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Anthropological Factor in Audiovisual Translation: Creativity and Censorship in Dubbing ‘Some Like It Hot’ in the Soviet Union

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Abstract. This paper investigates the anthropological factor of audiovisual translation lying in relationship between creativity and censorship. Film censorship systems and practices around the world demonstrate a wide variety of modalities and practices changing over time. Taking up the definition of film censorship as the attempt to hinder or limit the free expression, creation, production, distribution, exhibition, and reception of films (Biltereyst & Vande Winkel 2013), we will analyze the Russian dubbed version of the American film ‘Some Like It Hot’ (1959). It was released in the Soviet Union in 1966, two years after the relative relaxations in censorship practices after Stalin’s death in 1953 ended with the ouster of Khrushchev. Strict censorship regulations coupled with widespread self-censorship resulted in the verbal and visual cuts of about 20 minutes in Billy Wilders’ film with respect to sensitive topics and unsuitable culture-specific references. The focus of the research is on the discussion of concrete examples of creative approaches used by Soviet audiovisual translators to prepare a text for dubbing that preserves the wholeness and coherence of the film for a new generation of filmgoers in a changed political climate.

Keywords: audiovisual translation, AVT, creativity, dubbing, censorship, anthropological factor, translation solution.

Research area: culturology.

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Антропологический фактор в аудиовизуальном переводе: креативность и цензура (на материале советской дублированной версии кинофильма «В джазе только девушки»)

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Аннотация. Исследование посвящено изучению антропологического фактора в аудиовизуальном переводе, заключенного во взаимосвязи креативности переводчика и государственной цензуры. В мире существует множество практик и систем цензуры кинофильмов, которые со временем претерпевают существенные изменения. Рассматривая цензуру аудиовизуальных произведений как попытку воспрепятствовать или ограничить свободу выражения творческой мысли и контролировать процесс производства, дистрибуции, показа и восприятия кинофильмов (Biltreyst & Vande Winkel 2013), автор анализирует советскую дублированную версию американского кинофильма «В джазе только девушки» (1959 г.). Данная кинолента вышла на советские экраны в 1966 году после смерти И. В. Сталина в разгар хрущевской оттепели. Строгие требования цензуры вкупе с широко распространенными практиками самоцензуры привели к тому, что советская версия кинофильма стала короче на 20 минут за счет удаления из нее сцен, связанных с запретными темами и несоответствующими культурными отсылками. Таким образом, цель исследования состоит в рассмотрении конкретных примеров применения творческого подхода советских аудиовизуальных переводчиков к подготовке перевода под дубляж с соблюдением требования сохранения целостности и связности фильма, с учетом потребностей нескольких поколений зрителей, воспринимающих аудиовизуальные произведения в условиях постоянно меняющегося политического климата.

Ключевые слова: аудиовизуальный перевод (АВП), креативность, дубляж, цензура, антропологический фактор, переводческое решение.

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1. Introduction

There is little doubt that audiovisual translation (AVT) is a highly creative field where the translator becomes a co-author of the original production. AVT specialists are always under pressure of temporal, spatial, cultural and other types of constraints, which, depending on the mode of AVT and other circumstances, sometimes force translators to make surprising

decisions and to become valuable collaborators in the localization process. AVT is a universal way of transmitting artistic images and ideas to enormous audiences; thus it has always been tightly intertwined with the anthropological factors, including censorship issues. This study aims at showing how censorship triggers AV-translators' creativity making them key stakeholders in the film localization process.

The main objective of the paper is to explore the limits of AV-translators' creativity in the clutch of Soviet censorship. In the times of the USSR, the main mode of AVT was dubbing because it offered an opportunity to change the content of an original production according to the requirements of preemptive censorship without compromising the artistic value of the film. Films, as well as other works of art meant for public release imported to the USSR, were strictly censored for scenes or dialogues contradicting the ideology of the Soviet Union. Special commissions monitored every film to be released in the USSR. As a result, AV-translators had to be very careful to meet these regulations, at the same time preserving the artistic value of audiovisual productions in question.

In the context of this study, I would like to emphasize the creative role of AV translators who had to comply with the censorship constraints and yet were capable of providing a high-quality translation. Firstly, the paper focuses on AVT as a creative practice and defines the possible limits of this creativity. Secondly, it dwells on the issues of film censorship with special focus on Soviet dubbing practices in the context of strict censorship. The discussion section is a case study based on the Soviet dubbed version of Billy Wilder's "Some Like It Hot" (1959) released in the USSR in 1966. I will analyse minor and major changes AV translators had to make to reach complete lip synchronization of the dialogues, avoid forbidden and culture-specific topics, and to maintain the cohesion of the plot.

2. Audiovisual translation, censorship, and creativity: colliding concepts?

2.1. Audiovisual translation as a creative process

There is no doubt that translation is a process of a creative nature. The idea of formal comparing of source texts to target texts existing in some "translation vacuum" has been put to rest. Currently, we are talking of a necessity to study text "embedded in its network of both source and target cultural signs" (Bassnett, Lefevere, 1998: 123), looking at it from a bird's perspective: "seeing first the cul-

tural context, then the situational context, and finally the text itself (Leppihalme, 1997: 3). In this culture-oriented context, we may talk of a "transcreational turn" as a tool of re-creating the source text's ideas and artistic images in the target culture. As Katan (Katan, 2016) argues, translators have a choice whether to stay safe and to stick to a low-risk, traditional, and faithful translation, or to "step into the role of transcreator, which would allow them to take advantage of an already assigned professional recognition of their creative role, and which would authorize them to take account of the impact of cultural distance when translating". Sometimes, this creativity becomes an ultimate condition of providing a high-quality translation, and AVT is not an exception.

Talking of AVT it is important to mention that this type of translation slightly differs from traditional oral and written translation practices. From referring to AVT as "the translation of recorded audiovisual material" (Karamitoglou, 2000: 2) or "a translation of verbal component of the video" (Matkivska, 2014: 38) we moved to more complex perception of this phenomenon. The term AVT now stresses the necessity of dealing with the source text as a multisemiotic entity that requires taking into consideration a multiplicity of signs that are active in the production of meaning (Gottlieb, 1994; Chaume, 2004; Zabalbeascoa, 2008; Sakellariou, 2012; Gambier, 2013; etc.). New trends in AVT studies now focus on the "multi-functional, multi-layered polymorphic nature of audiovisual texts" (Díaz Cintas, Matamala & Neves, 2010: 13). Different modes and conditions of AVT also require translators to take approaches tailored to individual preferences of the clients and their audiences. It allows the scholars to address AVT practices not as "merely variants of literary, drama or poetry translation, but rather that they are translational modes belonging to a superordinate text type – the audiovisual one – that operates in contradistinction to the written-only and spoken-only types" (Díaz Cintas, 2009: 6). These developments in AVT research result in referring to AVT as a complex, eclectic, and multidisciplinary practice that implies recreation of an audiovisual production for new audiences tak-

ing into account their preferences, cultural values, social settings, peculiarities of perception, as well as different constraints imposed upon audiovisual translators.

Regarding the issue of creativity in AVT, we may speak of different approaches to understanding this concept. On the one hand, AVT translation is considered to be a creative practice by default because it offers service to a creative industry and, as Kapsaskis argues, its aim is “to maximize consumption and to promote dominant forms of popular culture” (Kapsaskis, 2018: 4). On the other hand, creativity in AVT is often viewed as a tool for cultural adaptation (Ranzato, 2015; Malenova, 2017; Perdikaki, 2018); a shift towards translational ‘subjectivity’, i.e. “towards the translator’s creative input in the process of ‘writing’ a translation, and the creativity inscribed in the products generated by this subjectivity” (Lofredo, Perteghella, 2006: 2). This approach, as Vieira (1999: 110) puts it, “demythicalizes the ideology of fidelity” and refers to AVT as a creative processing of original text used when other more faithful translation strategies lead to no satisfactory results. The intensity of transformation of the source text in the process of translation and the extent of ‘creative interference’ into original context make it possible to categorize creative practices into three main types: transcreation, transadaptation, and transculturation (Malenova 2018: 782). By using said creative translation practices, we will be capable of delivering a target text that will resonate with the recipients’ cultural values, demands, and expectations. In some cases, the changes stemming from this creativity can be so radical and unexpected, that the translator can eventually become a co-author of an audiovisual production.

There is yet another – more radical – approach to AVT as a creative practice. In this case, translators go an extra mile in their creativity and produce new target products that may in some sense even lose connection with source audiovisual productions. Chaume (2018: 87) calls them fundubs (or gag dubbing) when “the main function of the ‘creative translation’ is parody”. Talaván (2019: 54) refers to these parodic translations as creative dubbing and

subtitling and defines them as “producing fake subtitles and fake dubbing tracks through the manipulation of the original dialogues with a comedic effect in mind”. It is hard to say whether this turn in creativity can have profound implications for future AVT development. However these practices do exist and flourish in the Internet communities thus contributing “to a new kind of translator visibility that diverges from more traditional translation practices” (Diaz Cintas, 2018: 146).

All the approaches described present an ever-expanding array of tools used to integrate a source audiovisual production into a new cultural matrix. Sometimes, creativity in AVT may seem to be unreasonable or even unwanted because it may lead to a considerable distortion of the source content’s meaning and deform its cultural and communicative context. Despite this, such a “creative treason”, as Xie (2017) puts it, could be necessary and prerequisite; sometimes it even becomes the only choice for the translator. This is the case when audiovisual translators find themselves in the clutches of censorship.

2.2. *Censorship issues in AVT and Soviet dubbing practices*

The issues of censorship tightly intertwined with AVT often attract the attention of AVT scholars. This trend stems from the fact that, as Diaz Cintas (2012: 284) puts it, importing of foreign audiovisual productions into target cultures always implies the penetration of unfamiliar elements which are bound to be manipulated or adjusted by the dominant ideology of the host culture. The changes audiovisual production undergoes in the course of translation can be attributed to different pressing issues that have profound implications for AVT research and practice. Some of these issues are associated with cultural and political constraints due to political regimes in different countries (Mereu, 2012; Wang and Zhang, 2016; Gómez Castro, 2016; Di Giovanni, 2016, etc.). Others are linked to topics, scenes, and words that are considered inappropriate for some audiences (Parini, 2012; Zanotti, 2012; Ranzato, 2012; Sandrelli, 2016, etc.). Due to the fact that audiovisual translators are not solitary

individuals but rather part of a collaborative team, they should be prepared to see their work “modified significantly by revisers, editors, dubbing adapters and publishers of some form” (Cordingley and Manning, 2017: 2). The latter may include censors who are in a position of removing or changing anything that may seem morally offensive or politically dangerous for the current statecraft. A good example of dealing with ideology that interferes with AVT is dubbing practices used in the USSR.

From the very beginning of the era of cinema, foreign films were exported to Russia, later the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, due to the policy of a young Soviet state, not many foreign motion pictures made their way to Russian screens. On January 17, 1922, Vladimir Lenin stated in his letter that only two types of films could be released in the Soviet state: “a) entertainment films for the purpose of benefit and advertising (without sexually-oriented and counterrevolutionary elements); and b) films under the brand ‘life in other countries’ for the purpose of propaganda (Lenin, 1970: 360).

A great leap for AVT in the USSR happened in 1930–1940s. At that time, the USSR purchased films in the USA as a part of active political and military cooperation. The most popular films were ‘One Hundred Men and a Girl’ (1937), and ‘The Great Waltz’ (1938). These and other foreign productions were released in the original languages with Russian subtitles. However, the USSR never became a subtitling country. I believe there are two reasons for that. On the one hand, many viewers simply could not read. Despite the fact that after issuing the “Decree on Eradication of Illiteracy” in 1919, the Soviet government claimed this literacy project to be completed successfully, the share of illiterate people in 1937 was as follows: 14 % of illiterate citizens among men and 34 % among women. To be able to write one’s name was enough for the person to be considered literate (Zhiromskaya, Kiselev, and Polyakov, 1996: 94). Consequently, subtitling could have limited the access to audiovisual productions for a quarter of the country’s population. On the other hand, there were those who could hear and understand the original soundtrack; thus, it was impossible to censor

the content of the films. From 1947 on, more films were dubbed, and by the beginning of the 50s, the USSR became a ‘dubbing’ country.

Soviet dubbing practices developed quickly and set high standards for localization of audiovisual productions. According to Sazonov (2010:52), the dubbing of one film took about two months. The text was translated and synchronized, and then it was sent to the editor for literary adaptation. After that, the text was censored. Film censorship was not invented in the Soviet Union. Preemptive censorship of audiovisual productions stems from the times of the Russian Empire. In 1908, Moscow Governor’s Office issued an order specifying the rules of film release. According to this document, it was prohibited to show films that could offend religious feelings of people and films that had political or criminal context (Likhachev, 1927:36). Similarly, censorship pressure from governmental state agencies on Hollywood dates back to the Progressive Era (1896–1916) when many state and local censor boards were established (Wittern-Keller, 2013: 15).

The first document that introduced Soviet censorship rules was “Decree on Publishing” issued on October 27, 1917. According to this act, print press agencies that were publishing fake news, calling for criminal actions, and expressing antagonism towards the new Workers’-Peasants’ Government were to be banned (Zelenov, 2000a). In 1919, all studios and enterprises engaged in film production were nationalized and placed under the control of People’s Commissariat on Education (Sadoul, 1961:440). The process of imposing total governmental control over cinematography and film release reached its climax in 1923, when the Central Repertoire Committee was organized. According to the ‘Regulations Concerning Control of the Repertoire’, “not a single production could be approved for public performance without the permission of The Central Repertoire Committee” (Libussr). This requirement was applied not only to theatres, but also to public lectures, musical concerts, circus performances, and film releases.

Soon after the enactment of these Regulations, all films to be released in Soviet cinemas were split into three categories: 1) films

approved for all audiences; 2) films not approved for peasants and workers; 3) banned films. Although, in 1924 there were only two categories left: approved or banned (Surov, 1999). Any film produced or imported to the USSR, as well as any other work of art meant for public release, should not contain scenes or dialogues contradicting the ideology of the Soviet Union. Other banned topics included campaigning against the Soviet regime, divulgence of military secrets, arousing public opinion by conveying false information, arousing nationalistic and religious fanaticism, and showing pornography (Zelenov, 2000b). Consequently, censorship in the USSR started at the point of films selection. All films released at that time were adventure movies, musicals or romances without any pronounced ideological influence. Nevertheless, even in these 'light' films censors were able to find scenes and dialogues that seemed inappropriate for Soviet viewers. Special commissions watched every film to be released in the USSR, and audiovisual translators had to be very careful as to meet these Regulations and save the artistic value of audiovisual productions.

In the late 50s, when a period of so-called 'Khrushchev's Thaw' started, censorship was relaxed and foreign films made their way onto big Soviet screens. Despite that, special censor agencies called Art Councils were created to approve or ban every film imported from abroad or produced in the USSR. The usual reason for disapproval was non-conformity with the Soviet moral system, propaganda of bourgeois values, and discrepancy with the general line of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). If the film received a general approval for release, translators and dubbing directors had to edit out any information, dialogues or scenes that did not meet censors' requirements.

3. Do 'Some like it hot'?

A case study of the Soviet dubbed version

A good material for a case study of creative AVT practices resulting from the censorship restrictions imposed by the Soviet state is the dubbed version of Billy Wilder's comedy 'Some Like It Hot' (1959) starring Marilyn Monroe, Tony Curtis, and Jack Lemmon. It

tells about the adventures of two musicians – Joe and Jerry – who had to disguise themselves as women to join a female jazz band. In the USSR, the film was dubbed at Maxim Gorky Studio and released in 1966. Due to the ideological and cultural issues, the dialogues in the Russian dubbed version substantially differ from the original film. Moreover, censors made changes to the visual sequence. Many scenes of the film were simply edited out; as a result, the original film that lasted for 2 hours became 24 minutes shorter.

Censorship started from its very title of the production. In Russian it was localized as 'В джазе только девушки' (There are only girls in a jazz band) probably because the word 'hot' in Russian implies not only a type of jazz music but it can be considered as a hint to sexual relationships, the film's central topic which was completely forbidden in the USSR. In Russian, there is a popular saying "There is no sex in the USSR", which dates back to 1986. During a teleconference "Leningrad – Boston" one of the participants said: "We don't have sex and we are totally against it" (Fragment Telemosta Leningrad – Boston 1986). She meant that there were no sexual commercials on Soviet TV. Despite that, this phrase became very popular because it reflected the negative attitude of the state towards the topic of sexual relationships. That is why all scenes in the film suggesting intimate relationships – kisses, women in underwear, bellboy flirting with the main character – were cut out. Another forbidden topic was gambling of any type. One of the characters, Joe, loves gambling on dogs' races. The scenes where he is discussing gambling, races and bets were also edited out.

While preparing the synchronized target text, translators had to make some drastic changes to the original dialogues. This was not only connected with spacio-temporal constraints and the need for precise lip-synchronization. The translators had to change the content of the dialogues to avoid mentioning of some inappropriate and sensitive topics, such as gambling, ideology, capitalistic lifestyle and sexual relationships. They also had to localize some culture-specific references unknown to Soviet viewers. In this context, au-

audiovisual translators had to bring into use their creative interference and to transform both the form and the meaning of the source text. The analysis of the Soviet dubbed version of 'Some Like It Hot' showed that the creative practices applied by the translators can be classified into three types of translation solutions according to the intensity of changes made to the source material: creative generalization, meaning extension, and creating dialogues from scratch.

Creative generalization was applied when the characters used words or concepts that might be attributed to banned or unsuitable topics. One of these topics is gambling. There are several gambling scenes in the original film (e.g. the gangsters' playing cards in the garage) and references to gambling in the lines of the characters. Despite the fact that some scenes and lines connected to gambling were cut out (e.g. the episode with the line 'Tomorrow we go to the dog track and bet it all on Greased Lightning' was simply removed from the original video sequence), some of the lines had to be changed in translation. For example, when Joe and Jerry have to search for a new job, Joe asks his mate, "I wonder, how much Sam the bookie will give us for our overcoats?" Since the mention of the bookie had to be avoided, the meaning was generalized and this line was translated as follows: "Сколько можно получить за наши пальто, если отнести их в заклад?" (How much can we get if we put our overcoats in pawn?). This may seem as a minor change of meaning but it allows to synchronize the lip-movement with the target text and to avoid a direct mentioning of a bookie. Translators followed the same strategy with the gambling scene in the garage. It shows mobsters playing poker. The first part of the game was cut out from the film; however, the game was resumed in the next fragment that was not edited. Therefore, translators had to change the dialogue to minimize any mention of this card game and to stay within the audiovisual context of the scene. That is why, the original line "OK, let's go. Aces bet" was generalized as "Ладно, поехали дальше" (OK, let's move on).

The same solution was applied when dealing with cultural-specific references the Soviet people were unaware of. The translators could

choose one of the two possible strategies: to domesticate a culture-specific reference, or to use the strategy of foreignization and to introduce the reference as it is into the target text. However, despite the huge amount of culture-specific references in the film, none of them was transferred into the target text without changing. One can offer different explanations of this fact but it is possible that these references could be considered as markers of capitalistic lifestyle and, consequently, be alien to Soviet people. As a result, a "St. Valentine's Dance" was generalized into "Танцевальный вечер" (Dance party), "It's Shell Oil" turned into "Это от него" ("It's from him"), etc. It is very important to mention, that each Russian variant of translation can be easily synchronized with the source text. That way, translators eased the job for the dubbing team and avoided topics that shouldn't have been touched upon.

In some cases, translators had to adopt more radical solutions and extend the meaning of the source dialogue to stay in the context of the scene while dealing with forbidden and unacceptable topics. Some of translation solutions were quite unexpected. Translators had to use their creativity to change culture-specific references that sometimes did not have any ideological narrative just because they would be hard for the viewers to understand. Such as "maraschino cherries" turned into "что-нибудь солененькое" (something salty), "hot dogs" became "селедка" (herring), "playing golf" was changed into "поесть в ресторане" (to eat at the restaurant). These transformations of the source material cannot be explained by the necessity to provide lip-synchronization because neither phonetic form, nor number of syllables coincides with the source line. Golf, hot dogs and maraschino cherries, being elements of an alien bourgeois culture, did not fit into the paradigm of the communist lifestyle. The Soviet people, who were unaware of American society agenda, could never understand why the man of any girl's dreams should be "with money like Rockefeller and shoulders like Johnny Weissmuller". In the times the film was released, the name of Rockefeller was a synonym to greediness; he was pictured as a Nazi collaborator who produced furnaces for Auschwitz and

made his fortune on exploitation of the black labour (Glagoleva, 2019). It is quite clear that a Soviet girl fed with propaganda of that type could not dream of a guy like Rockefeller. So the translators had to use their creativity and produced the following variant: “чтобы денег побольше, а родни поменьше” (with more money and less relatives). This Russian phrase produces a comic effect and can be easily synchronized with the lip-movement of the actors on the screen.

Sometimes, the translators had to go beyond the limits of translation and created dialogues from scratch to stay within the audiovisual context to maintain the interplay between verbal and visual semiotics of the film. A good example to illustrate how creativity of translators can help to meet censorship requirements is the scene when Joe, disguised as a millionaire, is talking to Sugar Cane, the main female character played by Marilyn Monroe. They have just spent a night together on a yacht, and when Sugar starts kissing Joe he asks where she learned to kiss like that. She answers that she used to sell kisses for the Milk Fund, and Joe promises to pay the Fund for each kiss he gets. This episode was censored out and was removed from the Russian dubbed version. But later, on the steps of the hotel, Sugar kisses Joe goodbye and they are having the following conversation:

- How much do I owe the Milk Fund so far?
- 850 thousand dollars.
- Let’s make it an even million.

Here, the translators faced three problems. The first problem was that The Milk Fund, a charity organization which used to provide free milk to the poor children of New York City, was an American culture-specific concept that was not familiar to the Soviet viewers. The second problem was that the main character decided to pay for Sugar’s kisses. In the USSR, any type of consumptive relationships was considered unethical. Soviet people could not buy kisses or pay for them; this was against the moral values imposed by the state. The third problem was that the scene fell out of the context of Russian edited version because, as it has been already mentioned, all previous references to the Milk

Fund had been cut out of the narrative. Therefore, translators managed to create a new dialogue, and in the Russian version of the film, it gained a different meaning:

- Для меня ночь пролетела незаметно. (The night just flew by).
- И для меня тоже, дорогой. (I feel the same, darling).
- Я по-настоящему счастлив. (I am really happy).

As a result, we see a nice couple, they are in love and happy together. This concept of happy relationships went in line with the Soviet ideology and was approved of by the censors. Moreover, on the screen we see a close up of the actors and their lip movements are precisely synchronized with the Russian text. These are just a few examples of how Soviet audiovisual translators managed to provide high-quality audiovisual translation while keeping in mind censorship issues. All other creative translation solutions applied in the Russian dubbed version of ‘Some Like It Hot’ fall into the mentioned categories and create some new meanings in the frameworks of an original context.

4. Conclusions

Answering the main research question of the paper, whether AVT, censorship, and creativity are colliding concepts, I can say that creativity may become the only way to stay in the context of an audiovisual production, to comply with all the regulations of preemptive censorship, and to ensure the positive and adequate viewing experience. All the creative solutions described in the paper meet one goal, i.e. to place a source audiovisual production into a new cultural, ideological, and political context. Sometimes, these creative solutions may cause a potential misrepresentation of source meaning and can be considered a “creative treason”; however, they prove to be workable in the context of dubbing and makes it possible to reach a precise lip-synchronization, to avoid unwanted and culture-specific topics, and to maintain the integrity of an audiovisual production.

It does not matter whether censorship is imposed because of sensitive or controversial content of an audiovisual production, or it is politically and ideologically oriented. In

any case, audiovisual translators have to use the power of their creativity to provide high-quality translation. As Wang puts it, “wherever censorship regulates and suppresses, it simultaneously stimulates creativity in the translators, whose final outputs are crucial to the fate of an

original at the threshold of the anticipated marketplace” (Wang, 2020: 636). In this context, creativity becomes the added value of audiovisual translators and enables them to provide the viewer with an anticipated high-quality viewing experience.

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