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TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH FEATURE FILM TITLES IN CROATIAN

Abstract

This paper explores the challenges posed by English film titles and the translation strategies used to adapt them for the Croatian-speaking audience. The corpus consisted of 190 feature-length English-language film titles and their corresponding Croatian translations. They were then grouped according to the source-language challenges (puns and double meaning, character references, cultural references and idioms, ambiguity, wordplay by means of embedding the sequel number in the title, and intertextuality) and target-language strategies (using keywords indicative of the film genre or plot, proverbs, expanding the original meaning or making it more explicit, introducing intertextuality, partially translating the titles, and retaining only part of the original meaning). The analysis shows that while a part of the target-language titles in the corpus aim to familiarize the target-language audience with source-language structure and culture-bound elements, extra-linguistic factors affect the translation in over half of the instances. This points to the use of film titles as marketing devices.

Key words: film titles, translation, Croatian, English, marketing strategies

1. Introduction

The title can have a profound effect on potential viewers' attitudes towards a film or TV show and can be considered as part of the marketing process, which is why various external factors need to be taken into consideration when translating film titles. Furthermore, the translation of titles is usually governed by the film distributor(s) and subtitle translators frequently cannot affect the process (Kovačić 2009 and Marinović 2014). As a result, target-language (TL) film titles can sound misleading or inaccurate to the audience, and they frequently contain clichés. The first part of this paper contains a short overview of the conceptual framework, whereas the second part presents the results of the analysis that was conducted and the conclusions that can be drawn from it.

2. The conceptual framework

Simply put, a title provides the name by means of which a work can be identified. Leo Hoek, one of the founders of modern titology (the field of study dealing with the analysis of titles), holds that the title is »an artificial object, an artifact of reception or of commentary« that is arbitrarily separated from the title page or cover by readers, critics etc. (Genette 1997: 55–56). Although this refers to literary titles, film titles can be regarded in the same way: as more or less complex wholes that are intertwined with the identity of their respective films.

In addition to providing the name to be used in referring to the film, the film title performs a multitude of possible roles. It may convey the genre of the film, point to its franchise if it is a sequel, identify the film as either serious or a spoof, outline certain elements or plot events, provide an indication of the era or location in which the film takes place, draw attention to the underlying theme, and so on (Zborowski 2007). All of these can influence the potential viewer's decision to watch a film.

Due to the exposure of film titles in the media, »an evocative title can be the most effective single element of creative material in a broad marketing program« (Marich 2013: 37). Some of the creative strategies used by marketers and distributors are coming up with intriguing one-word (e.g. *Ratatouille*, *Avatar*, *Enchanted*) or two-word titles (*Finding Nemo*, *Little Fockers*), and communicating the film genre (e.g. *There's Something about Mary*). However, titles indicative of the plot should not be overly revealing (e.g. summarizing the whole plot and leaving nothing to the imagination), because potential viewers might be dissuaded from watching the film if they feel the story sounds too familiar or repetitive (Marich 2013: 38).

Whereas some titles seem inoffensive in the domestic market, they might nevertheless have negative connotations in other countries. This occasionally leads to such titles being altered for the foreign audience so that the negative associations are averted, as was the case of *Captain America: The First Avenger* – which was released as *The First Avenger* in some overseas countries (Marich 2013: 38).

The strategies used to translate film titles depend upon the type of equivalence relation that is to be achieved, namely linguistic, semantic or functional. This may explain why some titles are left in the source language (with or without the addition of a TL tag to clarify the meaning) while others are translated literally or changed altogether (Leonardi 2011: 181).

Language-play, allusion, cultural references, alliteration and rhyming are the most common challenges that appear in film title translation, as is the case with subtitles. Unlike TL subtitles (that match the original dialogue in form and meaning as much as possible), TL film titles can frequently differ from the SL ones. Aranda identifies the following types of film title translations: creative, expanded, commercialized, naturalized, romanticized, dramatized, exaggerated, provocative, and moralizing (Aranda 2007: 45–46).

Finally, there is the issue of the film title's nature as a *translation*. The TL titles that constitute literal equivalents of their SL counterparts are, without doubt, translations – but what of the titles that were altered beyond recognition in the TL? According to Leonardi, they are cases of functional (as opposed to linguistic or semantic) equivalence (Leonardi 2011: 185), as both titles fulfil the same function in their respective cultures (Viezzi 2004 in Leonardi 2001: 185).

It is precisely because of this that a film title can still be considered as a translation

even if it does not adhere to the language structure of the original. It can be said that translation comprises a TL reproduction of »the closest natural equivalence of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style« (Nida and Taber 1969 in Leonardi 2011: 185). This is necessary if the film is to appeal to the TL audience. One of the functions of the translation of film titles is, therefore, to present the target audience with appropriate language structures and cultural references that evoke in the TL audience an effect similar to the effect of the SL title on the SL audience (Leonardi 2011: 185).

In other words, successful film title translation »involves recreating in the TL text those features of the SL text which enable the latter to function for the purpose envisaged by the author of the original text« (Dyrel 2010: 189). Other than reflecting the contents of the film or complementing the plot in some way (e.g. by presenting the viewer with language-play or intentional ambiguity), the film title serves the purpose of pitching the film to the target audience.

A subtitle translator will translate the subtitles to a film to the best of their ability, striving to both preserve the meaning of the original dialogue lines and present the meaning to the TL audience. Subtitles are meant to foster the viewer's understanding of the on-screen narrative, which requires them to be accurate. The primary purpose of the title, however, is to attract viewers. Titles in general serve the purpose of establishing communication with the audience, and both the title and its translation are meant to fulfil the expectations of their respective readers or viewers (Nord 2005: 50–56). In many cases, the distributor will keep the original film title without translating it (e.g. *Matrix*, *Spider-Man*, *Batman*) because it is deemed more "impressive-sounding" by many Croatian viewers than the Croatian equivalent ('*Matrica*', '*Čovjek-pauk*', and '*Čovjek-šišmiš*', respectively), and if the original title is translated, it is frequently altered in some way so that it may attract many viewers.

The process can sometimes have an adverse effect, however, as in the case of *Crimen ferpecto*, the title of a Spanish black comedy film which was translated as '*Ševac i njegov pijevac*' (backtranslated as '*A F*cker and His Rooster*'), and certainly made the wrong impression on many potential viewers in Croatia.

Although referring to something as "correct/incorrect" and "acceptable/unacceptable", or even "purposeful/accidental" might seem arbitrary, TL text can be very close to the SL one in form and/or meaning and still be incorrect in the context of TL grammar or semantics. TL titles in this paper will be regarded as "incorrect" if they constitute grammatical and/or semantical errors in Croatian (i.e. they are not seen as valid in the TL system).

Whereas it is impossible to determine with absolute certainty if a translation deviating from SL form and/or meaning is deliberate or erroneous if there are no outright grammatical errors, the form and meaning of the TL text can nevertheless point to the most likely cause, and K. Malmkjær distinguishes between motivated choices and errors. Motivated choices can be explained with regard to the translator's apparent intention (e.g. omitting or substituting parts the translator feels are not in accordance with the expectations of the target audience), or can – if the intention is unclear – still point to some form of motivation on the translator's part, and are thus considered to be deliberate alterations of the SL meaning. They do not exhibit any formal patterns, but are inferred based on semantic patterns linked to the translator's perceived motivation (Malmkjær 2004: 145–149). Errors, on the other hand, are usually inexplicable (they do not seem to have any meaningful

ties to the context, and their existence cannot be explained by means of translator motivation) or outright incorrect (comparing the translation to the original text reveals that the errors could only have been caused by the translator's insufficient knowledge of the SL, e.g. misunderstanding grammatical items and/or syntagms), and are not considered to be motivated choices (Malmkjær 2004: 149–154). The same distinction will be applied in this paper – TL title items will be regarded as erroneous if no semantic explanation can be found for them or if they evidently point to the title author's misunderstanding of the SL form and/or meaning. TL titles that do not exhibit will be considered motivated, and will be analyzed according to how much (or little) they deviate from the SL titles in lexis and semantics.

The issue of film title translation in Croatia has so far been tackled by Marko Kovačić in an article entitled *Izgubljeni u prijevodu* ('Lost in Translation'), but has otherwise not been explored thoroughly in an academic context.

3. The study

3.1. Aim

The aim of this study is to explore the most commonly used strategies in film title translation in Croatia based on the analysis of a number of English-language film titles and the corresponding translations. The paper also aims to determine how successful these translation strategies are at matching the meaning and form of SL titles. Another aim of the paper is to investigate to what extent the TL titles are affected by distributors and marketers' attempts at making the films appeal to potential viewers.

3.2. Corpus

The corpus consisted of the titles of feature-length non-animated films released in Croatia from 2010 to 2013, amounting to 190 titles. The corpus spanned various genres and included both blockbusters and lesser-known direct-to-DVD films.

Two websites listing popular films and TV shows – *mojtv.hr* and *moj-film.hr* – were consulted in gathering the corpus. Only the titles that were not direct translations of SL titles were included in the study, whereas both direct translations and titles that had been transferred (i.e. had not been translated at all) were omitted from the study. For the purpose of this paper, "direct translations" are considered to be equivalent to Newmark's categories of "word-for-word" and "literal" translations (Newmark 1988: 45). There were also titles that were intended to be direct translations of their SL equivalents, but contained inadvertent alterations of the original meaning. Such titles were included in the study.

3.3. Procedures

The titles of films were first gathered and analyzed. They were then grouped according to the linguistic challenges presented by the SL titles and according to the translation strategies evident from the TL titles. Conclusions were then drawn based on the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the corpus.

3.4. Results

The film titles making up the corpus can be observed from two perspectives: that of the challenges presented by the SL titles and that of the strategies employed in the TL titles.

In the examples, the original (SL) film titles are listed first, followed by Croatian (TL) titles and their back-translation counterparts.

3.4.1. SL challenges

As the English language lends itself naturally to puns and other types of wordplay, these are the most frequently encountered obstacles in title translation. Since capturing both (all) meanings of the original is rarely possible in the TL title, one meaning will typically be singled out as the most important and will be conveyed to the TL audience. The following are some examples in which the SL titles contain **puns and/or instances of double meaning**.

(1) *Cop Out – Profesionalci u akciji* ('Professionals at Work')

The protagonists of the film are police officers ("cops"), and one of them is inadequate (a "cop-out") in that he cannot afford to cover the cost of his daughter's wedding. The two friends thus decide to try and obtain the money together. The TL title does hint at the plot, although the allusion to the protagonists' profession is absent.

(2) *Easy A – Cura na lošem glasu* ('The Girl with a Bad Reputation')

The film follows the story of a teenager whose reputation is ruined after she starts lying about having had sex with numerous boys from her high school. The title is a clever play on words: an "easy A" is a school subject that takes very little effort to pass with an excellent grade, but the terms "easy" and "A" also have an alternate meaning. A person that is sexually promiscuous might be referred to as "easy", whereas the letter "A" alludes to the scarlet A (that stands for *adultery*) worn by Hester Prynne in the novel *The Scarlet Letter*. Since grades are assigned in numbers – and not letters – in Croatian schools, the ambiguous meaning found in the SL title could not be conveyed in the TL title. The latter meaning (that of a girl wrongly accused of promiscuity), deemed more important of the two, was thus reflected in the Croatian title.

(3) *Vampires Suck – Bez ugriza, molim* ('No Biting, Please')

This SL title contains a pun, as "suck" can be interpreted both figuratively and literally. In colloquial English, the expression "to suck" is used when referring to someone or something objectionable or uninteresting (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 2013), whereas vampires are supernatural creatures said to suck their victims' blood. In accordance with its title, the film parodies the portrayal of vampires as nigh-perfect creatures seen in the *Twilight Saga*. Since the Croatian term for "suck" ('sisati') does not have the colloquial meaning of its English equivalent, the pun

could not be properly conveyed in the TL title. Opting for either the literal ('Vampiri sišu krv') or the figurative meaning ('Vampiri su koma') alone would probably not have achieved the desired effect with the audience, so the choice of this TL title is understandable. However, the title chosen makes no mention of vampires, and does not reveal the plot of the film as readily as the SL one does.

Many film titles contain **references to characters relevant to the story**, and these are usually conveyed through the characters' names or roles. Whereas such references are almost always left unaltered in the SL titles (e.g. *Centurion* – 'Centurion', *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* – 'Harry Potter i darovi smrti'), there are also cases in which other elements – such as those hinting at the plot – were deemed more important.

(4) *The Book of Eli* – *Knjiga iskupljenja* ('*The Book of Redemption*')

The story follows the journey of Eli, a man who believes that God wants him to safeguard an important book in a bleak post-apocalyptic world. The TL title alludes to the plot twist (the book that Eli has to deliver is, in fact, the only remaining copy of the Bible), and was probably chosen over the direct translation *Elijeva knjiga* because it hints at the connection with the Bible – a reference more likely to be recognized by the audience.

Whereas puns, wordplay and instances of double meaning prove to be the most difficult to accurately convey in the TL, **cultural references and SL-specific idioms** can also pose a difficult challenge.

(5) *Dear John* – *Sve što želim to si ti* ('*All I Want Is You*')

The term "Dear John" refers to the break-up letters sent to deployed soldiers by their girlfriends or wives, announcing their decision to leave the soldier for another man and move on with their lives. No suitable equivalent of the expression exists in Croatian, and a descriptive title would have been neither short nor particularly compelling. Whereas the TL title does hint at the genre of the film, it deviates from the SL one in failing to convey that one of the main characters is a soldier and that his beloved marries another man in his absence.

(6) *Get Him to the Greek* – *To je rock'n'roll* ('*It's Rock'n'Roll*')

The original title points to the film plot: one character attempts to get another – a fallen rock star – safely to Los Angeles' Greek Theatre, where he is to perform. The Croatian title focused on the broader theme of *rock'n'roll* instead, probably because the majority of Croatian viewers are not likely to be familiar with the location.

(7) *Mistletoe over Manhattan* – *Čudo na Manhattanu* ('*The Manhattan Miracle*')

Whereas the SL title of this fantasy family drama clearly states that the film takes

place during Christmas holidays, it was probably decided that most Croatian viewers were unlikely to be familiar with the reference to mistletoe (which is hung in homes at Christmas). Despite failing to indicate that the film is Christmas-themed, the TL title remains connected to the plot by mentioning that it includes a miraculous event.

Numerous film titles employ **ambiguity**, which not only attracts the viewers' initial attention, but also builds on that first impression by pointing to different layers of the story. Most cases of ambiguity are not conveyed in the Croatian titles fully because the interplay between the literal and metaphorical meanings in the English-language titles relies on the linguistic structures of the SL.

(8) *Ironclad – Templar* ('Templar')

The original title draws upon both the literal and figurative meaning of the term *ironclad*: it can denote a person (and – more commonly – a naval vessel) sheathed in iron armour, as well as someone or something not displaying an obvious weakness (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 2013). The former refers to the protagonist of the film, who is a heavily-armoured Knight Templar, and the latter to the stalwart defence of the castle besieged by King John. The Croatian title merely reveals that the plot focuses on a Knight Templar.

(9) *Soul Surfer – Duša surfera* ('A Surfer's Soul')

The title of this drama film about the life of Bethany Hamilton – a surfer who lost an arm in a shark attack – has a double meaning: a "soul surfer" is someone who surfs for pleasure, but the term "soul" also alludes to Bethany's faith as a Christian. The Croatian version of the title can be taken as alluding to the latter, but only vaguely.

Whereas most sequels are denoted by adding a number to the title of the first film in a series, certain films manage to **embed the sequel number in another part of the title**, thus resulting in **wordplay**.

(10) *Why Did I Get Married Too? – Brak je mrak 2* ('Marriage Is Awesome 2')

The title of the previous film *Why Did I Get Married?* was translated as *Brak je mrak* ('Marriage is awesome') in Croatia. The TL title is somewhat misleading or perhaps deliberately ironic – as marriage does not turn out to be "awesome" for all the characters – in addition to omitting the question "Why did I get married?", which is central to the plot. The sequel SL title is ambiguous, as the "too" can be interpreted as meaning both "as well" and "two". The TL title only features the sequel number, as appropriate homophones do not exist in Croatian.

Certain SL titles contain **intertextual references** to fairy tales and other literary works, as in the following examples:

(11) Beauty and the Briefcase – Posao i ljubav ('Job and Love')

The main character is a fashion journalist working undercover in an office so she could write an article on dating businessmen, all the while looking for a date for herself. While the SL title juxtaposes the character's aspirations in an allusion to the popular fairy tale, the more explicit TL title lacks the allusion but does hint at the plot in a somewhat vague manner. It does not reveal that the main character is a woman looking for her "prince charming".

(12) Geek Charming – Ljepotica i štreber ('Beauty and the Nerd')

The fairy tale referenced in the TL title is not an exact equivalent of the SL one – as Prince Charming was not a *Beauty and the Beast* character – but the fairy tale allusion was successfully retained.

Table 1. Challenging elements in SL film titles and TL coping strategies.

Intralinguistic and extralinguistic challenges	Number of SL titles	Strategies used in the TL
puns and double meaning	18	only one of the meanings retained
locations, character names, traits and professions	28	retained in most cases
titles of novels	4	retained
cultural references and SL-specific idioms	29	replaced by descriptive syntagm or closest TL equivalent
juxtaposition of literal and figurative meaning	5	only part of the meaning is preserved in most cases
sequel number embedded in the title	3	sequel number added to the title with no attempt at wordplay
intertextuality	8	conveyed in the case of works that are generally well known
no specific challenges	101	TL title altered in order to be more attractive to potential viewers

Out of the 190 SL film titles, 86 can be grouped according to specific challenges – linguistic or otherwise – that they posed for the translator. The linguistic categories include puns and double meaning, intertextuality, the juxtaposition of literal and figurative meaning, embedding the sequel number in the title in a creative manner, and the usage of SL-specific idioms (although these overlap with cultural references). The extralinguistic categories comprise culture-bound references, titles of films adapted from novels, and titles pertaining to locations, character names, traits and professions. It is important to note that some film titles match more than one of these categories (e.g. the film *Easy A* is an example of a double-meaning title that encompasses cultural references, an SL-specific idiom and intertextuality).

In the cases of punny or ambiguous SL titles, their Croatian counterparts only echo one of the meanings, the one deemed the most prominent – either because it might be more intriguing to the viewer or because it is more significant in the context of the

film plot. Conveying the double meaning can rarely be achieved due to differences between the two languages.

Place names are retained in the TL title if they are well known (e.g. Manhattan, Rome), whereas a lesser-known location is typically omitted from the TL title (e.g. *Hope Springs – Začin za brak*/'How to Spice Up Your Marriage'). Character names are frequently retained in the TL titles (*Django Unchained – Odbjegli Django*/'Django the Fugitive'). They are also sometimes inserted in the TL title even if they were not present in the SL one (*Diary of a Wimpy Kid – Gregov dnevnik*/'Greg's Diary'). Character traits or occupations referenced in the SL are sometimes kept in the TL title (*Silver Tongues – Slatkorječivi prevaranti*/'Silver-Tongued Conmen') and sometimes omitted from it (*Lincoln Lawyer – Cijena istine*/'The Price of Truth').

Culture-bound references are typically absent from the Croatian titles, and are replaced by descriptive syntagms or closest TL equivalents (*Stand-Up Guys – Mafijaši starog kova*/'Old-School Mobsters'), as are SL-specific idioms (*The Cold Light of Day – Hladna istina*/'The Cold Truth'). If either type of title has multiple meanings in English, the most relevant one is usually chosen for the TL title.

The juxtaposition of literal and figurative meanings in the SL title is usually not fully conveyed in the TL (*The Darkest Hour – Crni sati*/'Dark Hours').

Sequel numbers creatively embedded in the SL title (*Why Did I Get Married Too?*) are included as numbers in the TL title with no attempts at echoing the form of the original (as seen in example 10).

Intertextuality is usually retained in the TL title, especially in the case of fairy tale allusions (11, 12).

Regarded in the context of Newmark's translation strategies (Newmark 1988: 45-47), 11 of 86 titles (roughly 12.8 %) belong to the categories of faithful and semantic translations, 28 titles (32.6 %) are adaptations, and 52 titles (60.5 %) belong to free, idiomatic, and communicative translations (as stated previously, some titles belong to more categories, so there is slight overlapping). This points to a marked tendency towards altering SL form – and, frequently, meaning – in order to better engage the audience.

The remaining 101 SL titles were not particularly challenging from a linguistic or semantic point of view and did not warrant any special translation strategies. However, despite being eligible for direct translation, they were still altered in various ways that might make them attract potential viewers' attention better (such as making the genre or some plot elements more obvious in the TL title). These alterations are discussed in the following part of the paper.

3.4.2. TL strategies

Other than the translation strategies employed when dealing with specific SL challenges such as puns or cultural references, there are also strategies used to clarify the meaning of the title, point to the genre of the film, or simply make the TL title sound more captivating.

One of the more popular strategies includes adding various '**keywords**' (**pointing to the genre or plot**) to the TL titles of films, as can be seen in the following examples.

(13) A Little Bit of Heaven – Za ljubav nema lijeka ('There Is No Cure for Love')

This romantic comedy follows the journey of a woman who falls in love with her doctor while trying to face up to her terminal condition and imminent death, and the TL title conveys both themes. It does so by seemingly portraying love as an illness, however.

(14) Upside Down – Zabranjena ljubav ('Forbidden Love')

Although the TL title presents the viewer with the basic plot point of this romantic science fiction film (that the main characters' love is unattainable), the notion of two worlds that are literally upside down is absent from it. The TL title is also identical to the title of a Croatian soap opera, which may or may not have been done deliberately.

(15) Seeking Justice – Lanac osvete ('Chain of Vengeance')

The plot follows a secret organisation that allows its members to order the murder of those who committed crimes against them, but were not punished. "Chain reactions" are caused because the members on the receiving end of such favours must also commit crimes in return, making the TL title quite fitting.

(16) The Ward – Odjel straha ('The Fear Ward')

The TL title was expanded to make the SL title sound more mysterious (in addition to hinting at the genre of the film), probably because the literal translation ('Odjel') would not have seemed overly interesting to Croatian viewers.

Proverbs are occasionally employed in TL titles as a means of attracting the audience's attention by referring to a catchy, well-known phrase.

(17) Wasted on the Young – Mladost, ludost ('Youth Is Foolish')

A quote by George Bernard Shaw drawn upon by the original title (*Youth is wasted on the young*) was replaced by a proverb of similar meaning in the TL. While using a proverb seems appropriate in the context, the resulting TL title is somewhat misleading: it does not point to any sort of loss (relevant to the plot), but merely hints at youth being "silly", giving it a neutral to positive (comic) meaning. Seeing as the film is a dark thriller, perhaps a different TL title might have been more appropriate.

Expansion is an oft-used translation strategy which mostly serves the function of clarifying the meaning expressed in the SL title and/or making the TL title more attractive-sounding. Whereas one-word English-language titles can be very effective in making an impression on the potential audience, some of these titles would be either misleading or off-putting if translated into Croatian literally.

(18) The Town – Grad lopova ('Thief Town')

The original title was expanded in the TL, probably to make the meaning less vague and to point to the film genre, both of which might attract more viewers.

(19) Faster – Brži od pravde ('Faster than Justice')

This Croatian title explicitly states what the SL one hints at – that the main character will have to be “faster than justice” if he is to achieve his goal of exacting vengeance on those who killed his brother. The SL title was purposefully left ambiguous, as he will have to be faster than both a policeman and a hitman pursuing him. The latter meaning is absent in the TL title.

Some Croatian titles are **made more explicit in meaning** than their English-language counterparts. This is frequently done when the SL title contains the name of a location or character that not all viewers are likely to be familiar with. The translation strategy is also used in cases where a word-for-word translation would yield a vague or uninteresting title.

(20) The Way Back – Bijeg iz Gulaga ('Escape from the Gulag')

The original title of this drama film makes no mention of the setting of the plot, but the Croatian title makes it clear that the characters are trying to escape from a Russian Gulag. Although this could be considered an appropriate TL title from the point of view of semantics, it is unclear why the first letter of the noun “Gulag” was capitalized, as the Croatian title refers to the actual forced labour camp (a “gulag”) and not the organization that governed all such camps (the “Gulag”).

(21) Made in Dagenham – Ženska prava hoću ('I Want Women's Rights')

The film depicts the 1968 Ford sewing machinists' strike demanding equal pay for female workers. Unlike the SL title, its Croatian counterpart does not mention the location of the plant where the strike took place, but attempts to hint at the characters' fight for equal rights. The resulting title is somewhat misleading: instead of pointing to the women's desire to have the same rights as men, it makes it sound as if “women's rights” were different from “men's rights” in some way (ironically, this discrepancy is what the characters are trying to remedy).

(22) Diary of a Wimpy Kid – Gregov dnevnik ('Greg's Diary')

The SL title does not explicitly mention who the “wimpy kid” referred to is, but the TL title does. Greg's standing in middle school is thus omitted from the Croatian title, however, making it less indicative of the plot of the film than the SL title.

(23) Limitless – Savršena formula ('The Perfect Formula')

Whereas the original title refers to the empowering effects of a drug taken by some of the characters, increasing their cognitive capabilities, the TL title focuses instead on the search for the chemical formula of said drug. However, the impact of the Croatian title is toned down somewhat in comparison to the original.

(24) The Craigslist Killer – Ubojica s interneta ('The Internet Killer')

As the SL title implies, the film dramatizes the case of a man who was convicted of robbing and/or killing people he had met through the *Craigslist* website. The TL title is broader in meaning, perhaps because it was assumed that most Croats would be unfamiliar with *Craigslist*.

Some TL titles contain **intertextuality or allusions that were not present in the SL.**

(25) The Inbetweeners Movie – Engleska pita ('English Pie')

The SL title of this coming-of-age comedy film based on a popular British sitcom was an allusion to the *American Pie* franchise due to the similarity in themes found in the films.

(26) From Prada to Nada – Prada i osjećaji ('Prada and Sensibility')

As can be inferred from the SL title, this romantic comedy film is a “riches to rags” story. The plot draws upon Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*, which has been echoed in the TL title. Although the Croatian word “razum” (‘sense’) is not particularly similar to *Prada* in either spelling or pronunciation, the allusion is acceptable because it takes potential viewers’ expectations into consideration and conveys the main themes found in the film (lost wealth and the search for love).

(27) A Haunted House – Paranormalna aktivnost ('Paranormal Activity')

While the SL title of this comedy film is straightforward and indicative of the plot, the TL title alludes to the Croatian title of the *Paranormal* film series (translated as *Paranormalna aktivnost/Paranormal Activity*) in order to outline the basic difference between the two: the latter films are more serious in nature, unlike *A Haunted House*, which is satirical.

(28) The Place Beyond the Pines – Grijesi očeva ('Sins of the Fathers')

This SL title is a loose English translation of *Schenectady*, a Mohawk Indian name of a city in today’s New York state. Instead of presenting the audience with the Croatian translation of the aforementioned phrase, the TL title points to the plot via a Biblical expression. The solution is acceptable because the film – much like the quote –

questions the notion of fathers' sins being passed on to their sons.

Some of the titles are **only partially translated in the TL**. These are usually combinations of franchise names (left unaltered) and sequel titles appended to them (which are translated).

(29) Resident Evil: Afterlife – Resident Evil: Drugi svijet ('Resident Evil: A Different World')

Since the title of the first film of the *Resident Evil* franchise was left unaltered on its release in Croatia, the sequels retain the SL franchise name, whereas TL versions of the sequel titles are appended to it. In this particular example, the SL term *afterlife* was not translated literally ('zagrobni život'), but was replaced by "a different world". The decision is understandable, as the afterlife hinted at by the SL title is not that of the protagonists, but rather that of the world they inhabit. Having defeated her enemies, Alice hopes to establish a safe haven for the survivors of the zombie apocalypse. It is this fact that the TL title points to, which is why it fits the plot and can be considered appropriate.

(30) Total Recall – Total Recall: Potpuno sjećanje ('Total Recall: Complete Memory')

This film is a remake of the 1990 one, the title of which was translated as *Potpuni opoziv* (backtranslated to "Total Recall", 'recall' as in 'the act of calling back armed forces'). Although the latter is one possible interpretation of the original English title (which would be ambiguous outside the context of the film plot), it was nevertheless incorrect with respect to the plot, as the English term *recall* in the SL title actually referred to remembrance/memory retrieval. Whereas the new TL title improves upon that glaring mistake, it is still not fully appropriate because 'Potpuno prisjećanje' ("total recall", semantically the same as in the SL title) would have been the correct translation.

In certain cases, the TL title only conveys **part of the original meaning**, as can be seen in the following example:

(31) Grown Ups – Starci ('Old People')

Whereas the TL title conveys one of the possible meanings of the original ("old people" stands for "parents" in colloquial Croatian), this does not become apparent until one learns a bit about the main characters. At first sight, one might assume the film is focused on protagonists who are literally old. In addition, the TL title fails to convey the notion of maturity hinted at in the SL title. The main characters are not just "grown ups" (when juxtaposed with their children), but they also learn to be responsible and mature by the end of the film (thereby "growing up" in a sense).

There are also cases in which TL titles of film sequels end up being somewhat **misleading due to 'inheriting' the form of their predecessors**.

(32) *Little Fockers* (also known as *Meet the Parents: Little Fockers* in some countries) – *Dozvola za male Fockere* ('The Little Focker Permit')

The TL title here follows the pattern set by the Croatian titles of the previous two films in the franchise. The title of the 2000 film *Meet the Parents* was translated as *Dozvola za roditelje* ('The parent permit'), and the 2004 sequel *Meet the Fockers* was released under the title *Dozvola za Fockere* ('The Focker family permit') in Croatia. Despite sounding catchy, these TL titles make little sense in the context of the plot, as the characters do not require any sort of legally binding document or even a spoken permission to meet each other's parents and/or have children. The title "*Roditeljska dozvola*" ('Parental Permission') would have fit the theme of the first film, as Greg is desperately trying to earn the approval of his girlfriends' parents. Unfortunately, the confusing title given to the first film could not be disregarded in translating the sequel titles.

(33) *A Good Day to Die Hard* – *Umri muški: Dobar dan za umiranje* ('Die like a Man: A Good Day to Die')

The title of the first film of the *Die Hard* franchise (the 1988 film *Die Hard*) was translated as *Umri muški* ('Die like a Man') in Croatia. This TL title – which was probably chosen in the hope that it might attract viewers – is rather misleading since the protagonist keeps foiling his enemies' attempts at killing him, as can be inferred from the original title.

Table 2: TL title alterations to SL title form and/or meaning by categories

TL deviations from the original title	Number of titles in which the deviations are present
genre-denoting and plot-revealing keywords	25
proverbs	4
expansion	16
reduction in meaning and partial meaning transfer	38
meaning made more explicit	45
intertextuality and allusions	10
partial form translation and importation	7
misleading or incorrect translation of title or part of title	5
minor alterations that do not match the other categories	45

Of the 101 films, 45 TL titles were rather close to the SL ones, with only minor alterations to their form and/or meaning in the Croatian titles. The alterations were mostly aimed at making the TL title attract potential viewers' attention (e.g. *Date Night – Savršeni spoj*/'The Perfect Date', *The Big Wedding – Vjenčanje godine*/'The Wedding of the Year'). Genre-denoting and/or plot-revealing keywords are present in 25 TL titles. The most frequent keyword, "love" ('ljubav'; *Going the Distance – Ljubav na*

daljinu/'Long-Distance Love', *Flipped – Put ljubavi*/'The Path of Love', *The Vow – Zavjet ljubavi*/'The Vow of Love'), is inserted in the titles of romantic films. Since the inclusion of keywords is unnecessary – the plot can be hinted at in other ways, as exemplified by SL titles – it can be assumed that the purpose behind these keywords is to signal the film genre or plot progression to the audience. The words commonly used in horror film TL titles are “horror” and “fear” ('strava' and 'strah', respectively; *Saw – Slagalica strave*/'The Horror Puzzle', *The Hole – Rupa straha*/'The Hole of Fear'), whereas Croatian titles of action films and thrillers often contain the word “revenge” or “vengeance” ('osveta'; as seen in example 15). While used rarely, proverbs can be quite effective in alluding to the premises behind the plot (*In Time – Vrijeme je novac*/'Time Is Money') or replacing a relatively unfamiliar quote (17). The SL title was frequently expanded, either for the sake of revealing more about the genre or plot of the film (*Marmaduke – Moj ljubimac Marmaduke*/'My Pet Marmaduke') or to intensify the TL title and make it more involving than a literal translation (*Switch – Kobna zamjena*/'The Fatal Switch'). In the case of 38 TL film titles, the SL meaning was reduced in scope and/or only partially transferred. Long titles such as *Free Willy: Escape from Pirate's Cove* and *Across the Line: The Exodus of Charlie Wright* are frequently contracted so that they point to the franchise (*Moj prijatelj Willy 4*/'My Friend Willy 4') or main character (*Charlie Wright*) in Croatian. SL titles containing puns or double meaning are also the cause of TL title reduction in meaning, because only one meaning can typically be retained in the TL (*Knight And Day – Noć i dan*/'Night and Day'). The original meaning was made more explicit in 45 TL titles out of the 101. This serves the purpose of clarifying a somewhat vague SL title that might fail to attract viewers' attention (*The Lady – Aung San Suu Kyi: Istinita priča*/'Aung San Suu Kyi: True Story'). Vagueness does not necessarily equate with failure to capture viewers' interest (as stated before, something should be left to the imagination; titles that reveal too much may also fail to attract potential viewers), but it can nevertheless have such an effect. Making the meaning more explicit can also render a title more attractive-sounding by alluding to the plot (*Splintered – Sama u klopci*/'Trapped and Alone', *Unknown – Ukradeni identitet*/'Stolen Identity'). TL titles are also sometimes simplified in meaning if the SL titles contain references to cultural terms or SL-specific idioms (*No Strings Attached – Samo seks*/'Just Sex'). Simplification differs from clarification, and – in this context – refers to trying to convey the SL title meaning by using more simplified language in the TL form, whereas the aim of clarification is to bring the general meaning of the SL title closer to viewers by adding to the SL title meaning. Intertextuality and allusions were present in 10 TL titles, and mostly point to literary works (example 26) or other film titles (27). There are also TL titles which exhibit partial translation of their SL counterparts. In 7 of the films, franchise names or character references were kept, whereas the rest of the SL title was translated into Croatian or replaced by an explanatory syntagm in Croatian. Examples include *Nanny McPhee And the Big Bang* (*Nanny McPhee: Povratak čudesne dadilje*/'Nanny McPhee: The Return of the Wondrous Nanny') and *The Last Airbender* (*Posljednji Airbender*/'The Last Airbender'). Five titles were misleading and/or vague due to the translation strategies used. For example, *Upoznat ćeš visokog, tamnog stranca* ('You Will Meet a Tall, Dark Stranger') was intended as a direct-equivalence translation (the original title being *You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger*) but the resulting meaning was confusing, as the syntagm “tamni stranac” ('dark stranger') does not make much sense in Croatian – the terms

“tamnoput” (‘dark-skinned’) or “tamnokos” (‘dark-haired’) should be used in that context instead. Whereas the meaning of the TL title was probably understood by the viewers, it is still ambiguous and grammatically incorrect.

Of the 101 titles, 45 had only received **minor alterations** in the TL, while the original meaning was retained (*Courageous – Hrabrost* / ‘Courage’, *The Devil Inside – Sotona: Razotkrivanje* / ‘Satan: Exposure’). These TL titles are rather close to direct translations, but were altered slightly so as to better attract the audience’s attention.

4. Discussion

Whereas the majority of Croatian translations of film titles are not incorrect, it can be noted that much of the TL versatility is overlooked in favour of clichéd and deliberately dramatic expressions that might attract more viewers, thereby increasing the distributor’s profit. Although both SL and TL titles are marketing devices, SL title meaning can be – and frequently is – skewed in the corresponding TL title in an attempt to attract more viewers. This is sometimes done to the point of completely overriding the original meaning. While such treatment of film titles is understandable, can it also be regarded as somewhat disrespectful of the audience? Various Croatian-language forums contain topics pertaining to users’ dissatisfaction with what they consider inadequately translated film titles (especially in the cases where TL titles have no meaningful connections to their SL counterparts) (Forum.hr thread - *Prijevod naslova filmova* 2016). While film title translation has not been the subject of much research in Croatia, numerous unsatisfactory title translations have been discussed on various Croatian websites (e.g. *The Last Boy Scout – Prljavi igraju prljavo* / ‘Foul Men Play Dirty’, *The Hurt Locker – Narednik James* / ‘Sergeant James’, *Basic Instinct – Sirove strasti* / ‘Raw Passion’, *The Other Woman – Osveta na visokim petama* / ‘High-Heeled Vengeance’). Should film distributors be obliged to provide the viewers with titles truer to the original form and meaning, as opposed to relying on clichés that “sell well” but deviate too much from the original meaning? Whereas it is not possible to arrive at a precise definition of “too much” in this particular context, the displeasure voiced by forum users regarding numerous TL titles shows that viewers do find some titles more (or less) acceptable than others.

Although the direct translations and no-translations of film titles in Croatia were omitted from this analysis, such titles give rise to many questions. What could be the cause of direct translations that are glaringly incorrect in Croatian (with respect to grammar and/or semantics), for instance? Are such translations indicative of a disregard for coming up with a correct TL title? Or were attempts to produce such TL titles hampered by factors such as inadequate language knowledge and/or a penchant for sensationalism?

As for the no-translations, many can be justified by SL allure (*The Matrix* – being a catchy foreign-language expression – was found to be rather popular, whereas ‘Matrica’ would probably have been regarded as plain by comparison) or by the lack of a proper TL equivalent (as in the case of *Looper*). The practice of using TL resources to convey SL terms seems to have fallen out of favour with marketers and the audience, judging by the numerous SL film titles that are left in their original form. Is this no-translation trend caused by the perceived prestige of the titles’ SL counterparts, or are such titles indicative of the distributors’ and translators’ unwillingness to tackle those linguistic challenges?

Whereas instances of distributor-driven translation serve the function of attracting as many viewers as possible, it is also apparent that English-language expressions have begun to take the place of their readily available Croatian equivalents in many cases. The role of film titles as important marketing assets is understandable, but it nevertheless gives rise to various questions. Can sacrificing TL structure and lexis in favour of audience appeal that might increase the distributor's profit result in a decline in the real-life use of those expressions? Could that lead to an eventual impoverishment of the audience's Croatian vocabulary, as more and more local expressions are replaced by their more "prestigious" English equivalents? And more importantly, could a reverse process be triggered – one that might revitalize the use of the linguistic versatility of Croatian, thereby eliciting greater interest from its native speakers?

5. Conclusion

This paper aimed to provide an outline of the trends in translation of film titles in Croatia over the past few years, and several conclusions can be drawn from the analysis.

Firstly, the most challenging elements of SL film titles to be translated are certainly those bound to the SL structure or SL culture: puns, wordplay and – to a lesser extent – intertextuality. These almost always result in a reduction in the meaning presented to the TL viewer by the TL title, which is understandable due to TL limitations. The fact that SL puns and instances of double meaning are absent from the TL titles also outlines the differences between English and Croatian. Whereas the former lends itself well to puns and wordplay based on homophony, the latter is rather inflexible in that respect due to its almost non-existent homophones; if a homophone-based SL pun cannot be resolved by resorting to some other form of wordplay, only one meaning – usually the one chosen as the most relevant one – is typically echoed in the TL title. The rarity of homophonous puns in Croatian translations (despite the numerous homophone-based puns present in the SL) has already been noted (e. g. in Zavišić 2014).

Secondly, the expansion or reduction of meaning expressed in the TL title is not dependent upon TL structure limitations alone – it is also adjusted according to the interest the title might arouse in the audience. Balancing out the meaning with audience response is a double-edged blade. On the one hand, a title that reveals too much of the plot may not be very successful at attracting viewers. On the other hand, overtly providing the film genre in the title by means of various keywords helps attract the kind of audience interested specifically in the genre or plot elements advertised by those keywords. Although it frequently results in titles conveying partial SL meaning or clichéd titles, the usage of keywords and other TL strategies testifies to the adaptability of Croatian.

Thirdly, the analysis shows that over half of the SL titles did not pose an overt linguistic or semantic challenge, but their TL counterparts still were not direct translations. This leads to the conclusion that those TL titles were primarily meant to increase the appeal of their respective films to potential viewers (as opposed to the remaining TL titles, which served to bring the intended SL meaning closer to the TL audience). Although there are no official guidelines pertaining to these marketing strategies embedded in TL titles, the analysis points to widespread use of an array of strategies, such as modifying the scope of SL meaning and adding plot-denoting

keywords to TL titles. In light of this, it can be stated that translation of film titles in Croatia is certainly profoundly affected by the distributors and the need to pitch the film to the audience.

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HRVATSKI PRIJEVODI NASLOVA DUGOMETRAŽNIH FILMOVA NA ENGLLESKOM JEZIKU

Sažetak

Rad istražuje izazove koje predstavljaju naslovi filmova na engleskom jeziku te strategije u prevođenju kojima se ti naslovi prilagođuju hrvatskoj publici. Korpus uključuje 190 naslova dugometražnih filmova na engleskom jeziku te pripadajuće hrvatske naslove. Naslovi su podijeljeni prema izazovima u izvorniku (igre riječima i dvostruko značenje, spominjanje likova iz filma, izrazi vezani uz kulturu i idiome izvornika, višeznačnost, ubacivanje broja nastavka u naslov igrom riječima i intertekstualnost) te strategijama u odredišnom jeziku (korištenje ključnim riječima koje upućuju na žanr ili radnju filma, izreke, proširivanje izvornog značenja ili otkrivanje onoga što nije prisutno u izvornom naslovu, intertekstualnost, polovično prevođenje i zadržavanje samo dijela izvornog značenja). Dok je dio ovih naslova na odredišnom jeziku usmjeren na približavanje elemenata vezanih uz strukturu i kulturu ishodišnog jezika, istraživanje također otkriva da je oblik i značenje više od polovice naslova na hrvatskom jeziku pod utjecajem izvanjezičnih čimbenika. To upućuje na ulogu filmskih naslova kao važnih pomagala u oglašavanju.

Ključne riječi: naslovi filmova, prevođenje, hrvatski jezik, engleski jezik, marketinške strategije