“SEXISM AND RACISM IN THE DRAMA FILM ‘HIDDEN FIGURES’ FROM A TRANSLATION PERSPECTIVE”

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This study was conducted in the field of audiovisual translation. We analysed societal issues such as racism, sexism and gender discrimination in the Romanian subtitles of the American drama film “Hidden Figures”. The Sociolinguistic Theory of Translation and the Skopos Theory were applied in order to examine the corpus of examples extracted from the film.

1. Theoretical approach to audiovisual translation

A film is primarily a product which communicates about particular social phenomena, that is why we have focused on the Sociolinguistic Theory of Translation – proposed by the linguist E. Nida – which perceives translation “as an act of communication” [4, p. 104]. It analyses four important elements which are part of the translation process – “the message, the audience, the circumstances in which translation takes place, the circumstances in which the message is received” [4, p. 101]. Another theoretical approach included is the Skopos Theory assessed by linguists K. Reiss and H. Vermeer. They state that translation is “governed by its purpose” [5, p. 85], which might be established only according to target audience needs. We identified that the purpose of the film is to communicate about the way racism and sexism has affected Black women in the United States in early 1960s. Whereas the translation of this film aims to transmit further this information via creating the same linguistic effect in TL as in the original.

The notions of sexism and racism were defined and approached from the sociolinguistic perspective. They both denote discriminatory language practices that aim to humiliate a particular social group. We also identified the definition of subtitling given by J. D. Cintas and A. Remael which is “a translation practice that consists in presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that aims to recount the original dialogue exchanged among the various speakers, as well as all the other verbal information that is transmitted visually […] and aurally […]” [1, p. 9]. Subtitling is a constrained type of translation and particular linguistic and extralinguistic features have to be respected. For instance, subtitling is a “diagonal translation” [3, p. 104], according to H. Gottlieb, because there is a shift in codes – from oral to written. This shift increases viewers’ cognitive effort, that is why it is important for subtitling to create a coherent linguistic-visual whole. From technical perspectives, there have to be between 37 and 40 characters per subtitle and the line should ideally last 6 to 7 seconds on the screen. H. Gottlieb proposes the following a set of subtitling strate-

gies: expansion, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion, resignation [2, p. 166]. J. D. Cintas and A. Remael suggest partial and total reduction, condensation and reformulation as subtitling strategies [1].

2. Analysis of Selected Examples Representing Elements of Sexism and racism in the Film

A corpus of 50 examples from the film "Hidden Figures" were analysed from the linguistic and translation perspective. We have identified 30 examples of racial discrimination, 11 examples of gender discrimination and 9 sexist acts. As follows, we shall examine several selected examples from our paper.

EN: "***COLORED COMPUTERS***"

RO: „***GRUP DE CALCUL PERSOANE DE CULOARE***"

The label was translated via transposition and explicitation combined, as there is a grammatical change, namely the adjective "colored" was rendered as a noun phrase in TL, and the SL noun "computers" was explained in TL.

EN: "*Virginia acts like* ***Brown versus Board of Education*** *never happened.* ***They are never gonna allow a colored woman to just take classes at an all-white school***" [Mary].

RO: „***De parcă n-ar ști că școlile segregate au fost declarate neconstituționale. Nu vor permite unei femei de culoare să urmeze cursuri la o școală de albi.***"

Brown versus Board of Education was a case in which the Supreme Court decided to desegregate educational institutions. The statement was translated via paraphrasing, as there is a change at the semantic level and a shift in the perspective. "Gonna" is a contracted form of "going to", which is not possible to transfer in the Romanian subtitling. In our opinion, the original message was preserved with the help of paraphrasing and transposition techniques, however, the omission of the adverb "never" slightly changes the meaning of the last sentence.

EN: "***NASA doesn't commission females for the Engineer Trainin' Program***". [Vivian Mitchell]

RO: „***NASA nu numește femei pentru Programul de Inginerie.***"

In this statement, the SL message is preserved and the TL version also contains the negation and Present tense as in the original form. The sentence was translated literally, while the name of the programme was translated via condensation, namely the noun "training" was deleted.

EN: "*I just don't understand. I just… I don't understand it*". [Levi Jackson]

"*I don't wanna talk about this again, okay?*" [Mary]

"***But a female engineer? A female engineer?***" [Levi Jackson]

RO: „*Nu înțeleg. Nu înțeleg deloc.*"

„*Nu vreau să discutăm iar despre asta*."

„***O ingineră?***"

The question in bold is sexist as Levi believes that a woman would not be able to succeed as an engineer. The noun phrase "female engineer" was condensed as a single word noun in TL. The repetition is used to emphasize the issue of sexism, however

in subtitling the question was not repeated twice. The graphical representation of the corpus of examples is presented below (Fig. 1).

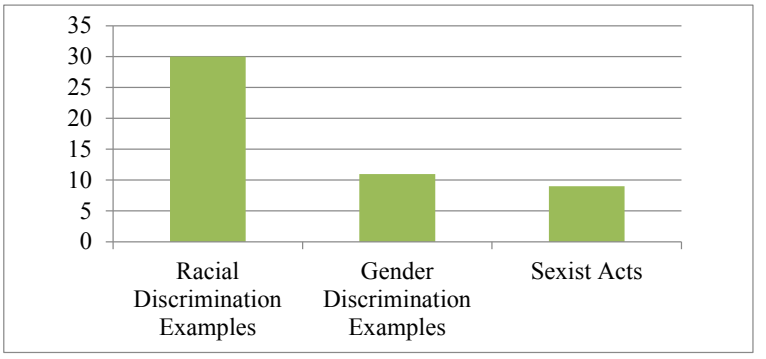


Fig. 1. The quantification of examples of racial discrimination, gender discrimination and sexist acts in the film “Hidden Figures”

3. Conclusions

It is important to bring awareness upon social issues such as racism, gender discrimination and sexism and the film “Hidden Figures” has successfully communicated about them. After carrying out the research, we have concluded that from the sociolinguistic perspective sexism and racism both can be defined as language discriminatory practices which aim to degrade a particular social group. We have also determined the contribution of the Sociolinguistic Theory of Translation and Skopos Theory in the process of AVT. Overall, the racist and sexist nature of the selected examples was successfully rendered in subtitling. Due to its constraints, specific strategies and techniques have to be employed when subtitling a film. The most appropriate translation techniques employed were omission, condensation, reduction, transposition, borrowing and literal translation.

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