottom of the screen. It seeks to convey utterances of the speakers, as well as the content of visual discursive elements (letters, graffiti, inscriptions, posters), and audio track elements (songs, off-screen voices, etc.) [7].

Researchers call subtitling a «constrained» type of translation, since film text is a polysemiotic multimodal discourse, i.e. it combines visual and verbal components, which complicates its perception. In addition to the restrictions which are universal for the translation process of any type (both external: deadlines, economic problems, and internal: cultural baggage of the translator, their self-discipline), Jan Pedersen also

highlights the restrictions specific to subtitling: spatial, temporal, and those associated with the semiotic transition from oral to written speech [6].

A short film is a film no more than 40–50 minutes in duration (and generally from 10 to 20 minutes on average). Time plays a very important role in it. The main task for people making such films is to manage to get across the idea underlying the film in a short period. Being limited in time, the director must set himself the task of fitting a full range of audience expectations and experiences into the running time.

Independent cinema is a distinctive branch of cinema characterized by professional production of feature films not related to the activities of major film studios. The researchers' views on the differences between studio cinema and independent film vary, but they mostly boil down to the following. Some consider that «the main principle is the financial independence from the big Hollywood studios and the ways of its distribution: film festivals, cable TV channels and DVD» [5], others argue that «independence is more of a social position of the film's author, an intentional deviation from the canonical norms of Hollywood filmmaking and the obligatory deconstruction of meaning» [4].

The picture chosen for the analysis of subtitling is «Spinners», a film by the independent studio «Barnacle Films» headed by Eric L. Barnes, the director of the film in question. The picture was produced in 2014 in the United States, and the events of the film unfold there as well.

While making the AVT of this film, we identified a number of peculiarities of short independent feature films subtitling:

1. There are 3 strategies for translating simultaneous utterances of several characters (or simultaneous audio tracks containing utterances of one character)

Example 1:

Nah, you don't look like
big men. F***!
Worry? I got cash money

Не, на взрослых не
смахиваете. Вот чёрт!
Не парься, у меня кэш.

In this example the utterances of the characters overlap, so the lines of different characters are differentiated by using italics or regular type font). If the number of characters per subtitle limit (72 characters per subtitle and 36 characters per line [6]) allows it, it is possible to separate the lines of the characters into two subtitles, each containing the utterance of one of the characters.

Example 2:

Helicopter, captain Blender
no handy, triple threat

Вертолётник, капитан
Блендер
без руки, тройная мощь

Here several audio tracks contain the utterances of *the same character*. This helps create an exaggerated feeling of text overload, the effect of a «stream of consciousness». It is impossible to render this through subtitles, and translator's notes are not always appropriate because the number of characters in the subtitle is limited. We have singled out a certain unit from the «stream of consciousness»: «triple threat», because it appears later in the text so it is advisable to preserve it in the translation.

This cinematic device poses a certain difficulty. It is quite problematic to transmit two different verbal audio streams simultaneously when it comes to subtitling. That being the case, there are three strategies:

a) Rendering the characters' utterances in two (or more) separate subtitles, the lines being displayed separately;

b) Rendering two verbal audio streams in one subtitle as a dialogue;

c) Singling out the main information from the «stream of consciousness», namely things related to the character development, the artistic intentions behind the film, and the storyline (such strategy is mostly used for rendering the overlapping utterances of one character).

2. Translating the obscene language, among other things, through the taboo lexis of the target language:

Example 3:

Ah, s**t!	Вот с**а!
F*** this s**t.	На**р это всё!
Sup, f**got.	Привет, педик.
They say your dad f***ed up your head being on you all the time.	Что тебя батя достаёт всё время, вот и повредил тебе кукушку .
D, what the f***?	Ди, ты чё творишь?

In this film, it makes sense to translate profanities using low colloquial vocabulary (vulgarisms), but not taboo lexis, because this is not entirely appropriate in this type audiovisual text. It is necessary to select lexical units that are equivalent to the corresponding units in the source language by emotional coloration (in examples 3a and 3b) and by direct lexical meaning (example 3c), if it is important in the context. If neither the former nor the latter strategy seems appropriate, it is advisable to resort

to transcreation in order to convey the essence of the statement (examples 3*d* and 3*e*).

Independent cinema views itself as «loose», having broader creative freedom in many respects due to the limited audience and focus mainly on the director’s artistic vision rather than on mass popularity. Therefore, when creating an independent film, the authors often do not limit themselves in expressive and graphic means, including obscene vocabulary. However, in the film in question, translating taboo vocabulary using equivalent lexis in the target language is not exactly expedient: it would only distract the viewer's attention from the idea of the film.

3. In the majority of cases, visual verbal information is rendered in subtitling

Example 4:

Signs and billboards (examples 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d), as well as graffiti (examples 4e и 4f)

a	<Quality Tile & Carpet. GUNS>	<Плитка и Ковры. ОРУЖИЕ>
b	<No health insurance? Medical accepted>	<Дешёвая медстраховка>
c	<Foreclosed house for sale>	<Продаётся залоговый дом>
d	<Cheap loans on Foreclosed homes>	<Бюджетные кредиты на залоговую недвижимость>
e	<GOD IS #1>	<БОГ РУЛИТ>
f	<Ham wallet>	<П**да>

When subtitling films, one can often find visual verbal information (SMS messages, graffiti, letters, signs, posters), but it is necessary to divide it into that related and unrelated to the plot, idea or development of the film characters. The former is advised to be translated, and the latter most probably should be left out.

This is especially important when translating independent films, as often their authors disguise the meaning, conveying it not through straightforward verbal means, but rather through means of artistic expression and the «language of cinema». Moreover, in a short film an author’s temporal space is limited, so it is unlikely that any visual verbal information in the audiovisual text would carry no meaning.

Thus, the peculiarities of independent feature short films subtitling are means of translating separate simultaneous utterances of one character or multiple characters, rendering obscene language through the taboo lexis of the target language, and rendering visual verbal information.

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