

## **EMERGING EXPECTANCY NORMS IN SUBTITLING FOR TELEVISION**

**Marija Marčetić**

### **Abstract**

*This article examines expectancy norms (Chesterman 1993) in subtitling for television, more specifically viewers' attitudes to strategies for translating culture-specific items and marked speech (vulgarisms). In addition to this, the data gathered are used to examine viewers' attitudes to linguistic norms and their relation to the assumed "defensive" attitude of Croatian culture, and to the visibility of the translator. The study, conducted as a questionnaire survey, also looks into the ways viewers attitudes are influenced by their age and professional background. Discrepancies are discovered between the viewers' expectations and established translation practices, which can lead to the perception of translation "mistakes". The study is expected to contribute to research into translation norms in subtitling for television in Croatia.*

### **1. Introduction**

Subtitles are arguably the most visible form of translation, where the target text (TT), by coexisting with the source text (ST), invites particular scrutiny from its recipients, especially if they are familiar with the source language (SL). In Croatia, foreign-language content on TV is mostly subtitled rather than dubbed. The criticism of the perceived "translation mistakes", both in everyday conversations and online, suggests that there is a gap between viewers' expectations and the product that the translator, complying with the established translation practice, feels obliged to deliver. In other words, perceived translation mistakes could be seen to represent a breach of expectancy norms, as defined by Chesterman (1993), or as a discrepancy between "an external view of translation (held by clients, or readers, of translation [. . .]) and an internal view (held mainly by translation scholars, who know that translating is much more complex)" (Pym 1995, cited in Schäffner 1998: 6-7).



This article presents the findings of a survey conducted to explore expectancy norms in TV subtitling. The article aims to provide preliminary insight into what Pedersen calls “folk views of translation” (2011: 213), that is, what the viewers expect and consider “correct” in translation. To set the scene, Section 2 defines some key concepts. Sections 3 and 4 state the aims and hypotheses of the research, and explain the methodology used. Section 5 presents and discusses the findings, while some tentative conclusions are given in the final section.

## **2. Key concepts**

As summed up by Hermans (1999: 14), Gideon Toury “injected the heaviest dose of norms into the veins of Translation Studies” and described translation as a “sociocultural, and hence norm-governed activity”. Toury makes a distinction between *conventions* and *norms*, describing *norms* as “the translation of general values or ideas shared by a group as to what is conventionally right and wrong, adequate and inadequate – into performance instructions [. . .] specifying what is prescribed and forbidden, as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension” (Toury 1995: 55). *Conventions*, on the other hand, differ from norms in that they “are not specific and binding enough to serve as guidelines for [. . .] instances of behaviour” (Hermans 1999: 15). In other words, norms are defined as “the social reality’ of ‘correctness notions’” (Chesterman 1993:5). As Pedersen (2001: 71) explains in his analysis of subtitling norms on European television, “norms describe what options translators actually use”, and these options “are installations of translation strategies [. . .] categories into which translation solutions can be grouped” (2001: 71-72).

Toury divided norms into three categories. An *initial norm* governs the translator’s general choice between adhering “either to the original text, with the norms it has realized, or to the norms active in the target culture, or in that section of it which would host the end product” (Toury 1995: 56). This includes for instance, the choice between preserving dialectal markedness and using standard forms in the translation. *Preliminary norms* are related to “the existence and actual nature of a definite translation policy” (Toury 1995: 58). Therefore, they govern “the choice of source text types, individual source texts, authors,

source languages, etc.) and the directness of translation" (Baker 1998: 164), while *operational norms* "[direct] decisions made during the act of translation itself" (Toury 1995: 58). There are two kinds of operational norms: *matricial norms* determine "the degree of *fullness* of translation", as well as the "distribution [and] textual segmentation" (Toury 1995: 59) and *textual-linguistic norms* that govern "the selection of specific material to formulate the target text in or replace the textual and linguistic material with" (Toury 1995: 59). We should note that, although Toury acknowledges that "*environmental feedback* [in translation], which may come from any other party to the communication event [. . .] is normative in its very essence" (Toury 1999: 26), he does not seem to explicitly assign an agentive role in the creation of norms to the receivers of the translation itself. On the contrary, while discussing the social context in which norms and conventions are being negotiated (and renegotiated) by a group, he asks "where those negotiations take place [and] what constitutes 'the group' in question" (Toury 1998: 21), and wonders "[h]ow homogenous (or heterogeneous) [that group should] be taken to be [and] what about (average or specific) consumers of translated utterances" (Toury 1998: 20). When he asks if those consumers "should be taken to form part of the group too" (Toury 1998: 21), he himself replies by going on to ask: "If so, would it not mean going way too far with the notion of 'group'?" (ibid.).

Other theorists, most notably Chesterman, later attempted to "refine the notion of norms further" (Baker 1998: 165) in a way that would assign a more direct role in the formation of norms to the receivers of the translation within the larger language community, by distinguishing between *professional* and *expectancy norms*. Professional norms are "constituted by competent professional behaviour" (Chesterman 1993: 8) and "regulate the translation process itself" (Hermans 1999:5), so it might be argued that they encompass all the norm categories defined by Toury. Expectancy norms "are established by the receivers of the translation", as they reflect their "expectations of what a translation (of a given type) should be like" (Baker 1998: 165). It is precisely such expectancy norms that were the focus of the present study.

We examined the viewers' attitudes towards strategies commonly employed for translating what Pedersen (2011: 42) terms "translation problems", i.e.

elements which “[prompt] strategic behaviour” and can thus “be seen as symptomatic of overall translation strategies employed by subtitlers, and thus of general subtitling norms”. Various types of translation problems, believed to be relevant for the study of expectancy norms, are in the foreground of this study. Among those, the most important are the so-called *culture-bound terms*. Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 200) define culture-bound terms as “extralinguistic references to items that are tied up with a country’s culture, history, or geography”. The translation of such terms can be challenging at the best of times and this appears to be the area of subtitling where Hermans’ (1999: 5) assertion that the “failure to observe [expectancy norms] means that the product is likely to be called something other than translation – adaptation, paraphrase, travesty, parody, whatever” rings particularly true.

Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 202) list nine strategies for translating culture-bound terms: loan, calque, explicitation, substitution, transposition, lexical recreation, compensation, omission and addition. The most controversial of these seems to be transposition, a strategy by which “a cultural concept from one culture is replaced by a cultural concept from another” (2007: 204). This strategy is elsewhere referred to as “cultural equivalent” (Newmark 1988: 82-83) or “substitution” (Ivir 1987). However, we will follow the terminology used by Díaz Cintas and Remael, who make a distinction between *substitution* and *transposition*, defining the former as a variant of explicitation, “a strategy resorted to when *spatial constraints* do not allow for the insertion of a rather long term, *even if it exists in the target culture*” (2007: 204, emphasis added). In short, it would appear that they consider substitution a strategy used for technical reason, and transposition reserved specifically for culturally specific terms, which is what we are interested here.

Another translation problem this study explores is *marked speech*. Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 187) define marked speech as the “speech that is characterized by non-standard language features or features that are not ‘neutral’ even though they do belong to the standard language, and may therefore have specific connotations”. They go on to explain that “speech can be marked by style or register, and it can also be either idiosyncratic or bound to socially and/or geographically defined population groups [as well as including]

taboo words, swearwords, and emotionally charged utterances" (Ibid.). Here we deal with only one element of marked speech – swear words (vulgarisms) – in terms of their acceptability in subtitling for television.

Finally, we test the claim that Croatian culture assumes a *defensive attitude*. The term is taken from Robyns (1994, cited in Hermans 1999: 89), who distinguishes among four attitudes towards foreign elements in the receiving culture:

Robyns distinguishes four basic attitudes, depending on whether the 'otherness' of the foreign (and hence the identity of the self) is or is not viewed as irreducible, and on whether or not the receptor culture adapts the intrusive elements to its own norms. [...] When a culture wards off imports and tries to contain their impact because it feels they may threaten its identity, the attitude is 'defensive'.

### **3. Aims and hypotheses**

The aim of this study is to provide insight into expectancy norms (as defined in Section 2) in subtitling for Croatian television channels. Our aim is to explore the possible discrepancies between what viewers expect and what translators apparently feel they should provide in their translations.

The aim of this study was to test the main general hypothesis that in Croatia there exists a discrepancy between the established translation practice and the viewers' expectations, which can explain the viewers' perception of translation "mistakes". More specifically, we focused on culture-specific items, in particular those translated using transposition (as defined in Section 2), names and units of measurement, and marked speech (vulgarisms). We also examined the attitudes towards linguistic norms (as illustrated by the example of the vocative case) and their possible relation to the "defensive" attitude (as defined in Section 2) that may be said to exist in Croatian culture. Finally, we investigated the attitudes towards the choice of strategies that contribute to the visibility of translators (for which the translation of movie titles and the modifications to already established translations were used as parameters).

We also took into account factors such as age, professional background or the familiarity with translation practices to see how they affect viewers' acceptance

or rejection of frequently employed strategies. We assumed that respondents over the age of 35 would be more open to the translation of names and the use of transposition in general, but that they would be more opposed to the use of vulgarisms. Younger respondents were expected to be more tolerant of the use of vulgarisms and also exhibit a less defensive attitude towards foreign elements in the target language (TL), simply by virtue of participating in an increasingly globalized culture, particularly via the Internet. It was assumed that this exposure influences the language they use (e.g. makes them more open to elements such as loanwords). Finally, it was presumed that respondents with a professional background in translation (and consequently, a better knowledge of translation practices) would be more understanding of the perceived "mistakes" and perhaps more open to the strategies which contribute to the translator's visibility, since "[m]any translation decisions that are made in subtitling would be incomprehensible without knowledge of [its spatial and temporal] constraints" (Pedersen, 2011: 18).

#### **4. Method and sample**

Our initial idea was to reconstruct viewers' expectations of subtitles by doing a qualitative analysis of responses on online forums where subtitles were discussed. We also planned to use these discussions to trace down what the participants perceived as the most important problems in translations intended for television. This initial idea turned out to be unfeasible, as forum discussions had peaked several years before our research. This meant that the data gathered in this way would be neither as relevant nor as plentiful as necessary. In an attempt to collect more relevant data in a similar venue, a Facebook group entitled *Svi mi koji vičemo na televizor: "Pa ne mo'š to tako prevest!"* [All of us who shout at the TV: "Come on, you can't translate it like that!"] was created. The group was given a humorous name with the intention of attracting members. Although the name served its initial purpose and more than three thousand people joined in a fairly short time, it soon became evident that the name itself would largely be detrimental to the development of fruitful discussion. It turned out that some individual examples from subtitles and comments on them were very insightful and useful (and were therefore included in this paper), but a large

number of participants focused on obvious translation mistakes (presumably taken from pirated, fansubbed films downloaded or streamed from the Internet) and not on issues which could be attributed to the operation of norms. This called for a change in methodology and a survey was created, inspired by the issues prominent in previously examined online discussions. The survey was distributed, and the answers provided in Croatian, but in this paper they have been translated into English by the author.

The questions can be divided into four groups. The first group is the largest one, consisting of three questions that are, in broad terms, related to the strategies for translating culture-specific items, while the second deals with strategies for translating marked speech. The third group is the smallest, as it contains only one question, but it is the only one that can be said to deal with a purely linguistic issue. The final, fourth group contains two questions, which both have in common the fact that they, in a sense, reflect the status of the translator and the level of intervention into the original they are "allowed" to introduce.

The survey was published online and the link distributed to the members of the above-mentioned Facebook group. This, in turn, had an effect on the structure of the sample. The total number of respondents was 342. The majority of them were students (67 percent), with students of foreign languages making 34 percent of the total number of respondents and students of language-unrelated fields making up 33 percent. Sixteen percent of the respondents said they worked in language-related fields, such as translation or teaching, while 12 percent of them worked in language-unrelated fields. Just under 4 percent of the respondents said they had studied a language but that their current jobs were not related to languages, while 3 percent were unemployed. Six percent of the respondents said they were still in school, and another 6 percent chose the option of "other", elaborating their choice with answers such as "I do not have a language degree, but in my line of work, a knowledge of languages is essential" and "I went to a language-oriented high school, but now I work in a language-unrelated field", etc.

In terms of age, respondents in the age group between 19 and 25 were the largest group, making up as much as 65 percent of the total number of respondents, with the group between the ages of 26 and 35 following with only



19 percent. Just over 6 percent of the respondents were under the age of 18, 4 percent were between the ages of 46 and 55, 3 percent between the ages of 36 and 45, while less than 2 percent were over the age of 55. This, admittedly, makes for a lopsided sample, but it is our hope that it can provide some insight into the expectations of the general public, particularly when combined with the more elaborative qualitative answers they provided.

Of the 342 people who participated in the survey, the majority lived in Croatia, while 101 respondents (30 percent) lived in Serbia and other former Yugoslav countries, where some, but not all, conventions regarding subtitling that are employed on Croatian televisions are followed. Just under 4 percent listed Croatian cities or cities from former Yugoslavia as their places of origin, but said they lived abroad, in countries such as Germany, Australia or the United States, and 1 percent said they had moved from either Germany or Switzerland to Croatia, while another 1 percent, although answering in either Serbian or Croatian, affiliated themselves only with non-Yugoslav foreign cities (Athens and Sofia, respectively). A single respondent was originally from a Croatian city (Knin), but lived in Serbia at the time of taking the survey.

The respondents were also asked to list the TV channels they watched most frequently. This question was included because this information helped with determining their place of origin with more accuracy, and because of the assumption that the channels they watched and the translation practices employed by those channels helped shape their opinions. Not surprisingly, among the 15 channels mentioned by the respondents, the three Croatian TV channels broadcasting when the survey was conducted proved to be the most viewed ones. The Croatian national broadcaster HRT was the leading one, with 52.3 percent of the respondents listing it as their channel of choice, followed by (Croatian) RTL and Nova TV, the channels of choice for 43 percent and 36 percent of the viewers, respectively. Seventeen percent of the respondents listed Fox and Fox Life as their favourite channels, while just under 12 percent of them preferred Discovery.

Interestingly enough, many respondents from Serbia and other former Yugoslav countries seem to watch Croatian television, particularly HRT, while the same is not true of Croatian viewers regarding Serbian TV channels, which fare





much worse among viewers in general. While there were 101 respondents from former Yugoslav countries, the most popular among the large Serbian TV networks, B92, was mentioned by only 11 percent, while the second most popular Serbian network, RTS, was mentioned by only 4 percent. Other Serbian TV channels attracted only a one-digit percentage of viewers. What is more, one professional translator working as a subtitler for an unidentified Serbian network, a member of the previously mentioned Facebook group, said she preferred to watch Croatian TV channels because she found the translations there were of a higher quality than the Serbian ones. Her comment was an early indicator that Croatian TV channels might be setting standards in subtitling even above the national level.

All this considered, it seems that Croatian subtitling practices influence the expectations of TV viewers throughout the broader region. Occasional comments from the viewers who are exposed to different practices on a daily basis enabled us to gain a fresh perspective on practices commonly used in Croatia.

Other channels the respondents mentioned include National Geographic (5 percent), VH1 (3 percent), HBO (3 percent), Avala (2 percent), BBC and TV Pink (1 percent), CNN and MTV (1 percent) and 27 other channels which were mentioned by less than three people. Additionally, 2 percent of the respondents said they did not watch television at all and another 2 percent said they only watched TV programs on the Internet (which, given that the survey was conducted in 2010, before Netflix and other streaming services were as readily available to Croatian viewers as they are now, may imply that they often watch them either without subtitles, or with subtitles created by amateurs who do not always conform to the norms established by professional translators).

Since the survey was conducted online, it is perhaps not surprising that the sample is comprised mainly of young people, particularly students of languages (i.e. members of the author's own peer group at the time). Although it could be argued that the sample is not representative of the general population because of the unequal distribution of age groups, the survey remains useful as it points to *emerging* norms: the expectations of younger audiences and, even more importantly, the attitudes of future translators.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 *Translating culture-bound terms*

#### 5.1.1 Transposition of culture-bound terms and the translation of humour

The first question in the survey was related to transposition, as defined above (in Section 2). It was initiated by a lively discussion on the ffzg.hr forum thread *ajme koja blamaža od prijevoda* ["dude, what an embarrassing translation"]. The discussion was initiated by someone who mentioned seeing a cartoon in the cinema, where, in a jocular context, the name of the supermarket chain *Home Depot* was rendered in the translation as the name of a Croatian chain of supermarkets selling similar merchandize, *Pevec*. Although hesitatingly, those who commented on the ffzg.hr thread for the most part admired the translator's creativity and highlighted the reaction this solution provoked in the cinema. They pointed out that not many would understand the joke had the original name been retained, while the use of the Croatian term added extra flair to the joke. As the same example appeared in several other forums, mostly in a negative context, we were unsure whether the cinema audience laughed because they found the translation ridiculous, rather than witty and creative. In other words, whether it falls into the category of what Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 214) describe as "utterances [which] provoke laughter unintentionally [. . .] or catch on only with a limited group".

Another example of the use of transposition we came across is the replacement of a relatively unknown American TV host with the name of the famous Croatian TV host Oliver Mlakar in the subtitles for *Step up 2* on one of the Croatian channels.

As our aim was to examine the acceptability of transposition for Croatian TV viewers, the survey began with the question "Do you approve of replacing terms specific for Anglophone cultures (British, American...) with terms specific for Croatian culture in translations for television? (For example, replacing *Home Depot* with *Pevec* or Labour Party with SDP.)" The respondents expressed a generally negative attitude towards this practice, with as many as 45 percent of them answering the question with "I definitely disapprove of it." A slightly lower

number of people, 37 percent of the respondents, answered with a less unfavourable answer "I approve of it in certain cases.", whereas as few as 15 percent of the respondents answered with "I approve of it in most cases." Only 2 percent of the respondents answered with "I definitely approve of it."

In the next question, the respondents were asked to elaborate on their choice and explain why they approved (or disapproved) of this practice and, if their answer was not a definite yes or no, to say in which circumstances they would approve of it. The analysis of these answers shows that many respondents focused on the concrete examples provided, and did not look at them as representative of a common practice. Thus, the example of Labour Party being replaced with SDP proved to be a bad one, since most of the respondents who could not move beyond the specific examples expressed outrage at its ridiculousness. One respondent went so far as to point out that "Labour Party would have to be translated as several Croatian political parties" if this practice were to become the norm. Another respondent, a person with a linguistic professional background, explained she was not against transposition and substitution as strategies for translating culture-specific items, but she thought the examples provided were not appropriate because they were names and she disapproved of translating names. Generally, the respondents who focused on the specific examples agreed that proper nouns, as a general rule, should not be translated. However, surprisingly and perhaps contradictorily, quite a few of them said they approved of the use of transposition with personal names, i.e. substituting the names of, say, minor celebrities who would be completely unknown to the target audience with the names of "local" celebrities if that would help viewers understand the intended meaning. Also, most respondents who approved of the strategy considered the substitution of *Home Depot* with *Pevec* a good example. Nevertheless, some of them qualified their answers, expressing sensitivity towards what Pedersen calls the "credibility gap" (2011: 91). As one respondent put it "it would make little sense if a character talked about *Pevec* in one scene and entered a *Home Depot* in the next".

We should also point out that, although people in Croatia tend to perceive Serbs as more fond of adaptation because they transliterate personal names into the local orthography (as part of transliteration into the Cyrillic script), a

respondent from Serbia said he was surprised to encounter a practice like transposition on Croatian television, since “something like that would have been completely unacceptable” in his country.

One of the major arguments against using transposition was that the purpose of translation was to educate the audience about the intricacies of the source culture, and there was a risk that this aspect would be lost with the use of transposition. Among those who were decidedly against the use of transposition, some felt that the use of Croatian brand names in the context of subtitles would confuse the viewers and lead to a mistaken belief that those brands existed in the United States or some other country the ST originated from, while others thought it simply looked silly and took away from the credibility of the translation. Others found the transposition of culturally bound terms entirely unnecessary, pointing out that, in this day and age, a particular culturally bound term, such as a brand mentioned in a programme, could easily be looked up on the Internet. Some even emphatically stated that the use of transposition in such cases was “unnecessarily condescending towards the audience”. Interestingly enough, one respondent, a student of language, stands out among those who expressed a belief in the educational nature of subtitling in that she not only approved of transposition, but also believed in the beneficial effect of using what Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 55) call “the gossiping effect”: the audience’s increased awareness of the discrepancies between the original and the translation because of their immediate coexistence. She said that viewers rely on what they hear in the original, while the translation only provides them with clues to understanding the nature of the term and its implications.

Respondents offered another argument against the use of transposition with brand names. Not only does replacing American brand names with Croatian ones make the translation more conspicuous and creates a credibility gap, but it also constitutes an advertisement for the Croatian brand used. Some even suggested that, should such a situation occur, televisions ought to charge the brands in question for advertising. One respondent with a non-linguistic professional background (perhaps a lawyer) explained this was a bad idea precisely because, on the one hand, using a Croatian brand name in a subtitle in a positive context constitutes an advertisement (illegal on public television), while using it in a

negative context may even lead to a defamation suit. Therefore, this respondent specified that he would find this kind of transposition acceptable only if both brand names were used as generic terms in their cultures (the respondent mentioned *Duct tape* and *selotejp* as an example).

A different kind of argument was brought up by those who have a problem with the acceptability of this strategy. The more unyielding among these respondents even expressed a belief that transposition was not translation at all. Others simply felt that transposition does not represent an adequate translation because it is difficult to achieve a satisfactory level of equivalence. Some were of the opinion that the choices made by translators in case of transposition were too arbitrary and that it was quite likely that even a professional translator would not have a wide enough knowledge of either the source or target culture to always come up with the perfect equivalent. Others worried that in some situations the item chosen as a translation equivalent might carry meanings and connotations not present in the ST and thus mislead the viewer.

Another factor the respondents felt should be taken into consideration was, of course, the target audience. While they claimed they mostly opposed the use of transposition, some respondents allowed for the necessity of using this strategy with specific audiences, such as very young children or older people, who (it was assumed) would not understand the reference, or with very specific terms, which would probably be unknown to the general audiences, but are essential for understanding the general context or the story. Nevertheless, there was no general consensus on this issue, as several respondents felt that transposition was not a good strategy to use in programmes for children as it would go against the programmes' educational purpose.

The type of the ST and the function of a culture-specific element within the TT were also mentioned as important factors. While the respondents mostly did not approve of the use of transposition, there is one type of situation where the great majority of respondents would find it appropriate, and that is the translation of humour. Most of the respondents were aware that different rules apply to translating jokes than regular speech. As Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 215) point out, "subtitling humour requires insight and creativity, but it is also a matter of establishing priorities", in that "sometimes laughter is more important

than rendering the exact semantics of a passage, sometimes the reverse will be the case". Still, in the section dealing with "jokes referring to a national culture or institution" (2007: 220), a category into which the examples used in the survey neatly fall, even they suggest either using generalization (hypernyms) or retention (retaining the original item) as primary translation strategies.

With regard to the reasons for either approving or disapproving of substituting English culture bound terms with Croatian ones, a very small number of respondents gave reasons that may in broad terms be linked to linguistic purism. One respondent approved of the strategy for purist reasons, while others opposed it precisely for its perceived purism.

The overall conclusion is that the viewers are, as a rule, highly sceptical and uncomfortable with using Croatian terms as substitutions for English culture-specific items. Instead, they advocate the use of some other strategies. Generally, the respondents working or educated in professions related to languages were slightly more open towards the use of the strategy. However, even they said that, being aware of the spatial constraints imposed on subtitlers, they preferred the use of explanation, hyponyms or hypernyms. Therefore, in the example of *Pevec* they would prefer *željezarija*, i.e. *hardware store*. One respondent said she would rather rephrase another part of the subtitle to save some space for an elaboration instead of using transposition. The respondents without a language-related professional or educational background (although not just them, but many students of language and translators as well) said they would prefer an explanation in brackets (a strategy also sometimes used on Croatian TV channels, albeit more commonly when translating puns). They mostly appeared unaware of the spatial limitations of subtitles.

With this in mind, this seems to be a good opportunity to suggest another potential strategy that might in the future be considered an alternative to transposition in translating culture-specific items. Although Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 37) explicitly say that "the use of explanatory notes to the translation, such as glosses, footnotes or a prologue, has always been anathema to subtitling", they admit that on-screen notes are starting to find their place in translating for DVDs. Also, there are streaming sites on the Internet, which actively *use* on-screen notes as an addition to the fansubs. Such new

developments may in the future render this kind of practice more acceptable even within mainstream media, particularly if we bear in mind that the use of embedded subtitles appears to be on the rise as well, for instance, in broadcasting non-English segments on American television. The most recognizable example of this practice may be the use of embedded subtitles in the American SF show *Heroes*, where the dialogue between the characters Hiro and Ando, spoken in Japanese, is translated into English via embedded subtitles. With the increased use of embedded subtitles, viewers might get used to seeing writing being imposed on the picture, which could make them more open to the possibility of on-screen notes. On-screen notes would eliminate the need for transposition and would free the translators from having to squeeze bracketed explanations into the constricted space of a subtitle. However, it is very probable that even if they were accepted by the mainstream media, on-screen notes would be likely to cause a similar kind of backlash that transposition elicits now, at least until the audience got used to them. At this point, therefore, the safest path for a translator appears to be the use of hypernyms which have enough similar connotations to make the intended meaning clear, or, if need be, to carry a joke.

However, there are some (humorous) contexts where the translated item cannot be categorized in such a way as to have a hypernym (for instance, with idioms and other, so to speak, multi-word jokes). In these cases, viewers appear a bit ambivalent, if not downright confused, with the translator's intervention into the text. A good example was posted in the Facebook group by a member from Serbia. In an episode of *The Simpsons* aired on Fox, an Australian character says: "These bloody [frogs] are everywhere. They're in the lift, the lorry in the bon whizzer, and the Malonga Gilderchuck.", which the resident translator apparently translated as *Ove proklete žabe su svuda! Levo, desno, nigde moga stana* (using lyrics from a popular local song). The person who posted the example seemed genuinely amused with the translation, but the very fact he posted it in that particular Facebook group indicates that he was at the very least sceptical about accepting it as a good solution. He felt this way despite the fact that the translation produces the intended effect and despite the fact that finding out what "the Malonga Gilderchuck" means would require an extensive Internet

search from the average viewer. Another, perhaps even more radical example that appeared in the group was the one in which the translator inserted a (culture-specific) joke in the translation where there was none in the ST. Apparently, in the first *Ice Age* movie, at one point, one of the characters says "Look, I'm skiing!", which the translator transforms into *Vidi, skijam kao Janica Kostelić!* (lit. "Look, I'm skiing like Janica Kostelić!", i.e. mentioning the famous Croatian Olympic medallist) The example prompted a response from another member: "Yes, Croatian translations are amazing! They even make you laugh at the boring parts of the movie!" Again, both thread posters appear genuinely amused with the translator's intervention, but since they posted the examples in a group dealing mostly with translating mistakes, it is difficult to establish whether their amusement is not (at least partly) sarcastic (the latter respondent continues the discussion by listing some, as he sees them, incorrect and unfaithful translations of film titles, an issue that will be taken up later in this paper). If they were indeed sarcastic, it leaves one with the impression that, despite its amusing quality, they find something odd in that type of translation.

This leads us to the issue of the translator's visibility, which will be further discussed below. The comments gathered in the survey suggest that Croatian viewers seem to prefer subtitle translations that draw no attention to themselves, regardless of how creative or original the more conspicuous translations might be. This might be a consequence of the dominant perception of translation activity in Croatian society, which in turn reflects on the status of the translating profession in Croatia. It seems that translators and the act of translation itself are expected to be invisible in order for the translation to be perceived as good. The reactions to the examples in question seem to call for a change in attitudes towards translators and translation among the general public, the consumers of translations, and an increased awareness of the nature and the realities of the process of translation itself.

The next question, which, like the previous one, is related to what viewers perceive as *natural* in translation, was prompted by an example brought up on the previously mentioned ffzg.hr forum thread. One user mentioned with amused outrage that she'd recently purchased a comic book in which the name of the superhero Daredevil was translated as Nebojša (a local men's name, literally



someone who is not afraid), which, it should be noted, sums up the character's main distinguishing trait perfectly. The perception on the ffzg.hr forum was that the use of the name was ridiculous and unnatural, although at one point a commenter mentioned hearing somewhere that Daredevil was regularly rendered as Nebojša when the character's adventures were first published in the region in the form of graphic novels, in "the old [sic] Yugoslavia". The same pattern is found with Spiderman that is still sometimes known to the public as *Čovjek-pauk*, or with Fred Flintstone that is to this day called *Kremenko* in Croatia without anyone finding it strange. The same example was brought up by a Serbian member of the Facebook group, who, admittedly, left it unclear whether the translation in question was featured in the graphic novel, or the movie of the same name (and whether it was an old translation that had turned into an urban legend of sorts, or a recent one). We should also mention a recent surge in popularity of movies based on comic books, from *The Avengers* to *Watchmen*, as well as the common use of pun-based humour and other types of names and surnames which provide clues to the character's traits in English-language films and TV-shows.

All this prompted us to bring up the issue of whether viewers, and to what extent, wanted (or accepted) such names being translated and to what extent factors such as age influenced their opinion. The question "Should a character's name and nickname be translated if their meaning provides additional information about the character or provides a clue to the plot?", was answered with "Yes, it's part of the whole experience of the movie." by only 11 percent of the respondents. On the other hand, 37 percent of the respondents were entirely against this practice, answering with "No, it would sound strange." Most of the respondents (52 percent) disapproved of this strategy as generally unnecessary, but allowed for the existence of such situations in which its employment was perhaps unavoidable. They replied with "It is enough to translate the name once, either at the beginning of the movie or at a point where it is important for the plot. In other cases there is no need for that." As for the factor of the respondents' age, the group of respondents aged 36 and above was more open to the translation of names than the group of respondents under the age of 35. A little over 38 percent of the over-36 group were in favour of translating names,

compared to only 10 percent of the younger group. Although this data is hardly conclusive (given that the respondents of the younger group are dominant in the sample), it is still potentially telling and implies a change of norm from a former “entrenched equivalent” (Pedersen 2011: 98) towards retention.

In any case, *Nebojša* seems to be a perfect example of what Toury describes as the process of rise and decline in the binding nature of norms, a clear proof that “what used to be binding may lose much of its force, what used to be common may become rare, what was once common to many may become idiosyncratic, on occasion even bizarre” (Baker 1998: 19).

### 5.1.2 Converting units of measurement in translation

Another instance of translating culturally bound terms is related to units of measurement. Although Croatian TV channels usually convert imperial into metric units in subtitles, they seem to be somewhat inconsistent about it.

The participants were asked if they felt that imperial measure units (inches, feet, etc.) should be converted to metric (meters, centimetres, etc.) in translations intended for television and to elaborate on their answers in the next question. The participants turned to be largely in favour of this practice, with 69 percent of all respondents answering affirmatively, and an additional 19 percent answering with “Yes, in some cases.” Only 12 percent of the respondents said they found the conversion of units unnecessary. The latter group objected to the conversion because they felt that the knowledge of both measure systems was a matter of general knowledge, or simply said they considered conversion “pointless”. Most respondents, however, felt that it would be unrealistic to expect of wider audiences to have a working knowledge of the imperial measure system and that, even if they had some idea about the relationship between the two systems, it would be simply too strenuous for them to calculate the measures while trying to follow the movie. Some considered it necessary for reasons which might be called purist (“that’s how it’s done in Croatia, we’re not English”).

Those who elaborated their answers felt the translator should keep in mind their target audience, or more precisely, whether the program was intended for “uneducated people and children”, or “scientists, who would be likely to know the

units". It was felt that measurement units should most definitely be converted if the program in question was of an educational nature, and that preferably both types of units should be present in the subtitles (with the original unit in brackets), so as to further educate the viewers.

The prevalent opinion was that measurement units should be converted to facilitate understanding. However, the respondents described situations in which they would tolerate, or even find it necessary to preserve original units. These exceptions were mostly related to the function of measurement units. For instance, it was felt that, if the precise measure unit was not important, but served just to make the viewer aware of, say, the relative size of an object, the original unit may be retained. Also, it was noted that there are situations in which the original measures would simply sound more natural. In relation to that, one language student from Belgrade juxtaposed two examples, saying that the viewer would find it more natural if the speaker was talking about using "7 litres of gas per 100 kilometres" than covering "40 miles per gallon of gas", but, on the other hand, it would be more natural for him to see "he was going 100 miles per hour" in the subtitles, rather than having it converted to "he was going 165 kilometres per hour". This is in accord with Díaz Cintas and Remael's observation that a common strategy in translation is to "transfer all those terms from the original that have strong phonetic or morphological similarities in both languages, and that the viewer may recognize in the original dialogue" (2007: 56).

Another language student went out of his way to provide a hypothetical example in which "measure conversion would not make sense": "a hypothetical film in which the protagonist is killing people according to a logical pattern: perhaps his victims are always exactly 13 miles away from the gun store, which is located in a house at the number 13, while the killer himself is wearing size 13 shoes." The respondent then rightly pointed out that the entire point of the movie would be lost if the distance was converted to 20.92 kilometres, and the shoe size to 48. He was also of the opinion that, depending on the context, the original size could be noted in brackets as well.

## 5.2 *Translating marked speech: swear words*

Swear words occur very frequently in films and TV shows. The strategies for their translation, however, vary greatly, since translators are often compelled by the networks to censor them, either by using more toned down expressions in the TL, replacing parts of the word with asterisks/dots or by leaving out the vulgarism entirely. Any of these practices is bound to receive mixed reactions from viewers, so this question was included in the questionnaire with the intention to determine whether, and to what extent, the viewers feel the need to be shielded from such content.

It turns out that only 16 percent of the respondents think that swear words should “definitely” be toned down in subtitles. Another 23 percent agree this should be done, but only in “exceptional cases”. In contrast, 61 percent of the respondents find such endeavours “completely unnecessary”.

Among the minority who objected to seeing swear words in subtitles, some were unable to provide a more elaborate explanation for their answer than “it’s ugly”. Others did elaborate by explaining, as expected, that swear words indicate bad manners, and it is, therefore, best to avoid them, since some viewers may find them offensive. Even more people emphasized the educational nature of public television. Considering public television the second greatest influence on children, preceded only by that of parents, they cited the influence of television as an explanation as to why broadcasters should take care not to expose children to such bad influence. In relation to this, the time of broadcasting and the type of show were seen as factors determining whether swear words should be censored. The general opinion was that daytime TV shows should generally be censored, as children might watch them. One of the respondents said: “It’s not appropriate to say these things on TV in the middle of the day, when children can see it.” Another respondent, a student of a language-unrelated group specified that, for the protection of children, programs should be swearing-free if they are aired before 9 p.m. The concerns about the ways TV programs influenced behaviour were not focused only on children, as some respondents felt that “Croatian people swear too much as it is” and that incorporating curses into subtitles shown on public television would encourage people in this behaviour. In

other words, those viewers believed that censoring swear words in translation should be used to send the message that swearing is not, or should not be, socially acceptable. On that note, some viewers said that swear words should be avoided in translations for public television, but that such precautions were not necessary on media such as the DVD, where the educational component was not so distinct. It is interesting to note that a substantial number of respondents felt that swear words should be toned down in subtitles because they seem worse (carry a greater emotional impact) in written than in spoken form, and suggested at least replacing some letters of the word with asterisks as a possible way of doing that, particularly in view of the fact that most people will be able to deduce what is being said from the context. Also, some took a moderate stance, saying that "stronger swear words" should be censored, while "milder ones" need not be (without actually specifying what constitutes either category).

The attitude described is in accordance with Díaz Cintas and Remael's advice regarding this issue. They warn that deleting swear words from the translation entirely is "not the only or the best option available" (2007: 196) since the viewers "may feel cheated when the aggressive or rude performance of an actor leads them to expect a certain type of vocabulary that is not relayed in the translation" (2007: 57). At the same time, they acknowledge precisely what our respondents have pointed out: that "saying such words is one thing, writing them is another matter [bearing especially in mind that] expletives do not necessarily cause problems in novels, whereas they do in subtitles" (2007: 196). For that reason they advise "the consideration of what is generally acceptable for written, as opposed to spoken language in the target culture" (2007: 200).

Some respondents, most often those with language-related professional backgrounds, expressed an awareness that there were situations in which it was inevitable to leave out or in other ways modify swear words from the original even when there was no intention to censor. These respondents were aware that, as Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 145) point out,

[t]he written version of speech in subtitles is nearly always a reduced form of the oral ST. Indeed, subtitling can never be a complete and detailed rendering. And neither should it, for that matter. Since the verbal subtitle sign interacts with the visual and oral signs and codes of the film, a complete translation is, in fact, not required.

Therefore, these respondents were of the opinion that, bearing in mind the length of the subtitle and the fact that the viewers do not rely exclusively on the subtitles to know what is happening, it was indeed unnecessary to preserve every single swear word in the translation. This, in turn, may result in toning down certain expressions, inadvertently or otherwise. Another element the respondents found problematic in this sense was the matter of acceptability. Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007: 196) explain that “taboo words are tied in with local traditions and are used differently by different linguistic communities” and subsequently suggest that “[s]ubtitlers must therefore first identify and evaluate the impact and emotional value of a given word or expression in the source culture, and then translate it into a target culture equivalent that is deemed appropriate in the context”. The previously mentioned group of respondents agreed in principle with the guidelines provided by Díaz Cintas and Remael, but felt that finding an adequate translational and psychological equivalent for certain swear words was very difficult, since often a literal translation could come off as too strong or too weak for the intended communicational situation. In the Facebook group, one person made an interesting point related to finding appropriate target culture equivalents when she pointed out that, on Croatian televisions, the English word “son of a bitch” was usually translated literally as “kujin/kučkin sin”. The person complained she had always found that translation strange and “unnatural” because, as she explained, the original expression is quite common and often used in English, while, conversely, the Croatian translation is virtually never used in actual native speech. At that point, another member joined the conversation and identified that particular example as “a textbook example of what translation theories have dubbed *translationese*” (i.e. a literal translation of the original that is often used by translators under the influence of the source language, despite the fact that no one actually talks like that).

As a different example of inappropriate translation of swear words, some respondents mentioned situations where vulgarisms are not used as, so to speak, “swear words proper”, but rather as indicators of belonging to a particular social group (some forms of African-American slang were mentioned as an example). In such cases, these words do not carry the same connotations or

have the same emotional impact they normally do. Translating them literary would be inappropriate, as they would not convey the intended message and might even perpetuate prejudice. In relation to that, it is interesting that a high school senior from Split complained that “on Nova TV, mild swear words in English are rendered with quite strong Croatian ones”, which the respondent found “both inexplicable and dumb”. An example of this was provided in the Facebook group by a person who recounted how, on *House M.D.*, “Screw you!” was translated as “Nabijem te!” (lit. approximately: “Up yours!”) which, she felt, had a much greater emotional impact in Croatian than “Jebi se!” (lit. “Fuck you!”), to which people have almost become desensitized, given how often it is used. On the other hand, the student from Split also said that it was ridiculous “to censor something that is already in the movie and that people have already heard in the original. Unless Croatian ears are particularly sensitive to that kind of thing, which I don’t believe, [she said] given how rich our language is in swear words”.

This brings us to the second most mentioned argument among those who found toning down swear words entirely unnecessary. Like the high school student from Split, a lot of them perceived censoring swear words as bordering on “hypocritical” because, as they said, Croats are very creative when it comes to swearing. Many of them said that there was no need to tone down foreign swear words because Croatian swear words are generally stronger (“ours are worse anyway”; “we are a foul-mouthed nation”). Interestingly enough, this view was espoused in particular by those respondents who lived abroad.

The use of swear words in translations can reflect the prejudice of the society in general, as shown in the example submitted by one man who said it bothered him when “every other swear word and insult” is translated into Croatian with *pederu* (the Croatian equivalent of the slur *fag*) because, as he pointed out, “that is unfair to gay people”.

All things considered, the most important argument against toning down swear words was, so to speak, an artistic one. The general opinion was that a swear word serves a dramatic function within the film and that it is not the translator’s job to censor it. Since a film is a work of art, the respondents agreed, the swear word must have been used by both the screenwriter and the

director for an artistically valid reason (although some respondents expressed uncertainty as to whether this really could be said to apply to low-quality programs, such as, say, soap operas) and that tampering with that meant a betrayal of the director's and the screenwriter's intentions and opened a door to a misunderstanding of the story and the source culture in question.

In relation to the argument that swear words should be toned down so the children would not pick them up, this group of respondents felt that this should be a decision made at the level of preliminary, instead of operational norms (without using those terms, of course), in that it is the broadcaster's responsibility not to show programs which abound in swear words when children might see them, and not the translator's to censor them. A case was also made for parental control, another protective measure which made these kinds of scruples in translation unnecessary. Many respondents simply said they found censoring annoying. Still, there were those who admitted that, although censoring swear words was generally pointless and unnecessary (since swear words are heard by the audience in the original anyway), it was currently the norm and that translators did not have much say in the matter.

Here, too, we assumed that older viewers would be more in favour of censoring swear words than younger ones (possibly with the exception of the youngest group of respondents, those under the age of 18). This assumption turned out to be valid: 41 percent of respondents older than 36 felt that swear words should be toned down, whereas only 12 percent of respondents younger than 35 shared that opinion. In addition, only around 6 percent of the respondents in the older group (only two people) limited the need to censor swear words only to exceptional cases, while the same is true for just over 24 percent of the members of the younger group. In both cases the general opinion weighed in favour of the negative answer, with 51 percent of the older, and 63 percent of the younger respondents opting for it.

However, the assumption regarding the youngest group of viewers proved incorrect: respondents under the age of 18 were no more likely to be in favour of toning down swear words than the rest of their larger peer group. Only 13.6 percent of them were in favour of censoring swear words, another 13.7 percent



felt that they should be toned down in exceptional cases, while most of them, 72.7 percent felt toning down swear words was entirely unnecessary.

### 5.3 *Grammar and the defensive attitude*

The issue of the vocative case<sup>1</sup> is perhaps the only purely linguistic issue raised in this paper. It arose from forum discussions concerning the declension of foreign names. It was our impression that in the debates, the so-called “defensive attitude” (Hermans 1999: 13), as defined in Section 2, towards foreign elements in language often became manifest, particularly since names are the most obvious signal of foreignness in translations. Our intention was to examine to what extent the general public shares such views on a particular grammar-related example. The vocative was used in the survey as an indicator of the linguistically more conservative tendencies among Croatian TV viewers. The vocative was chosen as it is less and less frequently used even with native Croatian names, in particular female ones. Thus, forms such as *Petre* or *Ivane* are used much more frequently than, for instance, *Marijo* or *Majo*, which sound much more stylistically marked and can appear almost archaic. The answers offered to the respondents (in response to the question “Should the vocative case be used with foreign feminine names in subtitles?”) reflect this. The affirmative answer was formulated: “Yes. If we adapt foreign names to the Croatian language by declining them, then that should include the vocative case as well.” The negative answer, conversely, was formulated like this: “No. The vocative case is rarely used with Croatian feminine names too, so it would look particularly strange with foreign names.”

It is not surprising that the majority of respondents, as many as 82 percent, responded with the negative answer, and only 18 percent with the affirmative answer. The original assumption was that older viewers would prove to be more inclined to purism in this respect than the younger ones. This proved to be correct, with the group over 36 being on average more in favour of the use of the vocative than the younger group (16 percent of younger viewers and 29

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<sup>1</sup> The vocative is the case used for a noun or pronoun which identifies the addressee of a particular utterance.

percent of the older were in favour of the use of the vocative). However, in both groups the majority of the respondents felt that the use of the vocative was unnecessary (70 percent of the respondents aged 36 and above and a little over 84 percent of the respondents younger than 35). Therefore, it appears that, at least on the level of grammar, the attitude of the Croatian audiences is not as defensive as we assumed. Whether this would be the case with lexical elements is another question that goes beyond the scope of this paper.

#### 5.4 *The visibility of the translator*

The final group of questions is related to the level of intervention “allowed” to the translator in the viewers’ opinion. This paper already touched on the subject of translator visibility in section 4.2.1. This section deals with issues that bear a more immediate influence on the perception of translators by the audience. The issues in question illustrate the extent to which the translators are felt to be allowed to intervene in the ST and be creative with it for the TT to still be seen as acceptable, as well as the amount of responsibility assigned to the translator by the public. Attitudes regarding the translation of movie titles and modifications to established translations were taken as relevant indicators.

##### 5.4.1 *Movie titles in translation*

Translation of movie titles is a matter of some controversy in Croatia. As the first point of contact between the film and the audience, the title is the first thing which should attract viewers into the cinemas and to watching the film, and the first thing that can attract criticism. Even on a purely anecdotal level, the viewers in Croatia often feel that movie titles are translated incorrectly, that they are too far removed from the original, or the plot of the movie for that matter, to be considered appropriate. The problem is not limited only to cinemas, of course, but is perhaps at its most visible on television, which not only shows some of these movies under the same titles later, but which has its own assortment of (perceived) mistranslations.

One of the most infamous instances of perceived mistranslation is *Notting Hill* with Julia Roberts and Hugh Grant, translated as *Ja u ljubav vjerujem* (lit. “I

believe in love"; the movie was, incidentally, accompanied by a love song of the same title by the Croatian band *Parni valjak* at the time of its first release), which remains the most regularly cited example of an over-the-top translation on Internet forums. Some more recent examples include *The Day after Tomorrow*<sup>2</sup> and *An Education*<sup>3</sup>, which was met with an ambivalent response, with some viewers resenting the fact that the translated title had little resemblance to the original one and did not (in the eyes of some viewers) provide a clue to the plot. Others, on the other hand, admired the ingenuity with which the translator avoided having to deal with the differences in connotation between the term in the title and its Croatian equivalents (*edukacija, obrazovanje, odgoj*) by combining the (admittedly) vague hint at what the film was about with a reference to the earlier work by Nick Hornby, one of the screenwriters and producers of the film.

It should also be mentioned that Croatian movie-goers remain largely unaware of the fact that it is distributors, and not translators, who have the final say in the matter of choosing a translated title, presumably in order to come up with the more marketable option, one that would draw audiences in more effectively than the ones a translator would choose. This, unfortunately, means that translators (as a profession more often than as individuals) get all the blame when such marketable translations are perceived as failures. The aim of the following question was, therefore, to see who the viewers thought should be responsible for translating movie titles.

When asked for their opinion on who should have the final say about the translation of movie titles, the respondents were able to choose between translators, distributors and specialized editors. The majority, 62 percent of respondents, said they felt that the translation of movie titles should be the responsibility of the translator who translated the movie. The second preferred option was editors, chosen by 21 percent of the respondents, while the current primary decision-makers, distributors, were the preferred option of only 10

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<sup>2</sup> The word-for-word translation of *Dan poslije sutra* was perceived as "translationese" by some viewers, while others pointed out that the more idiomatic but still literal translation, *Prekosutra*, would not be very attractive to the viewers.

<sup>3</sup> Translated as *Sve o jednoj djevojci*, literally "All about a girl", also a reference to Nick Hornby's novel *About a Boy*.

percent of the respondents. "Other" was selected by only 7 percent of the respondents. The majority of the latter group provided an explanatory answer which still involved the translator in some way. Most of them were of the opinion that the final title of the movie should be the result of a joint effort made by the translator in cooperation with either the distributor, the aforementioned specialized editor, or the language editor. Some even thought that the author of the movie (the director or the screenwriter) should participate in the decision-making process. Some respondents felt that it would be ideal if one of the parties involved in the decision was a native speaker of the SL.

All in all, these answers seem to indicate an agreement among the respondents that the person(s) involved in the decision should be experts in both the source and target cultures and their corresponding languages. It seems that the respondents did not credit translators themselves with that kind of expertise. The reason behind this, perhaps, lies in the aversion towards the way film titles are currently translated and a general disrespect towards the profession (which is both the cause and the consequence of hiring amateur translators – potential topic of another study), as well as the previously mentioned fact that most people are unaware that translators do not exercise as much influence on the way a title turns out in the end as it is generally perceived.

In order to confirm the assumption that Croatian viewers prefer titles they perceive as closer to the original, rather than the obviously made-up, bombastic ones which are supposedly more marketable, the respondents were asked to decide on the way in which the titles of films and TV shows should be translated for television. The answers offered were: "As literally as possible, there is no need to make up new titles"; "Titles should be adapted only when they contain word play or some other expressions which make them impossible to translate literally", and finally, the trick question, "Film titles should be adapted for the market and modified in such a way that they sound attractive to the audience." Here, the answer most opted for was the one which allowed modification when absolutely necessary, with a landslide 89 percent, while a meagre 3 percent of people were in favour of adapting translations in such a way as to make them more attractive, and only 8 percent opted for the first answer. This is not surprising, since students of language and language professionals comprise the

majority of the respondents. They make up a group which is fully aware that in translation there are virtually no clear-cut answers of the kind offered by the other two options. However, the fact that the literal option has slightly more proponents than the one which calls for more extensive changes, as well as the way in which the most popular answer was formulated might indicate that the Croatian respondents indeed prefer faithfulness to marketability, which is in direct opposition to the current practice.

#### 5.4.2 Modifications to already established translations

Finally, the last question of the questionnaire was inspired by an infamous translation which caused a lot of controversy not so long ago, where the translator who created the subtitles for the *Star Trek* movie decided to abandon the usual translations for the iconic Vulcan greeting “Live long and prosper” (rendered into Croatian as “Živi dugo i uspješno!” or “Živi dugo i napreduj!”) and replaced them with the more stylistically marked “Živi dugo i berićetno!”<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the film in question was a reboot of the franchise and in many respects represented a deviation from the, so to speak, *Star Trek* canon. Accordingly, as the translator Tomislav Mihalić himself explained (in Čop 2009), the translation was deliberately made as a reboot as well, a departure from the usual one, which the translator considered unsuccessful. Although the sentence appeared in a cinema subtitle, had it caught on, it most probably would have eventually been used on television as well. As it is, however, the translation faced a strong backlash, not in the least because the word *berićetno* was considered too substandard and dated, and therefore alien – no pun intended – to many viewers.

The debate also raised the issue of the extent to which viewers approved of modifying and changing existing translations which have entered the public mind as not only correct, but as parts of pop culture. The respondents were asked whether they felt it was acceptable for the translator to modify or “improve” the existing translations of films or TV shows with a cult status and offered a choice

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<sup>4</sup> The literal translation for the first option is *Live long and successfully*, the second one is a word-for-word translation of the original, while the stylistically marked translation that is the subject of our analysis could be translated literally as *Live long and fruitfully*.

between two answers. One was "Yes, no translation is set in stone. If someone comes up with a better one, there is no reason why it should not be used." and the other "No, those translations have become a part of pop culture in their existing form". Perhaps still haunted by the memory of the aforementioned Star Trek translation, the respondents decided in favour of the second answer, i.e. in favour of preserving the original, commonly recognized translation, however potentially faulty. Admittedly, it was not a definite, overwhelming victory as with the previous question and quite a substantial percentage of respondents had nothing against improvements. Still, with 63 percent in favour of using existing translations and 37 percent respondents expressing willingness to accept interventions into the already established translations, it is clear that the viewers are rather suspicious of translators getting creative with their texts.

## **6. Conclusion**

The results of the survey have shown that Croatian audiences are rather intolerant of translators intervening in the ST and departing from it in any way that can be interpreted as a lack of faithfulness. As seen in relation to the translation of titles, as well as the transposition of culturally bound terms, the so-called gossiping effect seems to be a significant factor in this, since the viewers form their expectations of the translation based on their knowledge of the original. They judge the translation and the translator accordingly, but since their actual level of knowledge is sometimes questionable, there is danger of misinterpretation. Frequently it seems that translators try to capture the intention and the "spirit" of the source text, while the viewers tend to focus on the actual wording. Still, at least in some cases, the translator is not perceived by the general public as responsible for the problems with translations. It is difficult to determine whether the viewers are suspicious of the translators' interventions because they are often exposed to flawed translations, or if they are critical of translations because they do not conform to their particular view of what constitutes a faithful translation. It is probably a combination of both factors. As demonstrated by their unwillingness to accept changes to already established translations, viewers in Croatia appear to be slightly more in favour of source-oriented strategies of translation. On the one hand, they expect a

translation which “reads” as the original and does not openly signal the fact it is a translation, while at the same time they are reluctant to accept reformulations even at the level of wording. Admittedly, their awareness of the necessity for translation interventions appears to be greater the more they know of both the language and the translation process in general.

This type of guarded attitude is both the cause and the consequence of the translators’ invisibility. When a translation is perceived as little more than a copy of the source text in the target language, translators rarely get a chance to justify their choices. This, in turn, results in the general unawareness of the translation process outside professional circles and may even invite undeserved criticism of the translators themselves.

So far research into translation norms in Croatia, in particular in media translation, has been scarce. A study by Antunović (2006) provided preliminary insight into translation norms for television and print media in Croatia. In her article Antunović points out that, although there are evident regularities in that field, it is at present difficult to determine whether these regularities can be categorized as norms, or just “conventions, regular patterns” (2006: 28). In order to determine this with certainty, Antunović argues, it would be necessary to conduct more extensive research on the matter, as well as to elaborate on the notion of norms. It is our hope that the data from this study will contribute to, or at least inspire, future research into translation norms in Croatia.

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