SUBTITLES: DEFINITION, TYPES, PECULIARITIES

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It is a well-known fact that the film translation industry is extremely large. This sphere of translations involves many translators who use a variety of methods to deliver a viable result. One of the main techniques used in translating movies is subtitling them. Although it may seem like a simple process, subtitling still requires compliance with a number of rules and standards touched in this article.

Subtitling is one of the oldest methods of *film translation*, as for a long time it was the only type of audiovisual translation available due to technological progress. Subtitling as a way to translate videos and movies appeared in the *1930s*. It is believed that this method of translation was invented by the American film translator Herman G. Weinberg. An early form of subtitles briefly conveyed the meaning of the dialogue of one or more scenes.

Despite the obvious advantages of dubbing, *European countries prefer subtitling* as the main form of film translation. There are several *reasons* for this: 1. Most of the European countries have a small population and therefore the fees from the rental of foreign films are too low; 2. Subtitling is much cheaper than dubbing; 3. The tradition of "preserving the spirit of the original"; 4. A country has several official languages, and each language needs a separate line of subtitles (for example, in Belgium or Switzerland). Subtitling is most common in the UK, the USA, Greece, Holland, Portugal, Israel, Thailand, Scandinavian countries, small European and multilingual countries, e.g. Luxembourg, Denmark, Switzerland [1]. We cannot omit the *exception*, in the form of the UK: the inhabitants of this country have never had problems understanding films from the US, and for this reason, did not need any translation. At the same time, in the US and UK, European cinema is more likely to be considered *"author's cinema",* it has a smaller number of viewers, and therefore subtitling is a more appropriate and economical type of translation.

Subtitles are *textual accompaniment* to a video that duplicates or supplements the sound of a film or program. Usually the subtitles reflect the speech of the characters. The term *"subtitle"* consists of two morphemes: the prefix *"sub"* that means in Latin *'located below something, or near something'*, and the root *"title"* that means in Latin '*inscription, heading, or label*' [2]. *The concept of subtitle* arose along with cinema. It denoted text or inscription on the screen, explaining the content of the film and reproducing the dialogue of the characters, since the cinema at that time was silent.

According to the German researcher Gottlieb, subtitles are an *intersemiotic translation* and against this background he gives the following definition: "subtitling con-

sists in rendering in a different language of verbal messages in filmic media in the shape of one or more lines of written text presented on the screen in sync with the original message”. He also defines it as *“prepared communication* using written language acting as an additive and synchronous semiotic channel, as part of a transient and polysemiotic text” [3, p.15].

Subtitles belong to the field of *multi-dimensional translation* without changing the sign system, but with the transition from spoken to written language. Subtitling is also defined as a *form of audiovisual translation*, which also includes dubbing, audio description and subtitling for people with hearing impairments.

The *crucial differences* between subtitles and traditional interlingual translation are that subtitling involves the interaction of *language, image and sound*, so a *triple transmission* occurs: firstly, the transfer of one language to another language; secondly, the translation of oral dialogue into written text and; thirdly, the translation of an unabridged text into an abbreviated version.

In this context, Gottlieb speaks of *four communication channels*: picture, sound, dialogue, and subtitles [3, p.18]. Each of the channels carries a certain *semantic load* and has a certain *impact* on the perception of the entire audiovisual work as a whole. Like these four channels, Delabastita defines four types of *film signs* that are broadcast in subtitles: “verbal signs transmitted acoustically (dialogue), non-verbal signs transmitted acoustically (background noise, music), verbal signs transmitted visually (credits, letters, documents shown on the screen), non-verbal signs transmitted visually” [4, p.101].

Speaking about the types of subtitles, there are *intralingual* and *interlingual* subtitles [5].

With *intralingual subtitling*, the oral text is accompanied by the written text in the original language. In this case, as a rule, a text is reduced and simplified, and not transmitted verbatim. Intralingual subtitles are also called *vertical subtitles* because they change the perceptual modality: the oral text is converted to written without any change in content. This type of subtitling is used when adapting a film for people with hearing impairments, as well as for a foreign-language audience that is not fluent enough in the source language to perceive the content of audiovisual materials by ear. Films with intralingual subtitles are often used in teaching and learning foreign languages as one of the multimedia didactic tools.

Interlingual subtitles, also called *diagonal subtitles,* change both perceptual modality and language. Interlingual subtitling is “a reduced translation of an audiovisual work that reflects its main content and accompanies the visual series of the original work in the form of written text located at the bottom of the screen” [6].

A particular problem for subtitles is the *spatial* and *temporal constraints* that exist due to the medium, which force the text to be constantly shortened or paraphrased. Spatial restrictions result from the general rule that a subtitle consists of a maximum of *two lines* with a total of *60-70 characters.* This small size is due to the fact that subtitles should occupy no more than *20% of the image* on the screen and should not

overlap information that the viewer reads from the image on the screen. Subtitles are also most often located at *the bottom of the screen*, since the more important part of the image, such as the speakers' faces, is displayed at the top of the screen, and the action is more likely to take place in the middle of the picture [7, p.53].

The *time limit* for subtitles is due to the fact that reading written text takes more time than listening to oral text. However, an important rule for subtitles is that the optimal subtitle gradually appears at the beginning of the utterance and disappears again at the end of the dialogue. This is one of the reasons why it is necessary to shorten the text.

In addition, the viewer not only reads the subtitles, but also receives relevant information from the image. It turns out that the translator may have some freedom in the choice of translation strategies, as long as the relevance of the message is retained in the translation.

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Recomandat

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