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CHALLENGES AND ERRORS IN TRANSLATING SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY GENRES (BASED ON “STAR WARS” FILMS)

Abstract

The presented article examines the problems and errors encountered in translating the works of science fiction and fantasy genres, with a focus on the Star Wars films. The study combines theoretical approaches with empirical data, revealing the difficulties translators face in adapting fictional worlds, their terminology and cultural contexts. Translating such works requires not only accuracy in conveying specialized vocabulary, but also creativity in adapting dialogues and characterizations to preserve the atmosphere and style of the original. The article analyzes key translation difficulties such as neologisms, wordplay, humour and cultural references, and suggests methods to overcome them. The study aims to improve the quality of translation in the science fiction and fantasy genres and provides recommendations for further research in this area.

Keywords: adaptation, approaches, difference, fantasy genres, films, science fiction, translation.

Introduction

The translation errors were always an immutable part of translation followed step-by-step way of proper adaptation. Every step is deemed as an integral part due to difference of language. As M. Baker mentioned, translation is impossible owing to the fact that it has different number of vocabulary, structures of sentence, grammar and so on. Evidently, taking into consideration these facts the translation is only one step which uniting with others in one common complicated term “adaptation”. So, to make a film, there are many aspects which should be taken into account. In the last century, audience could observe adaptation of film, but with some differences. Some versions of adapted film were deleted, but people who watched once film when it's appeared on build boards and watched it in current adaptation can find some inconsistencies which is not an odd thing [1].

Theoretical analysis

Specified approaches of translation can be different, because science fiction films are films which require special approaches to elude some misunderstandings from the audience perspective. In some extend, some science fiction films are odd, because it can refer to future actions, where humanity live in the advanced world or even on another planet. And in this point, translators can come across with some terms which film storyline suggests. For instance: in Star Wars there are many species of nations which live on other planets in other galaxies. The first difficulties and its solution approach are names and transliteration and transcription. These two approaches are the most appropriate and more unique, as it has simple usage according to M. Krenn [2].

If to consider these ways of translation, then we have a description: transliteration is the process of converting text from one writing system to another while maintaining the original spelling as closely as possible. It does not focus on pronunciation, but instead ensures a precise correspondence between letters or symbols. This method is commonly used for names, place names, and specialized terms where preserving the original form is important. For example, the Russian word Москва is transliterated as Moskva in the Latin alphabet, retaining its original structure regardless of pronunciation differences. Transcription focuses on conveying the pronunciation of a word in a different writing system, where the sound takes precedence over spelling. Unlike transliteration, transcription adapts the word to fit the phonetic system of the target language. This approach is often used in linguistic studies, pronunciation guides, and language learning. For instance, the Russian word Москва is transcribed as Moscow in English, reflecting its common pronunciation rather than its

original spelling. These translation techniques are commonly accepted, moreover these both was used constantly in the verity of ways, where transmission of names wasn't feasible. Translating the genres of science fiction and fantasy presents unique challenges due to their imaginative and often complex nature. Unlike works of realistic literature, where the primary goal is to clearly convey the meaning, science fiction and fantasy texts require not only translation of the language but also cultural adaptation, creative interpretation, and sometimes the creation of new lexical elements [3].

This section discusses the theoretical difficulties encountered when translating science fiction and fantasy, using the Star Wars films as an example, as they contain specialized terminology, invented languages, cultural references, and fantastic elements. One of the main issues when translating Star Wars is working with unique terminology.

Terms like The Force, Jedi, Sith, lightsaber, and droid are central to the plot and world-building but can be challenging to translate due to the lack of direct equivalents in other languages. For instance, The Force in Russian conveys the general concept of power but does not always capture the philosophical and mystical essence of the original. The translation of cultural and historical references that form the unique world of Star Wars presents a complex challenge. Such works often include expressions that have become iconic but lack direct equivalents in other languages [4].

It is essential to not only accurately convey the meaning but also preserve the original cultural and atmospheric context. For example, the phrase May the Force be with you holds significant cultural weight in English, and its translation requires not only a faithful rendering of its meaning but also an effort to retain its impact on the audience. In the Russian version, Да пребудет с вами Сила (May the Force be with you) successfully preserves both the meaning and the philosophical and religious nuances embedded in the original. Moreover, an important aspect of translation is the preservation of the characters' distinctive speech styles, which significantly affect the audience's perception of the work. For instance, Han Solo's characteristic humor and sarcasm must be accurately conveyed in translation. This can be particularly challenging, as certain expressions in English may lack direct counterparts in Russian. The translator must not only identify appropriate equivalents but also maintain the rhythm, tone, and atmosphere of the original dialogue. Ensuring that the unique traits of the characters are still remaining recognizable in the translation is crucial for preserving the integrity and appeal of the original work. At the same time, invented names of planets, species, and technologies may either be transliterated (e.g., Coruscant) or adapted according to the linguistic and cultural context of the target language (e.g., Beshpin as Бешпин in Russian). The translator must decide whether to retain the original terms or adapt them to preserve their relevance and cultural compatibility in the target language. Cultural adaptation is another critical challenge [5].

The Star Wars universe is deeply embedded in Western cultural traditions, including mythology, religion, and history. For example, the concept of The Force draws from various spiritual teachings, such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Daoism, which may be unfamiliar to audiences in other cultures. The translator must find a way to adapt these ideas to make them understandable to the target audience while preserving the essence of the original. The films also include humor and colloquial speech, such as the distinctive manner of speaking of Han Solo, which adds another layer of complexity to the translation. The translator must find a way to preserve the humor and character traits while ensuring they are natural and relatable to the target audience. The fan community also plays a significant role in the translation process. Many fans create unofficial translations or subtitles, which may differ from the official versions. These translations can provide valuable insight into how different cultures interpret the original works and highlight the differences between official and fan-made translations. While such translations are not considered authoritative, they often reflect the perspectives of specific cultural groups and may offer alternative solutions to translation challenges. Localization is another important component in translating Star Wars and similar works [6].

Localization goes beyond simple translation and adapts the text to the cultural context of the target audience. This may involve changing character names, altering cultural references, and adjusting dialogue to better align with local customs and traditions. The goal of localization is to make the material more relatable and relevant to the audience while preserving the spirit of the

original. For instance, character or planet names may be changed, or certain phrases adapted according to local cultural norms [7].

Experimental part

As the ranges of experimental units are limited, with whole improvisation abilities, it was made up an investigation among second year students of SKU. There was a test which followed with explanation of cultural differences which can effect on adaptation of film in variety of ways. For the second year students it was explained how cultural differences can impact on film and what causes may bring a wrong adaptation or kind of misunderstandings. After several attempts to elaborate differences, there was a test with multiple choices of translation Star Wars phrases, which are quite well known among Star Wars community. And moreover, these phrases were given in multiple-choice translation. It means that the translation was changed, and second-year students supposed to choose which option they consider the most appropriate. Moreover, under the choices, there was a line where they could indicate their own variant of translation which they deem as the most correct one. The study depicted that second-year students are quite acquainted with translation techniques such as calculi method, transliteration, and so on. There was no difficulty to indicate the right answer in multiple-choice test. Roughly 2% of participants decided to indicate their own variant of translation, which was seemingly correct. If we consider all participants as potential audience of Star Wars film, we can make a conclusion that if such audience watches this film in original, they would understand clearly all complicated terms and names of characters without any hesitation.

Results

Though in Kazakhstan science fiction films particularly Star Wars doesn't have strong influence, adapted variant highly valuable whether its prominent or not. Some individuals are well acquainted with some terms which able to cause misunderstanding. From the point of view of translation part, future and current translators should be aware about cultural differences. The study aimed to examine participants' preferred translation strategies and evaluate their confidence in selecting an appropriate response. The findings indicate that an overwhelming majority of respondents (98%) opted for one of the predefined choices, demonstrating a clear tendency to rely on established linguistic solutions. This inclination may suggest a sufficient level of language proficiency but also a potential reluctance to engage in independent analysis and formulation of translations. Only 2% of participants elected to propose their own translation, which may reflect a higher degree of linguistic competence, confidence in their abilities, or an inclination toward creative problem-solving. However, the limited number of such responses could also imply that the provided options were sufficiently precise and accessible, thereby reducing the necessity for independent translation efforts.

Notably, none of the participants reported difficulty in selecting an answer, which may indicate the clarity of the test itself or a preference among respondents to make a selection, even in cases of uncertainty. Overall, the results underscore a prevailing reliance on predetermined translation choices, with only a small proportion of participants demonstrating an active engagement in independent translation. These insights contribute to a broader understanding of translation strategies and hold implications for the refinement of pedagogical approaches in translation studies.

Conclusion

To conclude, translating science fiction and fantasy involves a number of challenges that go beyond mere accuracy. It requires careful cultural adaptation, stylistic consistency, and the preservation of the essence of the narrative. The analysis of Star Wars translations highlights key difficulties, such as translating invented terms, preserving the impact of iconic phrases, and adapting character dialogues while maintaining their original intent and stylistic features.

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ҒЫЛЫМИ ФАНТАСТИКА МЕН ҚИЯЛ ЖАНРЛАРЫН АУДАРУДАҒЫ ҚИЫНДЫҚТАР МЕН ҚАТЕЛІКТЕР ("ЖҰЛДЫЗДЫ СОҒЫСТАР" ФИЛЬМДЕРІНЕ НЕГІЗДЕЛГЕН)

Түйін

Бұл мақала ғылыми фантастика мен фэнтези шығармаларын аударуда туындайтын мәселелер мен қателіктерді зерттейді, «Жұлдызды соғыстар» фильмдеріне назар аударылады. Зерттеу теориялық тәсілдерді эмпирикалық деректермен біріктіріп, аудармашылардың қиял-ғажайып әлемдер мен олардың терминологиясын, мәдени контексттерін бейімдеудегі қиындықтарын айқындайды. Мұндай шығармаларды аудару тек мамандандырылған лексиканы дәл беру ғана емес, сондай-ақ, диалогтар мен кейіпкерлерді бейімдеуде шығарманың атмосферасы мен стилін сақтап қалу үшін шығармашылық тәсілді қажет етеді. Мақалада неологизмдер, сөздермен ойнау, юмор мен мәдени сілтемелер сияқты негізгі аударма қиындықтары талданып, оларды жеңу әдістері ұсынылады. Зерттеу ғылыми фантастика мен фэнтези жанрларындағы аударманың сапасын арттыруға бағытталған және осы саладағы болашақ зерттеулер үшін ұсыныстар береді.

Кілттік сөздер: бейімделу, тәсілдер, айырмашылықтар, қиял жанрлары, Фильмдер, ғылыми фантастика, аударма.

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ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ОШИБКИ ПРИ ПЕРЕВОДЕ ЖАНРОВ НАУЧНОЙ ФАНТАСТИКИ И ФЭНТЕЗИ (ПО МОТИВАМ ФИЛЬМОВ "ЗВЕЗДНЫЕ ВОЙНЫ")

Аннотация

Данная статья рассматривает проблемы и ошибки, возникающие при переводе произведений научной фантастики и фэнтези, с акцентом на фильмы «Звездные войны». Исследование объединяет теоретические подходы с эмпирическими данными, выявляя трудности, с которыми сталкиваются переводчики при адаптации вымышленных миров, их терминологии и культурных контекстов. Перевод таких произведений требует не только точности в передаче специализированной лексики, но и творческого подхода к адаптации диалогов и характеристик персонажей для сохранения атмосферы и стиля оригинала. В статье анализируются ключевые трудности перевода, такие как неологизмы, игра слов, юмор и культурные отсылки, а также предлагаются методы их преодоления. Исследование направлено на повышение качества перевода в жанре научной фантастики и фэнтези и содержит рекомендации для дальнейших исследований в этой области.

Ключевые слова: адаптация, подходы, различия, жанры фэнтези, фильмы, научная фантастика, перевод.

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