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## TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES IN PIXAR ANIMATED FEATURE FILM TITLES - A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BULGARIAN AND RUSSIAN TRANSLATIONS

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**Abstract:** The present article offers a description and analysis of the various techniques used in the translation of Pixar animated feature film titles from English into Bulgarian and Russian. The fact that titles play an integral role in the initial presentation of a product and in the establishing of expectations in the target audience is well established. In this sense, the analysis of the existing practices in the translation and re-contextualization of a particular title into different languages and the potential motivation behind such choices is expected to be of interest for a broad audience - ranging from the common (or even keen) fans of animated movies, through marketing and advertising specialists, all the way to researchers in the fields of translation theory and practice, media- and culture studies.

In terms of the historically established concurrent traditions in the field of translation in Western Europe and USA on the one hand and Russia on the other, Sirakova and Michev (2015) offer a summary of the different approaches and classifications. The theoretical aspects of terminological variability is an interesting issue as well, explored by and Harmon (2019) and Gambier (2018), among others. The western tradition includes the contributions by Vinay and Darbelnet, Urtado Albir and Molina Martinez, Nida, Newmark, Chesterman etc. The Russian tradition includes theoreticians such as Retsker, Barhudarov, Komissarov, Latishev, Alekseeva etc.

For the purposes of the present research, the propositions by Albir and Molina will be employed, according to whom there is a clear distinction between strategies of translation and translation techniques where strategies have to do with the process of translation and techniques - with its result. In view of the fact that the paper works with a corpus of film titles and their already existing established translations - that is, with the product of the translation - the only available object of observation, description and analysis includes the techniques and not the strategies of translation which the translator has used in the process of translating itself. Since the employed method of translation and the specific techniques at text level through which that method is realized are fundamentally interrelated, it can be assumed that the method can be recreated in the process of analysis based on the techniques observed. The specific strategies used by the translator in the process can only be subject to speculation and guessing, however, since, on the one hand, they can be not only verbal but also non-verbal, conscious and unconscious, and, on the other hand, the same strategy (regardless of whether it concerns problems with comprehension or with reformulation) can result in the selection of different techniques/combinations of techniques for resolving the problem which occurred.

**Keywords:** translation techniques, Pixar, animated feature films, movie titles, Bulgarian, Russian

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The present article deals with the different techniques for translation of film titles from English as the source language into Bulgarian and Russian as target languages. The focus is on Pixar Studio feature animated films, which amount to 27 titles as of 2023. The official website of Pixar Studio serves as the source for the original title in English, whereas the translations into Bulgarian and Russian have been taken from the information available on the Wikipedia website. The research interest towards this matter stems not only from the undeniable importance of the choice of title for the initial introduction of a product and for its consecutive reception by the target audience, but also by the need for making specific and justified decisions on the part of the translator concerning the selection and application of a set of strategies in the process of translation and the associated techniques of translation observable in the product of the translation.

### 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the purposes of the present study will be acquired the approach proposed by Albir and Molina (2002, 509-511) and their classification of 18 techniques of translation, namely - adaptation (the substitution of realia from the source culture with ones from the target culture); variation (a change in the tone, style dialect, sociolect etc.); generalization (the use of a more general or neutral term); literal translation (translation of an expression word for word); linguistic compression (compressing/shortening linguistic elements as in simultaneous translation or subtitling); linguistic amplification (the addition of linguistic elements, the opposite of compression); borrowing (the introduction of a word or expression from a foreign language without change in the original spelling or through naturalization/transliteration); substitution (substituting linguistic elements with extra-linguistic ones and vice versa); reduction (omitting information carrying elements from the source text); calque (the literal translation of a

foreign word or expression); compensation (introducing a stylistic or informative element in a different place in the translation to compensate for an element somewhere else in the original); particularization (the use of a more specific term, the opposite of generalization); modulation (a change on the cognitive level); description (the substitution of a term or expression with a description of its form/function); amplification (the addition of explanatory details and specifications which are not present in the source text, such as explanatory paraphrase, translator's notes - the opposite of reduction); discursive creation (setting up temporary equivalence which is not obvious outside of context); transposition (a shift in grammatical category); established equivalent (the use of previously accepted and established terms and expressions for the translation of idioms or collocations).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Due to limitations concerning the volume of the present article, the qualitative analysis will subsume a small excerpt of the total number of titles researched, whereas the quantitative conclusions will be drawn based on the entire corpus sample.

One interesting example of differing approaches to translation techniques is demonstrated in the choice of translation for the title of the animated film "Elemental" which will come out in 2023 and which features the 4 elements as main characters. The word "elemental" is an adjective and its first meaning according to the English-Bulgarian dictionary (1998-1999) is "стихийен, на природните сили (стихии)" (elemental, of the elements), followed further down by the fourth meaning "начален, първоначален, елементарен, основен" (initial, fundamental, elementary, basic). The semantic connection with the topic of the film is evident in the Bulgarian translation - it has to do with natural elements which directs the translator to the primary definition of the word, after which was employed the translation technique of transposition. As a result, instead of the adjective in the original, in the Bulgarian title we have a noun in Plural form - "Стихии" (Elements). This variant is quite close to the original which is partly due to the fact that the movie is a spinoff. The Russian variant is closer to the original phonetically since the word "Элементарно" (elementary) stems from the same root as the English "elemental". This retention of the common root, however, results in a semantic shift and instead of activating the notion of natural forces or "elements", in the Russian translation it is more likely to activate associations with Sherlock Holmes's famous phrase, "Elementary, my dear Watson". It could be argued that the technique employed here is discursive creation, since the two words do not share the same semantic meaning and instead the goal has been to establish temporary equivalence on the basis of phonetic similarity. Both of the translations are close to the original, although the Bulgarian title bases this closeness on semantics, whereas the Russian title relies on phonetics.

Another interesting case is that of the 2022 movie "Lightyear" which is also a spinoff but this time of the "Toy Story" franchise, where the main character is the toy-astronaut Buzz Lightyear. The first interesting aspect of the Bulgarian variant is the length of the title itself - instead of a single word we now have three, "Баз Светлинна година" - a case of amplification technique via inclusion of elements carrying additional information featured in the movie. The transfer of the name of the main character into Bulgarian is done via two additional techniques, one of which is borrowing via the use of transcription of the name "Баз" (Buzz), and the other - calquing of "Светлинна година" on the basis of the original "Lightyear". An interesting detail is the choice of the vowel "a" in the name "Баз" instead of "ъ" since the name of the prototype for this character, Edward "Buzz" Aldrin, is spelled as "Бъз Олдрин" (which sounds as a schwa) in Bulgarian and not "Баз". The technique of amplification can also be observed in the Russian translation of the title. Instead of the combination of borrowing via transcription of the name and calquing, however, the Russian variant chooses to utilize only transcription in a manner specific to the Russian language and its phonetic system, which results in the retention of the double "zz" from the original and the shift from the diphthong in "Lightyear" into the Russian "ep", "Лайтер" (similar in sound to "lighter").

The 2022 film, entitled "Turning Red", tells the story of a girl named May who turns into a red panda whenever she gets angry. The expression "to turn red" translates directly into Bulgarian as "да почервенея, почервениявам", and into Russian as "краснеть, краснею". In both cases there is an allusion to the colour red - both the one in the expression and in the colour of the main character, which makes it possible to use it via the technique of compensation in Bulgarian, resulting in the choice of "червена панда" (red panda) instead of "почервенияване" (reddening, turning red). In addition, the Bulgarian translation uses amplification by adding the name "Мей" and "панда", along with modulation for shifting the reference from the action to the character, thus resulting in the Bulgarian title "Мей червената панда" (May the red panda). The Russian translation uses transposition in order to translate the -ing form from the original - the explicit subject "я" (I) is added along with the conjugated form of the verb "краснеть" in the 1p. Sg., "краснею". This approach keeps the Russian translation closer to the original with its changes being more formal and not regarding the semantic content, whereas the Bulgarian title adds elements of surface structure and refers or alludes to the topic of the movie itself, which makes it more descriptive and informative than the laconic Russian one.

The 2021 film “Luca” tells the story of a boy of the same name. Both translations of the name use borrowing via transliteration, while the Bulgarian title uses additional techniques such as amplification with the informative elements “лятното приключение” (summer adventure). In addition, the Bulgarian title uses modulation where the theme of the title is no longer Luca but instead his “summer adventure”. The Russian approach is, by contrast, one of literal translation with a transliteration of the name. One again, the Bulgarian variant is more descriptive and informative.

The tetralogy “Toy Story” is also an interesting case with the four titles retaining the main part of the title and adding numerals after the first title to denote the order of the movies - thus we have “Toy Story 2”, “Toy Story 3” and “Toy Story 4”. The techniques for the translation of this main part of the title, which is in fact the title of the original first part, vary between Bulgarian and Russian. The Bulgarian title uses adaptation, whereas the Russian uses literal translation. The adaptation of the original “toy story” and its transformation into “игра на играчките” (game of toys) is more phonetically pleasing due to the alliteration and repetition of elements of the same root. In fact, the more literal “историята на играчките” would have been closer to the topic of the film since it is a story about toys and not some game of theirs. The choice of the title “Играта на играчките” (the game of toys) does not emphasize informativity (which is compensated for through the context) but rather the effectiveness of its formal aspect - this combination is more unusual and semantically interesting, as well as more catchy. The Russian title, on the other hand, puts a greater emphasis on the informativity characteristic of the original and retains the idea of a story about toys, thus resulting in “История игрушек” (the story of toys). There is a technique shared by the two languages - it is, however, not employed for the translation of the same part of the series. Bulgarian employs linguistic compression combined with amplification in the title of the fourth film, whereas Russian does it for the third part. This combination of techniques involves the omission of linguistic elements on the one hand and the addition of other, information carrying elements on the other. Thus we have “Toy Story 4” translated into Bulgarian as “Игра на играчките: Пътешествието” (The game of toys: The Voyage) and “Toy Story 3” translated into Russian as “История игрушек: Большой побег” (The Story of Toys: The Big escape). The semantic additions in both examples allude to the plot of the movies.

The movie “Inside Out” is about the personified feelings and emotions of the characters which come up in their behavior. This process is reflected in the title where the adverbial modifier denotes the coming out from inside to the outside. The Bulgarian translation is to a large extent literal as the selected adverbial “Отвътре навън” which constitutes the title is synonymous with the original. The Russian translation is much more creative in terms of techniques, which results in the title “Головоломка” (brain teaser, conundrum). The utilized techniques include transposition where the adverb is substituted with a noun, as well as discursive creation with a shift in semantics in the use of a notion associated with confusion and the need to resolve some sort of puzzle or conundrum. This choice does not coincide with the semantic content of the original title, but is established as a temporary equivalent.

The movie “Up” tells about a character who sets off on an unexpected journey in his flying house. The adverb used in the title is retained in the Russian translation which is literal and uses an equivalent Russian adverb - “вверх” (up, upwards). The Bulgarian translation employs a different technique which yields a title containing amplification via the information carrying element “небе” (sky) and particularization via the semantic transposition of the more general “up/upwards” denoting only the direction with the more specific “в небето” (in the sky). The Bulgarian translation of the movie title “Brave” employs amplification as well through the addition of the noun “сърце” (heart) to the adjective brave - yielding in Bulgarian the title “Храбро сърце” (brave heart). The Russian translation, respectively, employs a specific grammatical construction and constructs “Храбрая сердцем” (brave at heart).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

From a quantitative perspective in the present corpus of titles can be observed a prevalence of a specific set of techniques and a marked avoidance of others. The first place in terms of frequency is held by the technique of literal translation with 18 occurrences; the second place is for the techniques borrowing and amplification with 14 occurrences each; in third place is modulation with 10 occurrences; in fourth - variation, adaptation and discursive creation with 4 occurrences; in fifth - particularization with 3 occurrences; in sixth - transposition, compression, linguistic amplification and calque with 2 occurrences each. The techniques which have not been used in either of the languages include generalization, substitution, reduction, compensation, description and established equivalent. Considering the results from the qualitative and quantitative analysis the conclusion can be drawn that even when the same technique is preferred in the two languages, it is rarely applied to the same source title. It is also interesting to note that Bulgarian and Russian are unanimous in terms of the techniques which are considered irrelevant and inapplicable while at the same time the two languages exhibit variation in terms of the dominant techniques outside of the first two prevalent choices. This could suggest that whenever literal translation is not plausible and when we are not dealing with names, each of the two languages approaches the task in a different manner and thus produces a

different and unique product. In other words, in spite of the tendency towards preserving the closeness with the original and retaining the recognizability of the film product with its resulting standardization and uniformity, the translation of Pixar movie titles still offers the possibility for a more creative and original approach which takes into consideration the specifics of the target audience and its linguistic and cultural background.

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