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Mistranslations of film titles: between fidelity and advertising

ABSTRACT. In the paper, the authors present and analyse examples of mistranslated film titles into the Polish language, selected from a database of over 1,100 titles and presented on the sample of the film genre *comedy* with all its subgenres. The authors discuss various film title translation strategies and procedures with reference to the literature on the subject. In the conclusions, the authors attempt to explain the reasons for the selection of certain translation procedures, with special focus on the free formulation of titles as the least transparent.

KEYWORDS: film titles; translation procedures; mistranslation; fidelity in translation.

1. FILM TITLES AS AN OBJECT OF STUDY

The point of departure for this paper is the frequent criticism of the quality of film title translation in academic research, newspaper articles and film forums. The translation of a title as a particularly crucial element of the composition of a work, of great significance for its reception and functioning in culture, has repeatedly been the subject of reflection in translation studies (cf. Jarniewicz 2000; Rudolf 2000). Although it is often treated as an integral part of a work of art, its autonomy is, paradoxically, extraordinary (cf. Jarniewicz 2000: 477). Therefore, the divergent translation strategies are placed at opposite ends of the translational scale – ranging from extreme foreignisation to visible adaptation.

Discussing book titles, Hejwowski (2004: 168) states the title of a translation is not always sufficiently ‘similar’ to the original title to make it identifiable with the original, and claims alongside Kalisz (cf. 2000: that changes

which lead to the loss of the identifying role of titles cross-culturally “are hardly ever justifiable,” and usually “result from the fear that a more faithful translation of the original title will make the book [or a film for that matter – AS and AU] less marketable” (2004: 169). Badstübner-Kizik (cf. 2013: 63) even speaks of the phenomenon of film title translation.

In our paper, we view film titles as paratexts, according to the formulation by Genette (cf. 1997: 210), which includes titles, prologues, prefaces and epilogues, illustrations, covers and any other item which accompanies the main *text*. Paratexts, therefore, have a subordinate relationship with their texts: if analysed independently, they may not provide an explanatory key; if, on the contrary, they are studied together, depending on the main text, then they provide additional information of significant value which might be used as an explanation or justification, or substantially enrich the context of the main text. Therefore, either as text or paratext, film titles have enough semiotic density to justify a complex analysis such as that attempted in this paper, which seeks to go beyond the analysis of translation and language.

1.1. Functions of film titles

Films are global products, “designed with a worldwide market in mind” (Cronin 2003: 18). “The title should sound attractive, allusive, suggestive, even if it is a proper name, and should usually bear some relation to the original, if only for identification” (Newmark 1988: 56).

Nord (1995) provides an in-depth analysis of the functions of titles and claims that from a translation point of view it is vital to understand that the function of the source title (ST) is distinct from that of the target title (TT). She identifies six significant functions, which are divided into two main groups: 1) essential functions (distinctive, metatextual and phatic functions) and 2) optional functions (referential, expressive and appellative functions):

Each title has to be distinct with regard to the culture-specific title corpus it forms part of (= distinctive function). Each title has to conform to the genre conventions of the culture it belongs to (= metatextual function). Each title must be appropriate to attract the attention of its culture-specific audience and, if necessary, to be remembered over a certain period of time (= phatic function). If any piece of information is intended to be transmitted by the title, it has to be comprehensible to the respective addressees with their culture-specific world-knowledge (= referential function). Any evaluations or emotions expressed in the title have to be judged in relation to the value system of the culture in question (= expressive function). Any appellative intention has to take account of the culture-specific susceptibility and expectations of the prospective readers (= appellative function). (Nord 1995: 265)

Gagaczowska (2000) and Hejwowski (2004) name partially overlapping functions which can be brought down to six:

- the identifying function (differs from other books; can be identified as the book of a certain author, even in translation); In their paper on the titles of Tarantino's films, Ruiz & Pardo (2014: 214) speak of film-title translation as a complex (and globalised) rewriting phenomenon that benefits the commercial and ideological interests of the film industry:
- informative/presentative/descriptive function (stands in a certain relation to the plot, can summarize it)
- marketing function (attract the viewers' attention).

1.2. Sample analysis of comedy titles

Altman (2000: 15) aptly notices that "[g]enres are defined by the film industry and recognized by the mass audience". There is no simple way to approach comedy as a film genre. A comedy is designed to elicit laughter from the audience. It is a light-hearted drama, made to amuse and entertain by exaggerating situations, the way of speaking, the action and characters.

In an attempt to present a comparable sample of film titles, the sample chosen contains films categorised as comedies, or one of its subgenres, such as romantic comedy, action comedy, crime comedy, comedy-drama, black comedy and musical comedy. Film comedy is a film originated in the drama tradition, aiming at provoking the recipient's laughter, releasing joy derived from the main hero or by sympathizing with him, or from the feeling of superiority over him. Comedies present reality in a comic manner, humorously portraying both characters and events, situations, social relations etc. Characters coming from different social backgrounds, despite many plot twists and changes of their fate deserve a happy ending. This happy ending makes it possible to view those events positively and restores the earlier disturbed order of commonly accepted values. The action of a comedy is not always consistent and is sometimes a set of irrational, loosely connected events. It consists of three phases: balance, lack of balance and new balance. The world of the characters is a reflection of the world of the viewers and the characters themselves are usually simplified. The comedy developed numerous genre variants: burlesque, grotesque, knock-out comedy, slapstick, crazy comedy, custard-pie comedy, satire, parody, comedy-drama, barrack farce, sophisticated comedy, sex struggle comedy, screwball comedy, comedy of manners, social comedy, sitcom, musical comedy, black comedy, crime comedy, eccentric comedy, romantic comedy etc.

Comedy-drama is a film combining the elements of tragedy, comedy and lyricism. The vision of the world included in a comedy-drama is ambiguous so as to evoke contradictory reactions from the viewer – from laughter, through sadness to compassion. It differs from comedy in seriousness with which its author takes up the subject and creates the world presented. Comical and lyrical elements ease the sometimes tragic character of the plot. Therefore, comedy-drama is a genre often used by directors when the meaning of a film, because of the political or social context accompanying its reception, needs to be somehow less explicit (cf. Lubelski 2003: 508-509). Romantic comedy is a peculiar combination of a film comedy and a melodrama, with the presence of a love motif, action full of humour, witty dialogues and a characteristic pair of the main protagonists. Musical comedy – is a genre variety of a comedy, till late 1950s the term was identified with musical. In the 1960s it lost its basic comedy structure and lightness. It originates in the tradition of American musical theatre, French *vaudeville*, Czech *zpěvohra*, German *Singspiel* etc. It is a film show in which the elements co-creating it like music, dance and singing are mixed. The beginnings of musical comedy are marked with the sound breakthrough in the cinematography. It rapidly developed until 1970s. Its escapist character and fun formula made it perceived for years as immature and trifling. In the theoretical reflection it was appreciated only in the late 1980s (cf. Lubelski 2003: 508). Sitcom (situation comedy) is a term applied to television comedy series. The action of all episodes of this low-budget TV series is placed in a closed space of a TV studio (a house, an office, a hospital, a hotel) and the lots of the main characters (usually limited to a few people: relatives, friends, colleagues, friends) are settled around everyday personal and professional problems. Sometimes new episodes are organised around the appearance of a new character. This genre is based mainly on situation and character comedy, using social and cultural stereotypes with the help of a gallery of characters worked out by other varieties of comedy. Its characteristic feature is stimulating the audience's reactions by the introduction of the so called 'artificial laughter' the recording of which, imitating the audience's applause, accompanies the jokes and gags. Sometimes the producers decide on the introduction of a real audience into the TV studio (cf. Lubelski 2003: 875).

1.3. Corpus

The database used in the research encompasses 1,117 film titles gathered from the bases of the internet TV service film.wp.pl (WirtualnaPolska.pl) during the years 2007-2015 (although the films themselves were produced in

the years 1938-2013). All the films have been broadcast in Polish versions by various TV channels. The film genres of the titles were labelled by the service. The labels are congruent with the ones which are found in The Internet Movie Database (abbreviated IMDb), the world's most popular and authoritative source for movie, TV and celebrity content.

The sample of comedies includes 217 film titles, and encompasses films with the following labels in the given number:

- Comedies (49)
- Romantic comedies (80)
- Action comedies (29)
- Comedy-drama (28)
- Crime comedies (26)
- Black comedies (2)
- Sitcoms (2)
- Musical comedies (1).

We focus our considerations on an attempt to explain and rationalise the various solutions which can be seen in the titles of films which arrived on Polish screens in the years 2007-2015 and were translated into Polish for the Polish-speaking audience. Translation is perhaps a misleading term, because, as Steinsaltz (cf. 2000: 1) aptly notices, fidelity to the original seems hardly even a significant consideration, much less an aim of the film distributors who provide the titles. The new titles for the Polish cinema are chosen by professionals to suit the needs, demands and desires of their cinema public. Any new title must above all be memorable, say the majority of German film distributors in a survey quoted by Steinsaltz (cf. 2000: 1), and if possible convey an accurate impression of the film's contents.

2. FILM TITLES AS A TRANSLATION PROBLEM

According to Dynel (cf. 2010: 190), among most recurrent problems in translations of film titles are puns and humour, proper names, culture-specific content, such as references to other films and literature etc., lack of semantic equivalents and lexico-syntactic problems.

It is not our aim to analyse the corpus solely according to the notion of 'fidelity', although we attempt to catalogue the possible range of techniques. Starting from the local procedures described in subchapter 2.1, we decide to go further and focus on the concept of difference and (re)creation, being conscious of the power relations (original producer - Polish distributor - Polish translator), as well as commercial factors.

2.1. Translation (global) strategies/methods and (local) procedures

Venuti (1998: 240) indicates that translation strategies “involve the basic tasks of choosing the foreign text to be translated and developing a method to translate it”. He employs the concepts of domestication and foreignisation to refer to translation strategies.

2.1.1. Foreignisation vs. domestication

Venuti sees domestication as “translating in a transparent, fluent, ‘invisible’ style in order to minimize the foreignness of the TT” (Munday 2001: 146), disseminating and popularizing Schleiermacher’s dichotomy known as *Einbürgerung* (lit. ‘naturalization’) and *Verfremdung* (lit. ‘alienation’). In accordance with Schleiermacher’s division of the translation methods, ‘Einbürgerung’ can be understood as any measures aimed at bringing the author (here: film maker, producer, translator) closer to the reader (here: target audience).

2.1.2. Film translation procedures

The above mentioned (consciously or unconsciously chosen) global strategies or methods define the overall perspective taken by the translator/distributor on the film and the projected filmic experience. Mentioning the difference between translation methods and translation procedures, Newmark (1988: 81) writes that, “[w]hile translation methods relate to whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language”. He goes on to refer to the following methods of translation, which we illustrate with examples from the initial corpus of 1,114 titles:

2.1.2.1. Reproduction / Transference

This is the process of transferring a source language (SL) word to a target language (TL) text. It includes transliteration, or transcription, and so it could be called reproduction – i.e. with no changes, e.g. *Beverly Hills 90210*; *Kojak*; *Columbo*.

Ruiz & Pardo (2014: 208) mention a certain strangeness which reinforces the cultural hegemony of English and naturalises a phraseology, morphology and even syntax different from the language of the spectator, and the practical problem of how to pronounce foreign titles. ‘Non-translation’ can be a result

of information about films being released prior to their premiere on TV or the Internet as, for example, trailers. Since the audience already knows the original title in English, the distributors do not feel it is wise to change it.

2.1.2.2. Graphic adaptation / Naturalization

This is the reproduction of a title with slight adaptation for understandability, easier pronunciation or for reasons of cultural adaptation.

The transferred titles are either transparent enough (names, internationalisms, known toponyms), or were made famous by means of previous publications, e.g. in the case of film adaptations of books.

2.1.2.3. Literal Translation / "Through-translation"

This is word-for-word translation, with possible changes in sentence order (changes on the morphological level with no changes on the semantic level), as in:

Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters – Hansel i Gretel: Łowcy czarownic.

2.1.2.4. Functional equivalent

The aim of using a functional equivalent is the substitution of a culturally obscure word (known to the source culture) with an equivalent known to the target culture, e.g.:

Another Cinderella Story – Kopciuszek: Roztańczona historia.

2.1.2.5. Paraphrase / Description / Definition

The reason for describing or defining certain elements of ST titles might be, say, abbreviations which are not comprehensible to the TT audience, as in:

CSI: Miami – CSI: Kryminalne zagadki Miami.

2.1.2.6. Expansion

Expansion covers the numerous possibilities of extending the title to include various additions which are intended to give the recipients extra guidance in understanding the text, as in:

Aliens – Obcy – decydujące starcie
Happy Feet – Tupot małych stóp
Immortal – Kobieta pułapka
Speed – Niebezpieczna prędkość.

Translated titles so extended are (supposed to be) more 'informative'. They contain additional elements, describing to the recipients what they might expect. To see how tricky the attempts at expansion might be, may serve the example of *Aliens* – the sequel of *Alien* expanded in Polish into *Obcy – decydujące starcie* [*Alien – the decisive clash*], where after the sequel two more parts of qadrilogy followed.

2.1.2.7. Reduction

The removal of certain content from the original titles includes elements ideologically or stylistically unacceptable, those of little relevance, or those too obscure. It must be, however, noted that some content is reduced for stylistic reasons.

No Retreat, No Surrender – Bez odwrotu
The Shepherd: Border Patrol – Strażnik granicy.

2.1.2.8. Free (creative) formulation

Free translation can be regarded as a departure from the original text, thus (often) betraying the author's intention. Although this might result from reasons of (relative) untranslatability, in the case of film titles it seems to serve a commercial function. As a procedure widely criticised by movie-goers, we would like to focus on the free formulation of titles and analyse both the possible reasons for it and its many faces in translation; that is, in other words, what encourages translators/distributors to change certain titles and what the consequences are.

3. (RE)CREATION OF FILM TITLES AS AN ADVERTISING TOOL OF THE FILM INDUSTRY

Free formulation of titles in translation raises questions and doubts in both scholars and film recipients (in forums, blogs etc.). The title is not the only element that is altered; along with the "annihilation" of the initial form, intention and message, a brand new form, intention and message are created.

One of the reasons for altering a title is not the mere whim of the distributor, but its relative untranslatability. The free formulation of a title may originate from translation difficulties of a semantic and/or cultural nature, such as puns/humour; proper names; culture-specific content, such as references to other films and literature, rhymes, idioms, lexical and grammatical shifts, and so on.

3.1. Occasional derivatives

A relative untranslatability can be seen in the occasional forming of ad-hoc derivatives. For example, the creation of non-existent verbs built from nouns can pose a difficulty in translation, as in:

(1) *Pizza my heart* – *Pizza z sercem*

where *pizza* is used as a pun on “A piece of”.

3.2. Puns

An important problem in translation is caused by puns – witty formulations hinging on the juxtaposition of two relevant meanings conveyed by means of a single surface structure (cf. Dynel 2010: 191), and so also including idiomatic phrasemes (as shown e.g. in Urban 2013: 288).

(2) *Crossed over* – *Po przejściach*

(3) *Playing by heart* – *Gra w serca*

(4) *Two Much Trouble* – *Problemy chodzą parami*

(5) *Miss Conception* – *Zajście awaryjne*

(6) *Expecting Love* – *Mała wielka miłość*

(7) *No reservations* – *Życie od kuchni*

(8) *Smother* – *Nieszczęścia chodzą parami*

In (6) expecting “love” is understood as both ‘waiting for love to appear in one’s life’ and ‘expecting one’s baby, the miracle of love and life’. This difference is expressed in the Polish version with two adjectives – *mała* (“little”) and *wielka* (“big”). In (7) *reservations* is understood as both ‘doubts’ and ‘bookings’. In Polish the pun is achieved by the use of an idiomatic phrase *od kuchni* – which could mean the ‘kitchen’ itself, where the plot of the movie takes place and ‘the backstage’ of the restaurant.

(8) represents the case where the pun “smothering mother” is rendered with a proverb, therefore deviating from the original.

Thus, Polish titles mostly manage to maintain the puns, or introduce them where they were not present in the ST.

3.3. Proper names (PN)

Names constitute one of the potential problems in the translation of any text. "A proper name is a word or group of words [...] which is used to identify a unique concrete object (human being, animal, thing or place) existing now, in the past or only in human imagination" (Hejwowski 2004: 151).

Among the names in original film titles, we can isolate first names (14), (15), (23), (24), (26), (28), (29); last names, with or without forms of address (09), (11), (12), (13), (19), (20), (25), (30) or combinations of both (16), (21), (27); nicknames (17), (18); combinations of nicknames and last names (10), place-names such as towns, cities, clubs, islands etc. (32)-(35), names as components of phrasemes or proverbs (22).

- (9) *Van Wilder – Wieczny student*
- (10) *Drillbit Taylor – Ochroniarz amator*
- (11) *Mr. Woodcock – Facet od WF-u*
- (12) *Mr. Deeds – Mr. Deeds – milioner z przypadku*
- (13) *Meet the Fockers – Poznaj moich rodziców*
- (14) *Paulie – Paulie, gadający ptak*
- (15) *Oscar – Oscar, czyli 60 kłopotów na minutę*
- (16) *Bickford Shmeckler’s Cool Ideas – Skradziony notes*
- (17) *Hitch – Hitch: Najlepszy doradca przeciętnego faceta*
- (18) *Chasing Liberty – Cóрка prezydenta*
- (19) *You, Me and Dupree – Ja, ty i on*
- (20) *Saving Silverman – Twarda laska*
- (21) *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby – Ricky Bobby – demon prędkości*
- (22) *Keeping Up with the Randalls – Poznaj moją rodzinę*
- (23) *There’s Something About Mary – Sposób na blondynkę*
- (24) *Raising Helen – Mama na obcasach*
- (25) *Griffin & Phoenix – Miłość bez końca*
- (26) *Camille – Zakochana na zabój*
- (27) *The Marc Pease Experience – Dokąd zmierzasz?*
- (28) *Avenging Angelo – Słodka zemsta*
- (29) *Saving Grace – Joint Venture*
- (30) *Ocean’s Eleven – Rzykowna gra.*

If the name is rendered in translation, it usually requires some specification, as, for example, in (10), (11), (12), (13), (15), (18). (19) lacks the name and the rhyme, but it renders the fact of the third party involved in the relationship very well. In (20) the focus was placed by the producers on the hero's two best friends trying to save him from choosing the wrong girl. The Polish title describes the girl colloquially, putting her at the centre of the action.

Apart from containing a proper name, (24) is also stylistically difficult. How invasive this technique is, though, is demonstrated by (25) and (26), where “love” and the genre is forced into the Polish titles (although the original titles somehow do this without being explicit). In (27) the experience of a certain character, Marc Pease, forms the background for the main story. The title containing the name is substituted with a general and philosophical question: “Where are you heading to?”.

There are, however, proper names as fixed elements in phrasemes. When modified (and punned) and not recognised as such and/or ignored, they result in mediocre translations as e.g. the modified phraseme *keeping up with the Joneses* in (22).

Exotic sounding proper names seem to be understood as too vague and are rendered in expanded form.

The same is attempted with the clarification of names of various events, such as holidays, as in:

(31) *New Year's Eve – Sylwester w Nowym Jorku*

names of bars, as in:

(32) *Coyote Ugly – Wygrane marzenia*

(33) *One Night at McCool's – O czym marzą faceci*

names of places viewers are most probably not familiar with, as in:

(34) *Hope Springs – Dwoje do poprawki*

(35) *Staten Island – Mały Nowy Jork.*

3.4. Explication and Clarification

We see the translation of certain titles as clear attempts at the clarification of those titles which might not have been understood if either left in unchanged form or translated. The ST might be an abbreviation (36) or a foreign (non-English) word which is not specific enough, as in:

(36) *J.C.V.D. – Jean-Claude van Damme.*

The use of initials, widely used in the Anglophone world and absent from the Polish use, justifies the extension in (36).

An attempt at clarification (as seen in (37) and (38)) might result from attempting to reach target groups not inscribed into the model recipient of a certain movie. Sometimes a deviation from the ST can be seen as a blessing (or warning), preventing one from watching the film, as in:

(37) *Not Another Teen Movie – To nie jest kolejna komedia dla kretynów*

(38) *Tropic Thunder – Jaja w tropikach*

As innocent as the ST sounds, the Polish title clarifies that it might be a vulgar film with filthy humour, unmistakably altering “teen” into “cretin” (37).

The original English titles are founded on ambiguity, and they often leave the potential meanings to the imagination and the associative skills of the viewer. The typical clarifications in Polish concern titles which were probably considered too general and vague, and so they narrow general titles down to concrete contexts, as in:

- (39) *The Proposal* – *Naręczony mimo woli*
- (40) *The story of us* – *Tylko miłość*
- (41) *Due date* – *Zanim odejdą wody*
- (42) *Just Go with It* – *Żona na niby*
- (43) *Duplex* – *Starsza pani musi zniknąć*
- (44) *Monster-in-Law* – *Sposób na teściową*
- (45) *Something to Talk About* – *Miłosna rozgrywka*
- (46) *Bandits* – *Włamanie na śniadanie*
- (47) *Switch* – *Tak to się teraz robi.*

In the eyes of distributors, disambiguation requires clarification. In (39) it makes it apparent that the engagement was not mutual, in (40) that the “story” is actually a “love story”, that “due date” in (41) concerns a pregnancy, that (42) is about a pretend wife and (44) specifies that the “monster” is the mother-in-law (“teściowa”) and not the father (“teść”).

The ambiguous “switch” in (47) was changed in the TT. However, the rendition *Tak to się teraz robi* (“This is how it’s done now”) says even less about the possible content, genre or recipient group.

How treacherous such far-fetched choices are is demonstrated by convergent titles. It is not seldom that an innocent comedy title ends up matching the title of an erotic film, as in (45).

Most modifications of comedies (*sensu largo*, and especially with romantic comedies) result from attempts at unmistakably addressing a film to a desired audience, as in:

- (48) *The American President* – *Prezydent – miłość w Białym Domu*
- (49) *The Bounty Hunter* – *Dorwać byłą.*

(48) and (49) could hypothetically have matched any film genre. Narrowing their context, however, ensures they address the audience interested in watching romantic films.

3.5. Free formulation as (mis)translation

This paragraph includes clear examples of mistakes, as in:

- (50) *For love of the game* – *Gra o miłość.*

The semantic shift undertaken in the TT provokes different and unwelcome expectations, signalling that the film is a romantic comedy, or a romance.

- (51) *Hot Tub Time Machine* – *Jutro będzie futro*

Firstly, the target translation makes use of a Polish saying about not knowing what the future will bring, when the protagonists go back in time and get the chance to change their destiny.

(52) *What's Your Number? – Ilu miałaś facetów?*

(53) *The Shrink Is In – Z kozetki na fotel*

(54) *The Kids Are All Right – Wszystko w porządku*

The relatively innocent question in (52) is turned in the translation into a direct, and rude one and (53) and (54) say virtually nothing to the potential viewer.

3.6. Focus shift

Here, certain elements present in the ST are omitted, and different elements are given greater importance in the TT. Not only do we speak of lexical choices, but also of grammatical solutions leading to new creations and not seldom to semantic shifts, as in:

(55) *The Blind Side – Wielki Mike*

(56) *A walk to remember – Szkoła uczuć*

(57) *The Longest Yard – Wykiwać klawisza*

(58) *White Chicks – Agenci bardzo specjalni*

(59) *Forces of nature – Podróż przedślubna*

(60) *He's Just Not That Into You – Kobiety pragną bardziej*

(61) *Keeping the Faith – Zakazany owoc*

(62) *View from the Top – Szkoła stewardes*

(63) *How about you – Uroki życia*

(64) *Solitary Man – Człowiek sukcesu.*

The semantic shifts consist in placing the focus on different elements of the plot and/or protagonists, thus changing the perspective of the ST, as in: (59) which conveys too much of the plot, and even suggests the outcome of the story, or in (65), where the singularly unpleasant main character is shifted to the semantically capacious *Człowiek sukcesu* ("Man of success").

3.7. Stylistic reasons

Many film (title) critics notice that often the title could have been rendered faithfully, yet a certain film was still given a changed one. It can be speculated that certain grammatical forms, such as present and past participles, inflection and conjugation in Polish play an important role in transferring titles. In our opinion, those titles (both of books and films) attract the

attention of the recipient when they are concise, curiously phrased or neatly formulated.

The following titles could have raised doubts as to their Polish sound (word-to-word translation in square brackets), therefore, most probably, the distributor/translator decided to alter it completely.

- (65) *Must Love Dogs* – *Facet z ogłoszenia* [“A man from an announcement”]
- (66) *Beauty and the Briefcase* – *Randki na zlecenie* [“Dates on demand”]
- (67) *Blond and Blonder* – *Głupia i głupsza* [“Dumb and dumber”]

3.8. Associational tricks

Polish distributors sometimes make use of a trick by building a non-existent association for a foreign or domestic film. The allusions usually have nothing to do with the original film or its plot, however they make use of an association of the names of actors playing in them with other titles which they featured like in:

- (68) *Gambit* – *Gambit, czyli jak ograć króla*
- (69) *Arthur Newman* – *Drugie życie króla*

Both films featuring Colin Firth make use of the success of the film *The Kings' Speech* – *Jak zostać królem*.

Allusions are artificially created to high-grossing films to ensure increased ticket sales. We can list:

a) allusions to foreign productions:

- (70) *Dan in Real Life* – *Ja cię kocham, a ty z nim* [While you were sleeping – Ja cię kocham a ty śpisz]
- (71) *Cheaper by the Dozen* – *Fałszywa dwunastka* [The Dirty Dozen – Parszywa dwunastka]
- (72) *Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story* – *Zabawy z piłką* [Bowling for Columbine – Zabawy z bronią]
- (73) *Anger Management* – *Dwóch gniewnych ludzi* [12 Angry Men – Dwunastu gniewnych ludzi]
- (74) *Made of Honor* – *Moja dziewczyna wychodzi za mąż* [My Best Friend's Wedding – Mój chłopak się żeni].

E.g. for the Polish distributor the pun in (74) – the “[brides]maid” changed into “made” [of honour] – is less important to reflect in translation for the Polish audience, than building up a connection between the 2008 film with a 1997 Polish title of a romantic comedy with Julia Roberts (*My Best Friend's Wedding* – *Mój chłopak się żeni*).

b) allusions to domestic productions:

(75) *The Babysitters* – *Bejbis. Dziewczyny nie płaczą*

(76) *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* – *Chłopaki też płaczą*

(75) is in Polish *Bejbis* with the second title: *Dziewczyny nie płaczą*, referring to two Polish productions *Lejdis* and *Chłopaki nie płaczą*, and (76) in our corpus *Chłopaki też płaczą*.

Allusional tricks aim to fool the viewer, who is aware of the fact that some films are indeed deliberately implanted in the original title, with built-in associations, such as: *How the West was fun* – *How the West was won*, as in:

(77) *How the West was fun* – *Jak uratowano Dzikiego Zachód*

(78) *2001: A Space Travesty* – *2001: Odyseja komiczna*

(79) *Wrongfully Accused* – *Ści(a)gany*

(80) *Spy Hard* – *Szklanką po łapkach*.

A parody of *the Fugitive*, in Polish *Ścigany* is playfully travestied into *Ści(a)gany* (79), and the spy-comedy film parodying action films, *Spy Hard* (translated as *Szklana pułapka*) is rendered as *Szklanką po łapkach* (80).

A special trap is posed by film series which were not planned as such:

(81) *The Hangover* – *Kac Vegas*

(82) *The Hangover Part II* – *Kac Vegas w Bangkoku*.

Or the well-known *Die Hard* series, where, as in the case of *Kac Vegas* (81) and (82), the translation of the first part enforced the consistent rendering of titles of the *Die Hard* franchise, which includes four sequels, video games, and a comic book:

Die Hard – *Szklana pułapka*

Die Hard 2 – *Szklana pułapka 2*

Die Hard with a Vengeance – *Szklana pułapka 3*

Live Free or Die Hard – *Szklana pułapka 4.0*

A Good Day to Die Hard – *Szklana pułapka 5*.

Since the title of the original *Die Hard* was mistranslated, also the Polish title of the parody had to be recognisable for the audience and, therefore, it consistently resembled the Polish versions of the titles of the basic series and not the original ones.

3.9. From global to local

Certain translations into Polish involve visible domestication procedures, that is a choice of including local cultural references (to celebrities, songs etc.), among others phrasemes/sayings, or any other element translators deem necessary to preserve the filmic experience and to produce a fresh and engaging translation, as in:

- (83) *Air Bud: World Pup* – *Buddy, pies na gołe*
- (84) *In the Army Now* – *Służba nie drużba*
- (85) *Kickin' It Old Skool* – *Stare, ale jare*
- (86) *Big Fat Liar* – *Kłamstwo ma krótkie nogi*
- (87) *Serving Sara* – *Kto pierwszy, ten lepszy*
- (88) *The Rebound* – *Nowszy model*
- (89) *The 24 Hour Woman* – *Kobieta pracująca*
- (90) *Stripes* – *Byle do woja*
- (91) *What planet are you from?* – *Z księżycy spadłeś?*

In (84), (85), (86), (87) and (91) the Polish titles are popular sayings and proverbs, while in (83) the Polish title contains an idiomatic phrase and in (88), (89) and (90) popular sayings of different types (referring to recognisable references to e.g. song titles or films).

3.10. Overview of applied procedures and Conclusions

Ruiz & Pardo (cf. 2014: 212) argue that the key to interpreting the titles of films outside the English-speaking world seems to be placed outside translation studies and, perhaps, closer to the subject of advertising or entertainment. As far as titles are concerned, fidelity takes on a different meaning, whereby the translator does not have to be loyal to the original text, but rather to the overall filmic experience (which is not always achieved). In many cases, the Polish title aims at targeting the intended recipient of a certain film. As far as comedies are concerned, what counts is not ambiguity, but a key word instead, directly pointing to the (sub)genre involved by means of a banal description (often a generic cliché), and not infrequently by a long phrase summarizing the basic plot. Mysterious proper names (saying nothing to the Polish audience and raising no associations) are hardly ever allowed – their extension is usually accompanied by a word or phrase addressing the desired target group.

When analysing film translation, be it only the title, one must bear in mind that linguistic issues are often left aside and commercial pressures leave translators with very little room, thus leading them to ignore the notion of fidelity. It is mostly cost-benefit criteria that play the main role.

One of the biggest problems, being the result of the above conclusion, is that – in the case of massively altered TTs – translations of the same film title in different countries and cultures may lack any identifying feature for international viewers depriving them the chance to recognise an international production.

Our preliminary research surely constitutes a good point of departure for deeper analyses of other genres in order to find out whether the patterns are universal for the Polish film market.

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