

HUNGARIAN AND SLOVAK TRANSLATIONS OF ENGLISH FILM TITLES¹

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ABSTRACT

A quick online search for the phrase of “film titles” either in Hungarian or Slovak reveals that there is an ongoing debate among internet users about film title translations, more specifically, about the quality of these translations. Interestingly, the majority of the opinions expressed on many websites are negative criticisms about both Hungarian and Slovak film title translations. In this research, I try to explain this negative criticism by analyzing 379 English film titles and their Hungarian and Slovak translations using a relevance theoretical approach. The results indicate that there is correlation between the titles which received negative criticism and the type of translation procedure which was used to translate them. The research also revealed interesting connections between film title translations and humor as well as it suggests that the integration of film title translation into language learning would potentially be beneficial for both teachers and learners in a language learning setting.

KEYWORDS

Film title, title translation, Hungarian film title, Slovak film title, film title humor, film title in language learning

INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for investigating film title translations came from the Belgian film drama *The Broken Circle Breakdown* (directed by Felix Van Groeningen). To be more precise, I was inspired by the Hungarian translation of its title, *Alabama és Monroe* [Alabama and Monroe]. After watching the film, I just could not stop thinking about why the titles differ to such a great extent. Being exposed to a great number of Hungarian film title translations, my surprise for this specific title was not the only reason why I thought a research in this area might yield some interesting results. I was struck by the fact that, from the point of view of the climax and ending of the story of this particular film, the Hungarian title (unlike its English original) caused the viewer to quite easily predict the outcome of the story at about 40 minutes (circa one-third) in the film, thus potentially spoiling the experience of a twist-like turn of the story close to the end of the film. This gave me the thought that a film title has multiple functions which can be affected to a great extent by its translation. It is quite intriguing that in case of *The Broken Circle Breakdown* the Hungarian title functions as a hint or a clue to the resolution of the story (Alabama and Monroe being the main characters), while the English title merely conveys a suggestion about one specific element of the story (The Broken Circle is the name of a music band in the film in which both main characters play).

¹ A shorter version of this research was published in Hungarian in the online journal *Apertúra* ([11] Zolczer, P. 2015).

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Since Slovak is my second language, I also checked the Slovak translation of this film title, and to my surprise, on the lexical level, it was very close to a word-by-word translation: *Prerušený kruh* [Broken circle]. The Slovak title's story-hinting function also changed, but instead of shifting to the more revealing side of the spectrum like the Hungarian title, it became even less revealing than the English title (not even mentioning the name of the music band). At this point I decided that I'm going to search for some answers for the questions I had about film title translation.

An online search for the phrase "film title translation" (both in Hungarian and in Slovak) resulted in pages and pages of search results such as: "Újabb gyilkos magyar filmcímek" [New killer Hungarian film titles], "Filmcímek – A Magyar Szinkron/Fordítás Szégyenei" [Film titles – disgraces of the Hungarian Dubbing/Translation], "Furcsa, félrefordított filmcímek" [Strange, mistranslated film titles], "A 7 legrosszabb magyar filmcím: minden idők legbugyutább fordításai" [The 7 worst Hungarian film title: the silliest translations of all time], "Itt a fájdalmasan rossz filmcímek piszkos tizenkettője!" [Here is the dirty dozen of the painfully bad film titles], "A leggázabb filmcímek és félrefordítások" [The dumbest film titles and mistranslations], "Vymyslene nazvy filmov" [Made up film titles], "Aj vás serú zlé preklady názvy filmov?" [Are you also triggered by the bad film title translations?], "Najdivnejšie názvy filmov" [The strangest film titles], "Záhada prekladov názvov zahraničných filmov u nás" [Mysterious translations of foreign films at home], "Najhorší preklad názvu filmu/seriálu" [The worst film/series title translation]. All these results in both languages show that the general audience clearly has a problem with certain film title translations. This made me curious as to whether it was possible to analyze and categorize or classify in some way those film titles which trigger such reactions.

Theoretical background

I decided to approach the analysis of film titles by using the theoretical framework of relevance theory ([1] Sperber and Wilson 1986), and this decision was primarily made because of the influence of a paper dealing with Hungarian film title translations ([2] Vermes 2005), in which the author presented a solid method for using relevance theory for checking and comparing film titles with their translations from the point of view of whether the informational content of the originally intended message is preserved in the translation.

According to relevance theory, an utterance is relevant if it achieves appropriate contextual effect with a reasonable processing effort ([1] Sperber and Wilson 1986). This also means that the value of the information justifies the effort exerted for its processing ([3] Heltai 2008). Phrasing it this way, it becomes clear why film title translation can be approached by relevance theory. Film titles clearly have a function of raising interest, therefore their intention for the addressee is obvious. This already might be considered as a reason for why certain film title translations differ so much from their source versions: by radically changing the informational content of the title, the translation might be perceived as being more informative with less effort exerted, i.e. more relevant.

According to relevance theory, the informational content of an utterance (the explicit and implicit content as well as the connotational and emotional aspects) are transmitted through (or carried by) the explicatures and implicatures. Explicatures are the subset of those assumptions which are available analytically, while implicatures are the ones which are accessible contextually. It is very important that both types of content is intentionally transmitted by the communicator. In an optimal translation, these explicatures and implicatures should match the ones of the original utterance ([4] Gutt 1990: 145). In the context of relevance theory, under the term assumptions we mean notions which have two components. A notion consists of a logical and an encyclopedic entry. The logical entry might be fully defined, partially defined, or empty. The encyclopedic entry contains the representations associated to

the notion, such as cultural beliefs ([2] Vermes 2005: 452). If applied to translation, depending on which parts of the notion are preserved in the target text, four translation procedures can be defined:

- (1) Transfer (TRF) – the phrase in the source language is transferred to the target text in its original form.
- (2) Translation (TRL) – proper translation, in the course of which both the logical content as well as the explicatures are preserved.
- (3) Substitution (SUB) – in this case, the logical content differs from that of the source text's, however, the encyclopedic content is preserved.
- (4) Modification (MOD) – both the logical and the encyclopedic content is lost.

Vermes in his film title research analyzed and classified 135 Hungarian film titles of English films released in 2003. The classification of the film titles was done based on the genre of the films. According to his results, the most commonly used translation procedures were proper translation and modification. The classification based on genres showed that in case of drama, horror and adventure genres, proper translation was the most frequently used procedure, while in case of comedies, it was modification.

Film title translation in practice

The online search for film title translations, as mentioned above, yielded many results with websites on which the general audience expressed negative opinions (in form of posts, articles and comments) about certain Hungarian and Slovak film title translations. In almost all cases, the main point of the criticism was the radical difference between the informational content of the film title translation in contrast to their original English version. There was a recurring question among the negative opinions: Why cannot they simply translate those titles word-by-word?

The Hungarian news outlet Origo.hu conducted a survey³ among Hungarian film distributors in which they addressed this specific question. Their results are important from the point of view of this study, since they contain important information about the practice of film title translation. According to the survey, film title translations are, in most cases, not the result of a single translator, but rather an end product of a brainstorming of a team of people at the film distributor. Many times the final version of the title is the result of a poll between multiple alternatives. There are precedents for involving the general audience through blogs and social media websites in the process of film title translation.

The Hungarian film distributors asked in the survey claim that the Hungarian viewers very often decide about which film to watch at the ticket counter in the cinema, therefore the film titles has to be catchy, i.e. they have to make people lock their attention on them. If the original title does not suggest the genre of the film, or it even suggest another genre, it is habitual practice to make it unambiguous in the Hungarian title, e.g. *Alien* became *Nyolcadig utas: a Halál* [The eighth passenger: Death]. To make the genre clear, often the Hungarian title receives an addition, e.g. *Ocean's Twelve* became *Ocean's Twelve: Eggyel nő a tét* [Ocean's Twelve: The stake is higher by one].

Sometimes it happens that film title translations of other languages are taken into consideration as well. From the point of view of this dissertation, it is very important that the film studio who made the film can restrict the translation of their film's title by providing a word, phrase, or even a list of words out of which one has to be part of the translated title in

³ Survey results available in the online article: <http://www.origo.hu/filmklub/blog/osszeallitas/20121207-magyar-filmcimek-szuletese-a-forgalmazoknal-eroszakik-a-quantum-csendje.html> (last accessed: 05.02.2020).

the given form. If the film is a novel adaptation, it might happen that the translated novel is published before the film is released, and in such cases the film's title in the target language is already determined by the novel's translated title, although, there are exceptions from under this as well. The most intriguing piece of information about the practice of film title translation is probably the fact that sometimes the film distributors have to come up with a title translation months, or in extreme cases even two years, before the film is released, and they are to do this based on a very short description of the film.

Based on this survey, it is safe to deduce that film title translation is also a form of translation which is constrained by certain factors, such as the restrictions and limitations posed on it by the film studios or certain practices of the film distributors which are based on expectations of the general audience as well as their intention of creating titles which attract attention.

Research aims and questions

The aim of this research was to try to find an explanation for why the informational content of certain Hungarian and Slovak film title translations differ significantly from their original English versions. In order to do this, the first objective was to build an English–Hungarian–Slovak film title corpus (i.e. database) which includes a sub-corpus (i.e. sub-set) of Hungarian and Slovak film title translations that received negative opinions from the general audience. The second objective was to analyze and classify all film title translations based on translation procedures derived from relevance theory and compare them from the points of view of target languages in general as well as negative opinions received. The third objective was to answer the following specific research questions:

- (1) What type of translation procedures were used for the Hungarian and Slovak film titles which received negative opinions from the general audience?
- (2) From the point of view of the translation procedures, is there any significant difference between film titles of films which are considered to be successful and those that are not?
- (3) From the point of view of translation procedures, what are the characteristics of Hungarian and Slovak film title translations of English film titles?

Research corpus

The English–Hungarian–Slovak film title corpus contains 379 English film titles and their Hungarian and Slovak translations, that is, 1,137 film titles in total. The research questions played an essential role in the way the corpus is structured. They not only defined the number and parameters of the sub-corpora, but they even suggested the sources the film titles should be collected from. The negatively criticized film title translations mentioned in the introductory part are connected to the first research question, which inquires about the translation procedures used for translating these film titles. With the help of an online search engine, I collected these film title translations from various websites, i.e. forums, blogs, news outlets and online magazines as well as from posts and comments connected to these websites. This became the first sub-corpus of this research. The Hungarian online sources of negatively criticized film title translations are not connected in any way to the Slovak sources, which means that the collected Hungarian and Slovak film title translations did not match. For this reason, I divided this sub-corpus into two parts, each part containing the negatively criticized film title translations of one target language. Both parts of the sub-corpus contain the original English film title as well as their Hungarian and Slovak counterparts. The first sub-corpus contains 174 film titles in all three languages. The number of titles in the first sub-corpus collected from Hungarian and Slovak websites are 98 and 76 respectively.

Table 1. Color coded structure of the film title corpus

Film title corpus (379)				
Sub-corpus 1 Film titles which received negative criticism (174)		Sub-corpus 2 Titles of successful films (197)		Sub-corpus 3 Titles of unsuccessful films (83)
Titles from Hungarian websites (98)	Titles from Slovak websites (76)	Titles of Oscar- winning films (87)	IMDB Top 250 (110)	IMDB Bottom 100 (32)
Max 6 points (32)	Min 6 points (66)	Max 6 points (19)	Min 6 points (57)	

The second research question focuses on the Hungarian and Slovak title translations of English films which are considered to be successful and those which are not. I collected these film titles from a different source. One of the most popular online film database is the *Internet Movie Database* (www.imdb.com). This online film database allows users to rate films on a scale of 0 to 10 and has various lists available based on these ratings. For the second sub-corpus, containing titles of films which are considered to be successful, I used IMDb's top 250 list and the list of Academy Award winning films. This sub-corpus contains 87 Oscar-winning film titles and the first 110 titles of the top 250 list, i.e. 197 film titles in total. The third sub-corpus contains the titles of films which are considered to be unsuccessful. For the purpose of finding such titles, I used IMDb's bottom 100 list, more specifically, the last 32 film titles, and in order to increase representativeness, I also checked the ratings of every film whose title I collected into the first sub-corpus. If the film received less than 6 points of overall user ratings, I added them to the third sub-corpus. As a result of this, the 32 film titles in the third sub-corpus got increased by 51 additional titles, thus containing 83 titles of films which are considered to be unsuccessful by the general audience. The titles of films which received more than 6 points of overall user ratings I added to the second sub-corpus, increasing its number of film titles by 123, that is, from 197 to 320.

Research method

Despite the fact that the analysis of the film titles, more specifically, the classification of the titles into the categories of translation procedures is based on the study of Vermes ([2] 2005), I decided to diverge from his way of analysis in case of certain types of titles, such as e.g. the titles of the film trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*. Vermes put these titles into the category of substitution and he explained his decision by pointing to the fact that even though the logical content of the translated title matches the one of the original title, it becomes relevant due to the contextual implicatures pointing at the novel written by J. R. R. Tolkien, which was the basis of the film adaptation. In my analysis, I gave more priority to the logical content, therefore I put the film titles of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy in the proper translation category. I based this decision of mine on the assumption that the general audience very often is not aware of the fact that a certain film is in fact a book adaptation, especially nowadays, when the ratio of original films in contrast to remakes and adaptations is getting smaller and smaller.

The analysis and classification of the film titles into the four categories of translation procedures based on relevance theory is not a process which could be automated, this part of the research was the most time consuming. To be able to compare Hungarian and Slovak film title translations, it was necessary to analyze and classify each Hungarian and Slovak film title separately (758 titles in total). The translation procedures used for the two target languages were different in most cases, however, except for the substitution procedure, there were examples for all remaining translation procedures where they were the same. Table 2 contains such examples.

Table 2. Examples for matching translation procedures in both target languages

Procedure / language	EN	HU	SK
Translation (TRL)	All About Eve	Mindent Éváról [Everything about Eve]	Všetko o Eve [Everything about Eve]
	Lawrence of Arabia	Arábiai Lawrence [Lawrence of Arabia]	Lawrence z Arábie [Lawrence from Arabia]
Transfer (TRF)	Chicago	Chicago	Chicago
	Forrest Gump	Forrest Gump	Forrest Gump
Substitution (SUB)	Don't Say a Word	Ne szólj, száj [Don't sepak, mouth]	Nevrav ani slovo [Don't say even a word] (TRL)
	Goodfellas	Nagymenők [Hot shots] (MOD)	Mafiáni [Mafia]
Modification (MOD)	Basic	Kiképzőtábor [Boot camp]	Zelené peklo [Green hell]
	Metro	Két tús között [Between two hostages]	Policajt zo San Francisca [A policeman from San Francisco]

Out of the 379 English-Hungarian-Slovak film titles of the corpus, 262 Hungarian titles and 296 Slovak titles were possible to put into one specific category of translation procedure. I was not able to put the remaining titles into one category only, however, by combining the procedures to form procedure pairs, classification of the remaining titles became possible. Table 3 contains examples for film titles which could only be classified into one of the six possible translation procedure pairs.

Table 3. Film title examples for the combinations of translation procedures

Procedure combination / language	EN	HU	SK
Transfer and translation (TRF TRL)	Terminator 2: Judgment Day	Terminator 2: Judgment Day	Terminátor 2: Deň zúčtovania [The day of reckoning]
	Midnight Cowboy	Éjféli cowboy [Midnight cowboy]	Polnočný kovboj [Midnight cowboy]
Transfer and substitution (TRF SUB)	The Beverly Hillbillies	Beverly Hill dili [Beverly Hill whacky party]	Vidiečania z Beverly Hills [Countrymen from Beverly Hills]
	Cool Hand Luke	Bilincs és mosoly [Handcuffs and smiles] (MOD)	Frajer Luke [Courting Luke]
Transfer and modification (TRF MOD)	Along Came Polly	Derült égből Polly [Polly from a clear sky]	Riskni to s Polly [Risk it with Polly]
	Toy Story	Toy story – Játékháború [Toy story – Game war]	Toy Story - Boj hračiek [Toy Story – The war of games]
Translation and modification (TRL MOD)	Deep Blue Sea	Háborgó mélység [The churning abyss]	Útok z hlbín An attack from the abyss]
	Resurrecting the Champ	Viszlát, Bajnok! [See you, champ!]	Reportér v ringu [A reporter in the ring]
Substitution and modification (SUB MOD)	The Hottie & the Nottie	A dögös és a dög [The hot one and the bitchy one]	Kráska a tá druhá [The beauty and the other one]
	My Best Friend's Wedding	Álljon meg a nászmenet! [Stop the wedding march!]	Tú svadbu treba zrušiť! [That wedding should be canceled!]
Translation and	Gone with the Wind	Elfújta a szél [The wind blew it away]	Odviate vetrom [Blown by the wind]

substitution (TRL SUB)	All Quiet on the Western Front	Nyugaton a helyzet változatlan [The situation is unchanged at the West]	Na západe nič nové [Nothing new at the West]
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During the analysis and classification of the film title translations, the possibility for creating additional combinations of translation procedures had arisen, but because the very low number of film titles which would have been possible to put into such categories, and also because these titles overlapped with other existing procedures or procedure combinations, I did not create any extra translation procedure category. I placed these titles into the category with which they showed the biggest overlap. The English film title *The Great Dictator* is an example for a translation procedure called lexical omission according to the taxonomy of translation procedures created by Klaudy ([5] 1999). The Hungarian title became *A diktátor* [The dictator] and the was a lexical omission in the Slovak title as well, *Diktátor* [Dictator].

Other examples for lexical omission are *The Life of Emile Zola*, whose Hungarian version is *Zola élete* [The life of Zola], or *Lake Placid* which became *Jazero* [Lake] in Slovak. These film titles fit into the combination of proper translation and modification procedures. The logical opposite of lexical omission is lexical addition ([5] Klaudy 1999). The corpus contains film title translations in which this translation procedure can be identified as well. For example, the title *Horsemen* was translated into *Az apokalipszis lovasai* [The horsemen of the apocalypse], and *The Apartment* became *Legénylakás* [Bachelor flat] in Hungarian. The *A Separation* was translated into *Rozchod Nadera a Simin* [The separation of Nader and Simin] in Slovak, where lexical addition was used to include the names of the two main characters in the title. Lexical addition can not only be found in film titles which can be placed into the category of the combination of proper translation and modification, but it also often happens that lexical addition is used in film title translations where the combination of transfer and modification was used. This happened with *Argo*, whose Hungarian title, by the addition of the word *akció* [operation] became *Az Argo-akció* [The Argo operation], as well as with *Coraline* which was translated into *Koralína a svet za tajnými dverami* [Koralína and the world behind the secret door] in Slovak.

Results

After I finished analyzing and categorizing the Hungarian and Slovak film title translations, I created filters for each translation procedure and procedure combination in the database of the corpus. Table 4 shows the overview of the results which can be used to answer the first research question.

(1) What type of translation procedures were used for the Hungarian and Slovak film titles which received negative opinions from the general audience?

Table 4. Summary of the results for answering research question (1)

Summary	From English to Hungarian		From English to Slovak	
	HU	SK	HU	SK
TRF	0	4	11	0
TRL	0	18	27	0

Language and Literacy Section

SUB	4	3	3	0
MOD	65	24	33	62
TRL MOD	10	13	9	9
SUB MOD	11	4	3	3
TRF MOD	6	7	5	1
TRL SUB	1	2	4	1
TRL TRF	0	1	1	0
TRF SUB	1	0	2	0

Since the film title translations which received negative criticism were collected from Hungarian and Slovak websites, the results can be divided into two parts. The first part contains the summary of the titles collected from Hungarian websites, while the second part includes the film titles obtained from Slovak websites. The numbers highlighted in bold (65, 62) clearly show that the most frequently used translation procedure for translating film titles which received negative criticism was modification (and its combinations). The frequency of this translation procedure expressed in percentiles is 99% in case of the Hungarian film titles and 98% of the Slovak titles. These numbers clearly show that the general audience (or at least those who expressed their opinions about film title translations) is not satisfied with film titles which were translated with modification, that is, film title translations which do not preserve neither the logical nor the encyclopedic entry of their source versions.

Table 4 also shows that transfer or proper translation was not used for translating any of the film titles whose translations then received negative criticism. Besides reading the answer for the first research question off of Table 4, it also allows further deductions. The numbers in the transfer and translation columns in both parts of the table show an interesting difference between Hungarian and Slovak film titles where there is an inverse of zero to positive frequency in titles collected from Hungarian and Slovak websites. This means that the (sub-)corpus contains film titles which were translated into Hungarian with either transfer or proper translation, but not with any of these procedures into Slovak, and vice versa. The film title *The Butterfly Effect* was translated with proper translation into Hungarian as *Pillangó-hatás* [Butterfly-effect], but in case of the Slovak title, *Osudový dotyk* [Touch of fate], modification was used. The English film title *Saw* was translated into Hungarian with proper translation as *Fűrész* [Saw], but the Slovak title became *Hra o prežitie* [Game for survival] with modification. The same can be observed from the point of view of the other target language. The film title *In Bruges* was translated with modification into Hungarian as *Erőszakik* [Erőszak – Violence; Szakik – workman; funny sounding coinage, suggesting a comedy], while in case of the Slovak title, *V Brugách* [In Bruges], proper translation was used. The English film title *Jaws* became *A cápa* [The shark] in Hungarian and *Čeluste* [Jaws] in Slovak. Such a strong difference between the target languages regarding film title translations occurs with the translation procedure of transfer as well. The title *Wicker Park* was transferred into Hungarian as *Wicker Park*, while the Slovak title became *Miluj ma! Prosím...* [Love me! Please...]. However, the title *Drive* was transferred into Slovak as *Drive*, but the Hungarian title became *Gázt!* [Accelerate!; Push the pedal!].

The second research question was concerned with title translations of films which are considered to be successful and unsuccessful based on the ratings of the general audience as well as winning the Oscars. The second research question can be answered by interpreting the results shown in Table 5.

(2) From the point of view of the translation procedures, is there any difference between film titles of films which are considered to be successful and those that are not?

Table 5. Summary of the results for answering research question (2)

Summary	From English to Hungarian		From English to Slovak	
	+	-	+	-
TRF	28	4	45	11
TRL	85	10	92	19
SUB	10	1	5	2
MOD	20	32	11	34
TRL MOD	15	17	18	10
SUB MOD	3	6	3	2
TRF MOD	5	7	4	1
TRL SUB	28	5	16	3
TRL TRF	3	0	2	0
TRF SUB	0	1	1	1

The results in Table 5 show that the answer for the second research question is yes, i.e. there is a big difference between film title translations of films which are considered to be successful as opposed to those which are not. The film titles of successful and unsuccessful films are indicated with the + and – symbols in their respective rows both in the Hungarian and the Slovak part of Table 5. The most frequently used translation procedure for the Hungarian film titles of successful films was proper translation. Compared to the other procedures and combinations of procedures, its percentile is 43.15%. This frequency is very high if we consider that, together with the combinations, there are 10 different possible procedures. What is more, the frequency applies to the procedure of proper translation only, that is, its combinations are not included in this number. If they had been, however, the frequency would be even higher. In case of the Hungarian film titles of unsuccessful films, the most frequently used translation procedure was modification. Without its combination, the percentile for the frequency of modification is 38.55%. Slovak title translations show a very similar result. The most frequently used procedure for the film titles of successful films was proper translation with the percentile of 46.69%, while the most frequent procedure used for titles of unsuccessful films was modification with 40.96% frequency.

The third research question inquired about the characteristics Hungarian and Slovak title translations of English film titles have. Table 6 contains the overall results expressed for all translation procedures, including their combinations, as well as for the 4 main procedures.

(3) From the point of view of translation procedures, what are the characteristics of Hungarian and Slovak film title translations of English film titles?

Table 6. Summary of the overall results for answering research question (3)

Summary	From English to Hungarian		From English to Slovak	
		4 main procedures		4 main procedures
TRF	33	59	62	78
TRL	102	178	117	176
SUB	15	67	7	42
MOD	112	192	110	166
TRL MOD	40		35	
SUB MOD	19		11	
TRF MOD	21		10	
TRL SUB	32		21	
TRL TRF	4		3	
TRF SUB	1		3	

Table 6 contains the overall results of the entire corpus, divided into two parts for the film titles in Hungarian and Slovak. Both parts of the table contain two rows in which the results are shown for all translation procedures and their combinations as well as the four main procedures only, in which their combinations are included. The results show that, for the Hungarian film titles, the most frequently used translation procedure was modification and its combinations, with a percentile of 38.70%. This results is rather intriguing if one compares it with the answer for the first research question, according to which the film titles receiving negative criticism are translated with precisely this procedure. In case of the Slovak film title translations, the most frequently used procedure was proper translation and its combinations, with a percentile of 38.08%. The least frequent procedure and its combinations for the Hungarian titles was transfer, 11.89%, while for the Slovak titles this procedure was substitution and its combinations, only in 9.08% of all cases. Another interesting fact shown by Table 6 is that for the Slovak titles, compared to the Hungarian ones, transfer was used almost 2 times more often (62/33), but substitution was used less than half as frequently (7/15).

Solutions for adding humor (in)to film titles

The analysis of film title translations yielded some results which are unrelated to the research questions, nevertheless, are quite fascinating and might stimulate further research in their own area. In case of certain titles, the contextual effects can only reach the addressee if they see the title (that is, can observe its spelling). An example for this phenomenon is the Hungarian translation of *Kick-Ass*, which is *HA/VER* [ha – if; ver – to beat; haver – dude]. The title in Hungarian means *dude* without the forward slash and *if beats* with it in. The same phenomenon can be observed on the Slovak translation of *Tenacious D in The Pick of Destiny*, which is *Králi Ro(c)ku* [Kings of the year – Kings of Rock]. The letter *c* in brackets creates the ambiguity of two words pronounced the same way but spelled differently, *rok* [year] and *rock* [music genre] (the letter *u* is grammatical inflection).

Some film titles made me think about using a theoretical framework other than relevance theory to explain or at least describe the phenomena one can observe in their translations. According to Beaugrande and Dressler ([6] 2000), text has seven features: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality. Since the authors used the text on a traffic sign to explain the features of text, the same type of explanation can be used to refer some features of film titles. The film title corpus contains interesting examples for two of the seven features of text. Sometimes it happens that in one Hungarian film title there is a reference to another one. The English film title *Big Momma's House* was translated into Hungarian as *Gagyi Mami* [Nutty mamma]. Another film title, *Black Knight*, was translated as *Gagyi lovag* [Nutty knight]. Both Hungarian titles use the rather rare, slangish word *gagyi* [nutty], even though there is no connection between the two films, except for the fact that in both films Martin Lawrence is the lead actor. The same phenomenon can be observed on the titles *Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo* and the *The Animal*, which were translated into Hungarian as *Tök alsó* [two meanings: (1) the name of a specific card with low value from the Saxonian deck; (2) slangish reference to male genitalia] and *Tök állat* [slangish: top notch, ace, cool] respectively. The only connection between these two films is that Rob Schneider plays the main role in both of them.

Further findings

From the point of view of informativity, another feature of text, a further interesting phenomenon can be observed on some film title translations which rather decreases their humorous load. According to Beaugrande and Dressler ([6] 2000), if the text has a high level of informativity (but not too high), it requires more effort to process, but at the same time, is more interesting. The English film title, consisting of only a single letter, *M*, was translated into Hungarian as *M: Egy város keresi a gyilkost* [M: a town is searching for the killer]. The same phenomenon can be observed on the Hungarian title translation *Billy Mitchell haditörvényszéke* [Billy Mitchell's court martial] whose original version is *Mitchell*. One may argue that these Hungarian titles have so low level of informativity, that there is no further content left for the audience to deduce from them, therefore they can become less interesting. I believe it would be beneficial for film distributors to find out what makes the audience more curious as far as the informativity of film titles is concerned. The intention of making the genre explicit with the help of the film title is clear, although, it might be possible that this intention is in opposition to the one according to which film title translations should catch the attention of the audience. Prioritizing relevance to the story in film title translation might also result in having a title which can predict the resolution of the story, such as it was the case with the film title which inspired this research: *The Broken Circle Breakdown* was translated into Hungarian as *Alabama és Monroe* [Alabama and Monroe], revealing a highly important element of the story right in the film's title.

The use of film title translations in the context of language teaching

Previous studies clearly indicate that the integration of the practice of translation can be beneficial for learners of English as a foreign language (e.g. [7] Lee, Shallert and Kim 2015, [8] Calis and Dikilitas 2012). It is important, however, not to fall into the trap of focusing on the text only, as it had happened with the grammar translation method ([9] Richard and Rodgers 2001), since it could lead to the same conclusion – a group of techniques and procedures which overlook the creativity of the language learners, a skill which is highly important to nurture ([10] Puskás 2019) in order for the language learning process to be successful and effective.

Film title is an interesting type of text since it rarely appears in a text-only format. It is usually part of the visual channel of a medium which contains many additional pieces of information and stimuli, such as a film teaser, trailer or the film itself. For this reason, film titles are inherently more stimulating than “pure” text, which is one of the main reasons they can be more motivating to deal with on language classes. Another reason for film titles being potentially more motivating than texts in general is the fact that films are popular among almost all age groups, therefore their titles can function as stimuli for evoking many types of associations and connotations connected to the characters, scenes and story of the films.

As I pointed out in the beginning section of this research, a quick internet search reveals that there is a rather lively and active ongoing discussion about Hungarian and Slovak film title translation on numerous websites. This suggests that film title translations (at least Hungarian and Slovak ones) have the tendency to evoke opposing opinions from people. The reason for this might be that certain film distributors translate film titles with the intention to make them curious and “catchy”. Some people seem to like this free approach to film title translation, but some people prefer loyalty to the original title, hence the heated discussion about film title translation.

Lively discussion is the foundation of the effective practice and improvement of speaking skills, while the translation of film titles activates and improves creativity and involves the use of vocabulary and grammar skills. It certainly seems that further research in this area is justified and needed and might reveal that the use of film title translation in language learning setting is potentially highly beneficial.

SUMMARY

The aim of the research was to understand and try to explain why certain Hungarian and Slovak film title translations received very negative opinions from the general audience expressed on various websites on the internet. I also wanted to find out whether there is any difference between how titles of successful and unsuccessful films are translated as well as what the characteristics of Hungarian and Slovak film title translations are. I collected 379 English film titles with their Hungarian and Slovak translations (1,137 titles in total) and put them into a database which became the corpus of this research. It consists of three sub-corpora: (1) film titles which received negative criticism, (2) titles of successful films and (3) titles of unsuccessful films. I tried to remove my subjectivity from the data collection part of the research by only including titles which I found on lists based on user ratings and user opinions, that is, I did not include any titles whose translations I did not like and/or titles of films which I consider to be un/successful.

I approached the analysis of title translations from a relevance theoretical perspective and used a method described in another study dealing with English-Hungarian film title translations ([2] Vermes 2005). The analysis included the classification of each Hungarian and Slovak title translation into four categories based on which translation procedure was used in its translation (transfer, proper translation, substitution, modification). Since I found it difficult

to classify a large amount of titles by identifying them with only one translation procedure, I created combinations of translation procedure pairs, which resulted in 6 extra categories.

The results show that in 99% of all cases, Hungarian film titles were translated with modification, and the same translation procedure was used in 98% of the Slovak film titles. As a result of this procedure, neither the logical, nor the encyclopedic content of the original film titles were preserved. The English titles of films which are considered to be successful were translated with proper translation in 43.15% of all cases into Hungarian and in 46.69% into Slovak. The most frequently used translation procedure for the English titles of films which are considered to be unsuccessful was modification, in 38.55% and 40.96% of all cases in Hungarian and Slovak respectively. The overall results of the entire corpus yielded interesting results as well. Considering all 379 titles, the most frequently used translation procedure (38.70%) for the Hungarian film titles was modification and its combinations, which is quite fascinating, since this is exactly the procedure that attracts negative criticism the most. In case of the Slovak film titles, the most frequently used procedure (38.08%) was proper translation and its combination, which means that Slovak film titles are more often translated with their logical and encyclopedic content preserved than Hungarian film titles are.

The analysis revealed certain phenomena which are possible to describe and explain with a textual linguistic theoretical framework, e.g. the cases when there is a relevance in one film title translation to another film title translation without the films being connected in any way, as far as their stories are concerned, or when the title allows a prediction to be made about the outcome of the story, potentially changing the experience of the film. The research also indicates that the integration of film title translation into language learning would potentially be beneficial for both teachers and learners in a language learning setting.

The paper was written in the framework of KEGA grant project Improving creativity and teaching English as a foreign language creatively at primary and secondary schools (Rozvoj kreativity a kreatívna výučba anglického jazyka na základných a stredných školách) Project no. 006UJS-4/2019 at the J. Selye University, Faculty of Education.

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