

A COMPARATIVE AND DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS OF FILM TITLE TRANSLATIONS AND APPELLATIVE EFFECT TRANSFER INTO CROATIAN AND GERMAN

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Abstract

Studies of film title translations remain scant to this day. The existing studies mainly focus on investigating the sources of difficulties during the translation process. Although the studies employ different analytical approaches, the conclusion in almost all investigations is that the decisive objective during the translation process is the transfer or production of the appellative effect. This study investigates which strategies are employed during translation into Croatian and German and why, as well as possible diachronic changes in the choice of translation strategies. We created a corpus of 935 film titles from 1923 to 2017 and their translations into Croatian and German, which we first classified as direct translation, free translation, transcreation or transcription, and finally we quantitatively and qualitatively analysed the data. Our results show considerable differences between the two subcorpora in the choice of translation strategies and motivation, as well as in the patterns of diachronic change. Furthermore, correlations with specific cultural-historical processes are observed.

1. Introduction

Film titles have been understood as having a prominent role in one's perception, thus also in one's understanding, of a film. A title is defined as a paratext type, as are prefaces, postfaces, dedications, remarks and subheadings (Genette, 1989: 8–10). A paratext is an addition to the text which can have various functions, such as guiding the reader's interpretation. Titles are easily recognisable visually, as they normally precede the text; they are significantly shorter than the text itself, and

they are graphically pronounced (Iannelli 1998: 26). Šidiškytė and Tamulaitienė (2013: 71) assert that film titles are “the most salient and eye-catching part and would rightly deserve a more extensive and systematic linguistic research”. A title is thus given an important communicational role through which it mediates between the addressee of the text to which it belongs and the text it entitles (Peña-Cervel 2016: 305).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Functions of titles

During linguistic production, every sender performs a speech act that can be described in terms of several linguistic functions. In his organon model, Bühler (1934: 28) differentiates between three prominent functions of the linguistic sign: the representative function, which stands for a link between the linguistic sign and the referent in an extralinguistic reality, the expressive function, through which a link is formed between the realised message and the sender by transmitting the mental states of the sender, and the appellative function, which stimulates the addressee into action. All three functions are present during communication, and one of them always dominates. These linguistic functions, proposed by Bühler and Jakobson, have been successfully applied to titles in the field of translation studies.

Nord (1995: 264), for example, discriminates between three essential and three optional functions. The essential functions include the distinctive, the metatextual and the phatic function. The distinctive function relates to the uniqueness of the title in a particular culturally specific corpus. Iannelli (1998: 31) notes, however, that in some cases the expansion of the title is necessary for it to maintain its distinctive function. Thus sometimes titles of homonymous literary works such as *Satires* or *Novellas* need to include the name of the author or epoch, or some other name. Iannelli further mentions that titles of similar expression have been known to cause interference, such as with the titles of two works of Immanuel Kant *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* ‘critique of pure reason’ and *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* ‘critique of practical reason’.

Moreover, information about the genre is conveyed through Nord's metatextual function since it has been noted in translation research that the formation of titles and their translations depend on the genre's conventions of a particular market.

The phatic function enables the creation of the communication channel and also message consolidation (Nord 1995: 264; Katnić-Bakaršić 1999: 3). The phatic function of a title can have a prominent role even in the absence of the text, which is important for maintaining the consumer's interest in the product (Boucheri 2008: 30).

Optional functions include, according to Nord (1995), the referential, the expressive and the appellative function. The referential function refers to information directly transmitted through the title. The sender's mental states are relayed through the expressive function. It has been noted that specific lexical-semantic structures can enhance the expressive effect, such as diminutives, superlatives, verbs in the first person, lexemes with salient emotional connotations, possessive pronouns etc. (Nord 2011: 64). The appellative function encourages the addressee to act (Nord 2011: 62–3).

Most studies concerned with film title translation have noted that the appellative effect is given the foremost attention during title production and translation (Schubert 2004; Limon 2012; Peña-Cervel 2016; Surdyk and Urban 2016; Jutronic and Karabatic 2016). In the context of film titles and their translations, the appellative effect relates to the efforts aimed at encouraging as many people as possible to watch the film. It is therefore no wonder that film title translation has been associated with skopos theory (Schubert 2004: 240). Although relatively clear boundaries between specific linguistic functions, or rather effects, have been made above, it has also been proposed that virtually all linguistic functions of titles have the potential of enhancing the appellative effect (Leonardi 2011: 10). An increase in the metatextual effect, by for example adding genre key words, and in the expressive effect, by adding emotionally salient lexemes, has been correlated with an increase in the appellative effect (Leonardi 2011: 17). Some authors have even gone so far as to say that film title translation is nothing more than appellative effect

transfer (Schubert 2004: 241), while Jutronić and Karabatić (2016: 103) have equated film title translation strategies with marketing strategies.

2.2 *The process of film title translation*

The amount of shared knowledge about the process of film title translation has been modest at best. While it is clear that film texts are translated by professional translators, the role of the translator in film title translation seems to be quite tenuous. Studies of film title translations have not been particularly concerned with the translation process, although such information probably would shed some light on the apparent appellative behaviour of film title translations. Most studies claim that film titles are translated first and foremost, or even solely, by film distributors (Jutronić and Karabatić 2016: 103; Limon 2012: 8; Peña-Cervel 2016: 307). While sources of such information have mostly been unclear, Limon states that his knowledge about the translation process in Slovenia stems from conversations with four film distributors and the Slovenian public broadcaster *Radiotelevizija Slovenija*. Limon notes that cinema film titles are translated mostly by distributors, while the translation of film titles shown on television falls within the domain of the broadcaster. However, in some cases an already existing title translation is adopted, for example when the film text is based on a literary work (Limon 2012: 9). Šidiškytė and Tamulaitienė (2013: 75) have also observed that a title translation into one language can determine the translation into another language. The authors exemplify this with the film title *Arbitrage* (2012), which was translated into Lithuanian as *Apgaulinga aistra* 'deceptive passion' and into Russian as *Порочная страсть* 'vicious passion' whereby the authors assume that the Russian translation influenced the one made in Lithuania. A similar situation has been detected in Slovenian translations, where in a limited number of cases German translations seem to determine the final form of the title translation in Slovenian (Limon 2012: 9).

In order to examine the process of film title translation in Croatia and Germany we talked to Branimira Borčić Nemeč, head of the Translation Department at the Croatian Radio and Television (HRT), which is the Croatian national broadcasting

company, Henning Bochert, from the translation agency Bochert Translations in Berlin, and Timm Oberwelland, from the independent distribution company TOBIS Film GmbH in Berlin. We attempted to contact Croatian film distributors as well, but our calls were not returned. Borčić Nemeč states that translators at the Croatian Radio and Television are actively involved in title translation. The translator suggests potential title translations; however, the final translation is chosen by the editor of the film department. A language editor is also involved in the process. Borčić Nemeč notes that there are specific rules at the Croatian Radio and Television limiting possible translations. For example, foreign words are avoided when possible, normative accuracy is praised, while puns and wordplay are encouraged. Translators also seek to be as faithful to the original as possible and to maintain a connection to the film text. If a film title has already been translated, a translator may suggest a new translation if they have valid arguments. This is, however, typically not the case if a translation has been listed in the *Film Encyclopedia (Filmska enciklopedija; Peterlić 1986a; Peterlić 1986b)* published by the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography; such translations can only be modified in exceptional cases.

Bochert claims that, as a translator of feature films for Netflix, he has not wielded any influence on title translation, which is controlled by marketing. Bochert notes that before the 1980s film titles were mostly directly or freely translated, while today the original titles are often transcribed and adopted as translations. In addition, the strategy of using expanded titles – which includes a German addition alongside the original English title – is widely used in Germany. Bochert connects this strategy with advertising, considering the fact that title addition has the function of a slogan for the film, but it is also connected with, as he states, the tendency to create a balance between the great influence of English in Germany and the status of German as the official and national language. Given that foreign films are mostly dubbed, viewers do not find this strategy unusual because it is perceived as a minor intervention on the part of the translator from the perspective of the viewer when the film is already dubbed in its entirety. Bochert also mentions the role of film studios when choosing a translation strategy. Studios sometimes require that the title be left unchanged, which must be respected by the distributors and others who are involved. Wordplay is used in Germany, as it is by the Croatian Radio and

Television, whenever possible. A TV broadcaster in Germany may change an existing title translation, as is the case in Croatia, even if the film was already shown in cinemas. Bochert mentions the title of the film *The Astronaut's Wife* (Ravich 1999), which has two translations in Germany, one for the cinema (*Die Frau des Astronauten* 'the astronaut's wife') and another for television (*Die Frau des Astronauten – Das Böse hat ein neues Gesicht* 'the astronaut's wife – evil has a new face'). The first translation is a direct translation of the original, while the other has an addition alongside the direct translation of the original title. The title addition gives extra information about the genre and the plot of the film, thus fulfilling its advertising function, which is to attract a large number of viewers.

In order to determine how film distributors decide on the translation of a film title, we consulted Timm Oberwelland from the independent distribution company TOBIS Film GmbH based in Berlin. The company deals in the distribution of German and foreign films screened in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. The advertising department of the company, which includes no translators, decides on the translation of a film title, thus confirming the minor or even non-existent role of professional translators in the process of film title translation. Oberwelland explains that the company buys screening rights for films in duration from 15 to 20 years. The license is valid for screening films on all distribution channels: the cinema, television and the Internet. Each year they buy the rights for 15 films. The contract, which the company makes with film producers, determines all commercial aspects of the film on the new market: the film poster, the advertising budget and the film title, which means that the licensor must agree with the chosen poster and title. The distributors are also responsible for the subtitling and dubbing for the German market. This part of the work is done by translators employed as freelancers. Last year they translated titles using the transcreation strategy [e.g. *Viceroy's House* (2017) > *Der Stern von Indien* 'the star of India'], direct translation [e.g. *Paris Can Wait* (2016) > *Paris kann warten*] and transcription [e.g. *Bad Moms* (2016)].

The influence of the English language on the German market is related to social networks, through which the potential viewers often hear of a film for the first time and of its original title, which is usually in English. Therefore, distributors sometimes

decide to keep the original English title since its translation would be a bad marketing move, especially if it is a film featured in foreign and German media for winning a prestigious award. Oberwelland states the example of the film *12 Years a Slave* (2013), which was shown in Germany under the exact same title because the distributors thought that the appellative function was more powerful when using the original title.

The choice of a translation can also be influenced by the title translation of the literary work the film is based on. If a film is based on a book which was translated into German prior to the distribution of the book-based film, distributors will use the book's title translation as in the example of *P. S. I Love You* (2007), which was translated into German as *P. S. Ich liebe dich* 'P. S. I love you'.

When translating film titles, distributors seek to transfer and, if possible, amplify the appellative effect. Oberwelland thus mentions the film *The Last Word* (2017) where the title was not directly translated into German although this was possible; it was rather distributed under the title *Zu guter Letzt* 'at long last'. The decision to change the title was made because the direct translation would have the negative connotation of finality which creates the mental image of the ultimate piece in a sequence, whereas the German title translation has a more positive connotation since it only signifies the end of a well-rounded unit.

The advertising function of a title determines the success of a film on the market. Therefore, it can happen that a film is more successful on a foreign market than on its original market thanks to a more explicit title. This can be seen in the example of *A Little Chaos* (2014), which was commercially more successful on the German market. Oberwelland attributes this fact to the transcreation of the title into *Die Gärtnerin von Versailles* 'the gardener of Versailles' which expresses the film's plot more explicitly and strengthens the appellative effect of the title.

3. Approaches to the study of film title translation

Early studies concerned with titles mostly examined the titles of literary works, especially novels. Film titles were only sometimes taken into account, mostly to establish a comparative perspective. These studies compared literary works and film

titles with the titles of scientific papers (Bouchehri 2008: 33). Despite the early involvement of film titles in title research and the apparent progress in translation research in the last decades, studies of film title translations remain scant to this day (Peña-Cervel 2016: 307). Previous film title translation research can be divided into the Asian, primarily Chinese, and European geographical and cultural circles. Asian studies have mostly been interested in translation strategies of domestication and foreignisation (Yin 2009; Shi 2014; Mei 2010), while transliteration has been specifically addressed due to different writing systems used in the dominant source market, the United States (Beier et al. 1994: 5) and target markets (Yin 2009: 171–2). European studies have been chiefly engaged in detecting the sources of difficulties during the translation process (Leonardi 2011; Limon 2012; Berdis 2013; Šidiškytė and Tamulaitienė 2013; Jutronic and Karabatić 2016; Surdyk and Urban 2016). Limon (2012: 1–2), as well as Surdyk and Urban (2016: 153), cite repeated criticism of film and television show title translations by viewers as expressed on internet fora and similar platforms as a reason for embarking on film title translation research.

Almost all studies of film title translation analysed one source and one target language. Only Šidiškytė and Tamulaitienė (2013) conducted a comparative analysis of the translation of English comedy and thriller titles into Lithuanian and Russian, but found no significant differences. The only diachronic analysis we encountered was Schubert's (2004), in which he detected significant diachronic changes in the translation strategy choice for German translations of English film titles. In his corpus containing titles from 1944 to 2002, Schubert noted a dramatic increase in the number of transcriptions, which have been the first strategy choice since the 1964-1973 decade, after being only modestly represented in the 1944-1953 decade. This change is interpreted as resulting from globalisation effects and the immense effect of English on German (Schubert 2004: 257). Schubert's 2004 study is also the only notable study involving German film title translations, while Jutronic and Karabatić (2016) remain the only study with Croatian film title translations. Jutronic and Karabatić (2016: 101–2) concluded in their study that the appellative effect serves as the primary motive during the process of title translation. Negro Alousque (2015) and Peña-Cervel (2016) conducted cognitive analyses of film title

translations. However, the methodology and interpretations in the studies seem somewhat controversial.

Methodologically, most studies have relied on a classification of translation strategies developed on the basis of different types of manipulation of lexical-semantic structures of the original title during the translation process. Schubert (2004) used the most detailed classification, which we used in our own analysis in a slightly modified form. Our modified classification includes the following translation strategies:

1. *Direct translation* [e.g. *The Sixth Sense* (1999) > Cr. *Šesto čulo*] is semantically similar to the original. A direct translation is a sign that the translator of the title did not encounter cultural and/or specific linguistic difficulties (Schubert 2004: 242). However, certain connotations have been known to get lost in a direct translation due to cultural and/or specific linguistic differences between the source and target languages. Schubert exemplifies this with the translation of the title *The Color of Money* (1986) into German (*Die Farbe des Geldes*) where the colour green marking the currency of the source market is invoked in the original title, but no such connections are elicited in the German translation. It is clear that the definition of direct translation is highly dependent on the particular semantic theory used in defining the concept. Direct translations were often not the focal point of film title translation studies, as most studies were preoccupied with the sources of difficulties in the translation process.
2. *Free translation* is a translation which has survived specific modifications, but has retained some semantic equivalence. Modifications taken into account in this study include addition, subtraction, substitution and shift.
 - a. *Addition* [e.g. *Dawn of the Dead* (2004) > Cr. *Zora živih mrtvaca* 'dawn of the living dead'] is an enlargement of the original title during the translation process by joining new lexical-semantic structures. Several studies analysing different languages noted that specific lexical-semantic structures were systematically included in additions such as

emotionally salient lexemes and proper nouns (Leonardi 2011: 14; Schubert 2004: 245).

- b. *Subtraction* [e.g. *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex * But Were Afraid to Ask* (1972) > Cr. *Sve što ste željeli znati o seksu* 'everything you wanted to know about sex'] is a partial removal of lexical-semantic structures during the translation process. Studies have noted that at least some subtraction cases are encouraged by exceedingly long titles, such as *Who Is Harry Kellerman and Why Is He Saying Those Terrible Things About Me?* (1971), which was translated into German as *Wer ist Harry Kellerman?* 'who is Harry Kellerman' (Schubert 2004: 242–3).
- c. *Shift* [e.g. *To Catch a Thief* (1955) > *Uhvatite lopova* 'catch_{IMP 2. PL} the thief'] is defined as a change of morphosyntactic structures during the translation process (Schubert, 2004: 243; cf. Catford 1965: 76). Schubert (2004: 244) suggests that shifts in translations into German obscure the meaning of the title in some cases, thus enabling multiple interpretations, which presumably intensifies the appellative effect of the translation. However, his idea is arguable. Another observation was an increase in dynamics through the conversion of a nominal phrase into a verbal one, e.g. *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986) > Ge. *Ferris macht blau* 'Ferris skips school'.
- d. *Substitution* [e.g. *House on Haunted Hill* (1959) > Cr. *Kuća straha* 'house of fear'] includes a swap of lexical-semantic structures while morphosyntactic relations to other structures of the title remain relatively intact. Since in our preliminary analysis we found that morphosyntactic structures often experience at least some change when undergoing substitution, substitution is here defined more loosely compared to other translation strategies and could therefore be easily understood as a combination of addition and subtraction. Studies have indicated that specific lexical-semantic structures take the role of substitutes, such as highly concrete and emotionally salient lexemes

which, as in addition, supposedly reinforce the appellative effect (Schubert 2004: 243).

3. *Transcreation* [e.g. *American Beauty* (1999) > Cr. *Vrtlog života* 'vortex of life'] is a complete replacement of lexical-semantic structures during the translation process, which results in zero linguistic equivalence. Translation research has differentiated between obligatory and optional transcreations, depending on potential cultural and/or linguistic difficulties during the translation process (Limon 2012: 6; Schubert 2004: 246). Problematic cases include idiomatic expressions and titles with multiple possible interpretations. Studies analysing Slovenian and German title translations have interpreted transcreation as, among other, a means of explication (Limon 2012: 4; Schubert 2004: 246–8). Limon concluded in his study that 41.3% of free translations and transcreations in his corpus included changes in the original title for the purposes of explication in order to more clearly convey the genre of the film and thus to target the appropriate audience. Schubert has suggested that a great deal of German transcretions show a tendency for personalisation, e.g. *First Blood* (1982) > Ge. *Rambo* 'proper name', or include emotionally salient lexemes. It is a general agreement that transcreations are mainly due to intentions of enhancing the appellative effect (Surdyk and Urban 2016: 168).
4. *Transcription* – Transcription is a strategy whereby exact lexical-semantic structures from the original title are retained, with possible modifications. Jutronić and Karabatić (2015: 87) found a considerable amount of transcriptions in their analysis of Croatian translations and linked this phenomenon to the high degree of prestige that English has among Croatian speakers.
 - a. *Complete transcription* [e.g. *Spider-Man* (2002) > Cr. *Spider-Man* 'proper name'] indicates the identity in expression between the original title and the translation. Studies have shown that this is often the case with original titles consisting of only proper nouns (Schubert 2004: 251–3). However, complete transcriptions have been known to lose phonetic associations, as is the case in *Major Payne* (1995), which was

transcribed into Slovenian, thus eliminating the association caused by the homophonic expressions *Payne* and *pain*, both [peɪn] (Limon 2012: 2).

- b. *Additions* [e.g. *Octopussy* (1983) > Ge. *James Bond: Octopussy*] mostly include subheadings, as noted by Schubert (2004: 249-51). While some subheadings have the role of explication, some are “semantically relatively empty”¹. According to Schubert, such “nonsense titles” still deliver an increase to the appellative effect and are found first and foremost in mainstream comedies.
- c. *Subtraction* [e.g. *The Karate Kid* (1984) > Cr. *Karate Kid*] is rarely found among transcriptions (Schubert 2004: 251).
- d. *Substitution* [e.g. *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest* (2006) > *Pirates of the Caribbean – Fluch der Karibik 2* ‘curse of the Caribbean 2’] is equally rare (Ibid.).

During the analysis we established that some film title translations did not fit any of our proposed translation strategies. We were therefore compelled to expand our classification. The mixed type of free translation was added, characterised by two or more subtypes of modifications. Furthermore, combinations of translation, either direct or free, and transcription were detected, but remained quantitatively very limited and were consequently excluded from the qualitative analysis.

For the diagrams, please see Appendix 2.

4. Aims and hypotheses

The aim of this study was to analyse strategies employed in film title translation into Croatian and German and to discern specific strategies employed in the appellative effect transfer. This would allow us to detect valuable research points which could be pursued in future studies to increase our understanding of the film title translation process.

¹ “Semantisch relativ leer” (translated by the authors).

We hypothesised that the Croatian and German film title translations would show quantitative differences in the choice of translation strategies. We further hypothesised that diachronic changes would be detected in both subcorpora and that the two subcorpora would show some similarities in the change of diachronic patterns due to globalisation effects and that the patterns could be correlated with specific cultural-historical processes. In addition, we hypothesised that most of the recognised patterns in the analysis could be explained with the help of the appellative effect transfer.

5. Methodology

We manually created a corpus consisting of 935 original film titles in various languages and their 915 Croatian and 914 German translations. The full corpus is available in Appendix 1. We focused on a timeframe from 1923 and 2017. The selected timeframe was segmented into 10-year periods, enabling us to calculate the proportion of particular translation strategies for each period. For each year, 10 original film titles with the highest number of votes were included in the corpus. We used this criterion in order to analyse the appellative effect transfer, as we assumed that the number of votes would correlate with the number of viewings of a film. Not all film titles had both the Croatian and German translation. Furthermore, some original titles were already in German. There were no original titles in Croatian. Every title was translated into at least one of the analysed target languages. Original titles were mostly in English, as was the case in all studies dealing with film title translation we reviewed (Schubert 2004; Mei 2010; Leonardi 2011; Limon 2012; Berdis 2013; Šidiškytė and Tamulaitienė 2013; Negro Alousque 2015; Jutronić and Karabatić 2016; Surdyk and Urban 2016; Peña-Cervel 2016). Other source languages in our study include, in order of frequency, French (30), Italian (15), German (15), Japanese (14), Russian (6), Swedish (4), Spanish (3), Latin (1), Korean (1), Portuguese (1) and Danish (1). Original titles were obtained from the website IMDb (Internet Movie Database; *imdb.com*), an online database offering

relevant information on films, television shows and video games². IMDb was used in corpus building by other relevant studies as well (Schubert 2004; Berdis 2013; Surdyk and Urban 2016; Peña-Cervel 2016).

Most title translations into Croatian were gathered from the online edition of the *Film Lexicon (Filmski leksikon; Kragić and Gilić 2003)* published by the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography (*film.lzmk.hr*) and the websites *filmski.net*, *mojtv.hr*, *moj-film.hr* and *blitz-cinestar.hr*. Two of these websites, *mojtv.hr* and *moj-film.hr*, were used by Jutronic and Karabatic (2016) in their study as well. Translations into German were retrieved from the websites *moviepilot.de* and *cineplex.de*. In some cases, during our preliminary analysis, we encountered German translations specific for the Swiss and Austrian markets. These title translations were excluded from the analysis. We were presented with a similar situation in the Croatian subcorpus where we came upon Croatian translations specific for the Bosnian market. These translations were excluded as well. Thus we could focus specifically on the Croatian and German markets.

The first step in the corpus analysis was to classify the film title translations according to specific strategies found in our classification presented earlier (Section 3). The data was quantitatively and qualitatively analysed for each target language separately and then compared.

In our diachronic analysis, we calculated the proportion of particular translation strategies for each 10-year period from 1923 to 2017. Since we wanted to offer a preliminary explanation for potential diachronic changes, we compared the temporal perspective of some diachronic changes with the timeline of relevant cultural-historical processes that presumably had global influence. Special attention was given to processes occurring in the American film industry, or Hollywood, as that was the source of most of the analysed film titles. Hollywood became a notable place in the global film industry during and immediately after World War II. At this time the European film industry came to a halt, enabling Hollywood's domination of the industry. However, at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s,

² Surdyk and Urban (2016: 157) describe IMDb as "the world's most popular and authoritative source for movie, TV and celebrity content".

Hollywood entered a period of stagnation (Peterlić 1986: 557). During that time there was also a reduction in the number of cinemas in Germany (Lorenzo 2015: 109). From the 1960s to the 1980s the so-called era of New Hollywood began, characterised by the strengthening of the director's artistic role; at the same time the major film studios engaged primarily in film distribution and global marketing (Peterlić 1986: 535). A distinction is made between early New Hollywood, also called Hollywood Renaissance, which ended in the second half of the 1970s, and the Late New Hollywood (Kokonis 2008: 171). In the 1990s multiplex cinemas came to the forefront, which shifted the focus to massive film projections through which the number of cinema goers drastically increased, both in the US and in Germany (Lorenzo 2015: 110).

6. Results and discussion

6.1 Comparative analysis

In most cases (60.1%) film titles were directly translated into Croatian. Direct translation was followed by free translation (17%) and transcription (15.5%). Transcreation was represented by 6.7% of the title translations, while combinations of a translation and transcription were scarce (0.8%). Film titles were chiefly transcribed into German (39.7%), while direct translation was also considerably represented (25.4%). These were followed relatively closely by transcreation (17%) and free translation (16.8%). Combinations of a translation and transcription were, similarly to the Croatian subcorpus, limited to 1%.

6.1.1 Direct translation

Direct translation was considerably more represented in the Croatian subcorpus than in the German one. Some original titles in our corpora were directly translated although there were clear cultural and/or linguistic difficulties in the translation process. For example, the film title *V for Vendetta* (2005) was directly translated into Croatian as *O za osvetu* even though the grapheme *V* is a relevant visual motive in the film. Furthermore, we observed direct translations that were identical to the

translation of a literary title on which the plot of the film was based, e.g. *War of the Worlds* (2005) > *Rat svjetova*. However, it is difficult to assess whether the title was translated anew or if the previous translation of a literary title was adopted. Nevertheless, it could be presumed that the adoption of an already existing translation could add to the appellative effect of the translation through the serial effect, which is “the consumer’s belief that new products from the same group have a constantly high quality”³ (Schubert 2004: 247).

6.1.2 Free translation

Free translation as a whole was present in similar proportions in both subcorpora. Croatian free translations were led by shifts (29.9%), which were closely followed by substitutions (26.8%) and additions (21.7%). Subtraction and the mixed type appeared in slightly lower proportions, 13.4% and 8.3% respectively. German translations were dominated by substitutions (36.4%), which were followed by shifts (18.8%), subtractions (17.5%), additions (16.2%) and the mixed type (11%). Subtle differences between the two markets are observable.

When it comes to additions, there were some differences between the two subcorpora. A closer look at additions in the Croatian subcorpus reveals that in most cases the motivation for additions can be discerned. In 32.4% of the cases there is a tendency of enhancing the serial effect by adding lexical-semantic structures indicating that the film is part of a series, e.g. *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974) > Cr. *James Bond 007: Čovjek sa zlatnim pištoljem*. Interestingly, most of the serial markers include character names. Addition seems also to have served as a means of explication, at least in 23.5% cases, e.g. *Airplane!* (1980) > Cr. *Ima li pilota u avionu* ‘is there a pilot on the plane’. Sometimes keywords for the explication of a genre were also involved, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) > Cr. *Zora živih mrtvaca* ‘dawn of the living dead’. The addition of emotionally salient lexemes was discovered in only four cases (11.8%) and included in two instances the abstract lexeme DEATH, a diminutive and an attribute. As was the case with the Croatian subcorpus, German

³ “Dem Glauben der Konsument(inn)en, dass neue Produkte aus derselben Gruppe eine konstant hohe Qualität aufweisen” (translated by the authors).

additions had the role of creating the serial effect (in 37.5% of the cases), e.g. *Sons of the Desert* (1933) > Ge. *Laurel und Hardy: Die Wüstensöhne* 'Laurel and Hardy: the desert sons'. The proportion of emotionally salient lexemes was somewhat higher in the German subcorpus, with 25% of the translations which were mostly expanded with the use of attributes. In four cases (16.7%) character names were introduced to the title, without having the purpose of achieving the serial effect, e.g. *The Martian* (2015) > Ge. *Der Marsianer – Rettet Mark Watney* 'the Martian – save Mark Watney'. There were no such cases in the Croatian subcorpus.

Regarding addition, we also observed that in both subcorpora most additions include series markers and, interestingly, their proportions are comparable. This suggests that original titles of films belonging to a series which are not marked as such are similarly treated both in Croatia and in Germany. Contrary to these similar trends in the process of marking the affiliation to a series, there were no cases of explication in the German subcorpus, while this motivation was highly represented in the Croatian subcorpus. Moderate differences were present in the proportions of emotionally salient lexemes, the higher proportion being found in the German subcorpus. Personalisation was modestly present only in the German subcorpus. Although it is difficult to judge which of the motivations would produce a greater appellative effect, these results possibly suggest that the orientation towards a more powerful appellative effect was more present during the translation process into German than into Croatian.

Subtraction was present in similar proportions in both subcorpora. In the Croatian subcorpus, 38.1% of the subtractions excluded a redundant series marker. In all of these cases, original titles include either the marker *part* or *episode* (which incidentally only appears in titles of the *Star Wars* film series). One example is *The Hangover Part II* (2011) > *Mamurluk 2* 'hangover 2'. Subtraction resulting from the shortening of an exceedingly long title was also present in 38.1% of the cases. In most cases (75%) the subheading was lost, e.g. *The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad!* (1988) > *Goli pištolj* 'naked gun'. In the German subcorpus, the shortening of an exceedingly long title was present in 25.9% of the cases, e.g. *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog* (1927) > *Der Mieter* 'the lodger'. There were

some cases (14.8%) of a redundant marker exclusion, e.g. *The Godfather: Part III* (1990) > *Der Pate 3* 'the godfather 3'. Apart from a single case when an already existing literary title translation was adopted, motivations for all other subtractions in the German subcorpus remain unclear. While the obvious trend in the Croatian subcorpus was to shorten long original titles, possibly to allow greater clarity, the percentage of shortening was considerably lower in the German subcorpus.

The proportions of shifts show moderate differences between the two subcorpora. What is perhaps more notable is that shifts and substitutions appear in similar proportions in the Croatian subcorpus, while their proportions are rather different in the German subcorpus, where substitutions are favoured over shifts. Initially one might assume that a higher proportion of shifts in the Croatian subcorpus can be explained by greater morphosyntactic differences between Croatian and English as the prevailing source text, as opposed to German and English. However, a closer look shows that only 12.8% of the shifts in the Croatian subcorpus can be interpreted as interventions due to morphosyntactic differences between the source languages and Croatian, e.g. *He Who Gets Slapped* (1924) > *Onaj kojega su tresnuli* 'the one who they slapped', where the passive construction was hard to transmit. There were three cases (6.3%) of salient emotional connotations resulting from a shift. For example, in *The Thin Man* (1934) > *Mršavko* 'thin-suffix', instead of a lexeme equivalent to MAN, the suffix *-ko* is inserted which nominalises the adjective, denotes a person and functions as a hypocoristic (Barić et al., 2005: 329). Only two cases (4.2%) of explication were detected, e.g. *Roman Holiday* (1953) > *Praznik u Rimu* 'holiday in Rome'. Remarkably, motivation in other cases remains enigmatic. In the German subcorpus, 20.7% of the shifts were due to morphosyntactic differences between the languages, e.g. *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) > *Edward mit den Scherenhänden* 'Edward with the scissor hands'. Yet other cases of shifts continue to be unclear. Although for reasons of linguistic typology one might expect a higher proportion of shifts in the Croatian subcorpus than in the German one, they are actually similar and slightly more substantial in the German subcorpus. It would appear that, when encountering difficulties due to the morphosyntactic differences between the source and target languages, translation strategies other than shifts are implemented in the translation process. Although the

proportion of explication was very low in the Croatian subcorpus, it seems rather indicative that there were yet again no explication cases in the German subcorpus.

Substitutions were moderately more numerous in the German subcorpus compared to the Croatian one. Once again most changes were made with unclear motivation. Both explication and interventions due to linguistic differences were modestly present at 14.3% in the Croatian subcorpus. An example with a clear difficulty was the original title *(500) Days of Summer* (2009) which was translated into Croatian as *(500) dana ljubavi* '(500) days of love'. The difficulty was caused by the homonymy between the English lexeme SUMMER and the character name *Summer*, which was impossible to convey in the translation. Five cases (11.9%) included emotionally salient lexemes as substitutes, e.g. *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* (1994) > *Ace Ventura: Šašavi detektiv* 'Ace Ventura: the wacky detective'. Most other cases of substitution remain vaguely motivated. Substitution was the most common subtype of the free translation strategy in the German subcorpus. Although motivation is unclear in most cases, first explication cases were detected in the German subcorpus, but they were present in only 9.1% cases. Substitutes in most interpretable cases were emotionally salient lexemes (23.6%), e.g. *Our Hospitality* (1923) > *Verflixte Gastfreundschaft* 'darned hospitality'. Clear differences are noticeable between the two subcorpora. While in the Croatian subcorpus substitution had a role in the translinguistic reconciliation, no such aspect was detected in the German subcorpus. Yet again there were moderate differences in the proportion of emotional connotations, which were more substantial in the German subcorpus.

Free translation of the mixed type was modestly represented in both subcorpora. No systematic data was found in the analysis regarding free translation of the mixed type.

6.1.3 Transcreation

The proportion of transcreation showed mild differences between the two subcorpora, with the German subcorpus containing more instances of this strategy. In the Croatian subcorpus, 21.3% of the transcreations facilitated explication, e.g. *Now You See Me* (2013) > *Majstori iluzije* 'masters of illusion'. In 13.1% of the cases

emotionally salient lexemes were added during the transcreation process. Most other cases are without a clear interpretation. In the German subcorpus, a large number of transcreations did not have a clear interpretation either. In 9.3% of the cases an emotional connotation was introduced. In most of the cases the lexemes served for the explication of the genre, for example in *White Heat* (1949) > *Sprung in den Tod* 'the jump into death' where the translation suggests a thriller. In 7.4% of the cases a proper noun was inserted during the transcreation process, e.g. *The Most Dangerous Game* (1932) > *Graf Zaroff – Genie des Bösen* 'count Zaroff – genius of evil'. There were few cases of explication in the German subcorpus, making the proportion of such interventions in the Croatian subcorpus noticeably higher than in the German one. The proportion of lexemes with salient emotional connotations was similar in both subcorpora.

6.1.4 Transcription

There were pronounced differences in the proportion of transcription between the two subcorpora. While transcription was only modestly represented in the Croatian subcorpus, it was the primary choice in the German one. Croatian transcription was dominated by complete transcription (88.1%), which was followed by subtraction (9.8%) and addition (2.1%). The latter strategy was represented by only three cases in the entire subcorpus. German transcription was also led by complete transcription (69.3%), but included considerably more additions, which took the second position (24.3%). Subtraction was found in 5% of the cases. In the German subcorpus, substitutions were found in only four cases, and there was a single shift. Considerable differences are, therefore, noticeable in the proportions of complete transcription and addition between the two subcorpora. The fact that the German subcorpus contained substitutions and a shift, which were not represented in the Croatian subcorpus, and the fact that most original titles from the corpus were in English, suggests that English lexical-semantic structures are more acceptable when translating into German than into Croatian. However, the proportion of both translation strategies remain very low, calling for further arguments for this kind of interpretation.

The proportion of complete transcriptions was significantly higher in the Croatian subcorpus compared to the German one. Most complete transcriptions in the Croatian subcorpus were transcriptions of proper nouns (83.3%), e.g. *Mary Poppins* (1964). In 13.3% of the cases proper nouns included compound proper nouns such as *Iron Man* or *Spider-Man*. There were six cases (4.8%) of transcription in which there were either no clear lexical-semantic structures, e.g. *THX 1138* (1971), or the source language was ambiguous, e.g. *Ex Machina* (2015). There was one case of number transcription (0.8%), namely *300* (2006). Other cases of transcription have no clear motivation, but were quantitatively marginal. Contrary to the high proportion of clearly motivated complete transcriptions in the Croatian subcorpus, only 29.6% of the complete transcriptions in the German subcorpus are transcriptions of proper nouns. Cases similar to and including *THX 1138* and *Ex Machina* were found to constitute 2.4%. The same case of number transcription was also found in the German subcorpus. Therefore, while 88.9% of the complete transcriptions in the Croatian subcorpus are clearly motivated, only 32.4% of the complete transcriptions in the German subcorpus fall into that category.

There were considerably more additions in the German subcorpus compared to the Croatian one, in which only three cases of such interventions were found. Two of these included serial markers, e.g. *Octopussy* (1973) > *James Bond: Octopussy*. Almost all cases of addition in the German subcorpus involved the insertion of subheadings (94.3%), with only five titles remaining without a subheading. In 28.4% of the cases, additions involved lexemes with salient emotional connotations. As many as 68% of these cases had the purpose of genre explication, e.g. *Halloween II* (1981) > *Halloween II – Das Grauen kehrt zurück* 'Halloween II – the horror returns'. Although a preliminary visual examination suggests that most of the subheaded transcriptions are nonsense subheadings, one group that stands out is comprised of combinations of a complete transcription and a direct translation. Eleven such cases (12.5%) were found, e.g. *The King's Speech* (2010) > *The King's Speech – Die Rede des Königs* 'the king's speech – the speech of the king'. There were limited amounts of explication and cases where series markers were used.

Subtraction was found in similar proportions in both subcorpora. However, depending on the theoretical classification one wishes to pursue, it would seem appropriate to count a large proportion of subtractions in both subcorpora as complete transcriptions. In the German subcorpus, for instance, 77.8% of the cases are exclusions of the initial definite article, e.g. *The Karate Kid* (1984) > *Karate Kid*. This was the case in 57.1% of the cases in the Croatian subcorpus. Additionally there were three cases (21.4%) of the exclusion of subheadings and three cases of the exclusion of redundant series markers in the Croatian subcorpus. In the German subcorpus, beside the initial definite article exclusion, in one case a subheading was excluded and in another a redundant series marker. Two cases had no clear motivation, e.g. *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012) > *Silver Linings*.

Substitutions and shifts were not found in the Croatian subcorpus, as already mentioned above. Four of the five cases in the German subcorpus include titles of films belonging to a series, the earliest being from 2006. The remaining translation is a fairly peculiar case of substitution: *The Addams Family* (1991) > *Die Addams Family* 'the Addams family'.

Translations in the German subcorpus systematically show lower proportions of explication compared to the Croatian subcorpus. Conversely, proportions of emotionally salient lexemes were higher in essentially all translation strategies investigated in our study. What is more, motivation for most modifications, when it comes to both free translation and transcription, was unclear in considerably more cases in the German subcorpus than was the case in the Croatian one. All this, along with the observed considerable differences in the diversity of transcriptions, suggests that the process of translation into German was much more modulated by the appellative effect transfer and increase, also allowing more room for the original appellative effect of English lexical-semantic structures. Because there were substantially more cases of explication and fewer cases of unmotivated transcription and transcription in the Croatian subcorpus, clarity of title translation seems to be the central motivation in most cases. This interpretation is also supported by the fact that nonsense title transcriptions or nonsense subheadings were hard to find in the Croatian subcorpus, while they were abundant in the German one.

6.2 *Diachronic analysis*

In the first examined decade, between 1928 and 1937, the Croatian subcorpus was greatly dominated by direct translations (78.5%). Free translation and transcription appeared in much lower proportions (8.6% and 7.5% respectively). Transcreation and combinations of a translation and transcription (CTT) show marginal results. For the next several decades, moderate or in some cases slight fluctuations in the proportions of direct translation, free translation and transcription can be observed. Transcreation remained peripheral while CTTs were non-existent until 2006. In the 1978-1987 decade, a pronounced drop in direct translation was observed, from 73.7% in the previous decade to 49%. Comparing those two decades, we further found a substantial increase in free translation, from 6.3% to 22.4%, and a moderate increase in transcription, from 15.8% to 21.4%. Most of the transcriptions from this decade involved proper nouns, which suggests that this increase is mostly or solely due to sampling bias. Free translations, however, do not show any clear cause from the translator's point of view, as there were virtually no interventions due to linguistic differences between the source languages and Croatian. In the next decades no significant diachronic changes were detected. Free translation retained a higher proportion, constantly around 20%. Direct translation remained steady (around 50%). Transcription regularly constituted 20% after the end of the 1988-1997 decade. Transcreation gradually increased after the 1948-1957 decade to a modest proportion, regularly just below 10%. Diachronically, the most substantial changes were found in the proportion of direct translation, which dropped around 30% from the onset of our timeline. This was mostly picked up by free translation, which showed a moderate increase at one point and has remained at a similar level until present. Transcription recorded a moderate increase compared to the first decade, but the fluctuations observable from the second decade already showed values similar to the present ones. This led to the final decade still being dominated by direct translation (46.5%), followed by transcription (21.8%), free translation (18.8%), transcreation (8.9%) and CTTs (4%).

In the first examined decade, between 1928 and 1937, direct translation was the first strategy choice in the German subcorpus, with 44.4%. Other translation

strategies shared similar proportions: transcreation 21.1%, transcription 17.8% and free translation 16.7%. The next two decades showed mild increases in transcreation and free translation, combined with a moderate decrease in direct translation. In the 1958-1967 decade, fluctuations are apparent in all strategies, while transcription recorded its first moderate increase. This increase gradually gained ground and exploded in the 1978-1987 decade, when transcription became the first choice translation strategy, making up 54.7% of the cases. Consequently, all other translation strategies recorded moderate or substantial drops. Direct translation went from 40.6% in the 1958-1967 decade to 16.2% in the following decade. The trends have continued with limited fluctuations until today, when transcription is the predominant strategy (75.2%), followed by direct translation (8.9%), free translation (7.9%), transcreation (5.9%) and CTT (2%). The last decade recorded only a moderate decline in free translation.

Diachronic differences and similarities can be observed between the two subcorpora. In both subcorpora we observed prominent decreases in direct translation. In the Croatian subcorpus, there was a pronounced drop in the 1978-1987 decade, while the German subcorpus recorded a similar drop in the 1958-1967 decade and a subsequent gradual decline in the periods approaching the last decade. It is, however, not clear why the observed change showed different temporal values. The gradual decline was probably a consequence of a steady rise in transcription. What is more, a similar gradual decline was recorded in free translation and transcreation as well. In the Croatian subcorpus, moderate changes were observed with regard to free translation, which does not seem to be a product of sampling bias.

Although not many major diachronic changes were detected in our analysis, we can still make some connections to specific cultural-historical processes. According to the general timeline presented in Section 5, the major decline in direct translation observable in the German subcorpus seems to correlate with the onset of New Hollywood, which was characterised by a shift in the focus of major film studios from the artistic control of the movie production to the distribution of the film and its success on the global market. That is also the time when fluctuations in all

translation strategies appear in the German subcorpus, suggesting that cultural-historical changes influenced the process of film title translation. It also possibly suggests that there was a period of adjustment, since steady proportions of particular translation strategies emerged only later. However, sampling bias should be taken as a possibly influential factor. The explosion of transcription in the 1978-1987 decade can be correlated to advances in Hollywood's power during the later phases of New Hollywood. However, causal links remain unclear, probably due to the quite general outline of cultural-historical processes we used in our analysis. In the same decade that transcription ballooned in the German subcorpus, the Croatian subcorpus experienced a substantial decrease in direct translation and a moderate increase in free translation. These results imply that there were notable connections between cultural-historical processes in the 1980s, and possibly sooner, and diachronic changes in film title translation. Because film title translators are more focused on the appellative effect at present, it is possible that free translation and transcription, in the Croatian and German subcorpora respectively, were those translation strategies that were mostly associated with the appellative effect transfer.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of our corpus consisting of 935 film titles between 1923 and 2017 and their translations into Croatian and German yielded considerable quantitative and qualitative differences in translation strategy choices and their motivation between the two subcorpora. The most notable differences have to do with the proportion of direct translation, which was lower in the German subcorpus from the start of our timeline, but further experienced substantial drops, and which was not as pronounced in the Croatian subcorpus. Differences in diachronic patterns were observed as well, but clear interpretations of temporal differences are more difficult to make. Almost all non-direct translation strategies were characterised as increasing or maintaining the appellative effect of the title. Furthermore, correlations with specific cultural-historical processes, although extremely general, were observed. Sampling bias was a serious threat to our proposed interpretation. We

conclude that further research with bigger samples is needed to clarify the diachronic perspective.

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