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Multilingualism in audiovisual translation of animated films¹

DOI: 10.23817/strans.12-18

Received: 31.08.2021

Accepted: 15.09.2021

Nowadays multilingualism and language variation increasingly pose an object of researchers' inquiries not only with regard to literary but also audiovisual translation. Numerous publications, e.g. by Zabalbeascoa & Voellmer (2014), Ellender (2015), Zabalbeascoa & Sokoli (2018) and Corrius & Zabalbeascoa (2019) – to name only a few – make it evident. The reviewed monograph “(Re)Creating Language Identities in Animated Films. Dubbing Linguistic Variation” by Vincenza Minutella can without doubt be numbered among these contributions.²

The aim of the book is – as the author indicates – “to explore how linguistic variation and multilingualism are used to create characters and identities and to examine how Italian dubbing professionals deal with this linguistic characterisation” (p. 7f.). Minutella sets as her objective to derive patterns and trends in the way these characters and identities are created as well as to find strategies of translating language varieties in dubbed animated films into Italian.

The reviewed book consists of nine chapters, of which the first one forms an introduction of the monograph and the ninth contains final conclusions. The first chapter is preceded by a preface, acknowledgments and a list of tables. Chapter nine is followed by references, two appendices and an index.

1| Minutella, Vincenza (2021). *(Re)Creating Language Identities in Animated Films. Dubbing Linguistic Variation*. (Palgrave Studies in Translating and Interpreting). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. 408 pp.

2| A noteworthy publication in the Polish research field is the book by Proczkowska (2021) where the author scrutinizes the translation of a third language in consideration of its humorous role in American sitcoms.

In the introduction the author describes the motive for choosing the addressed issues as well as the research material. She also delineates the methodology based on descriptive translation studies with the aid of a corpus-based approach. The corpus study carried out on audiovisual material was accompanied by personal communication with people involved in the dubbing process, as well as observations of dubbing sessions. The use of triangulation in the conducted research which allows to gain tangible results, is to be commended.

Intriguing is the choice of the research material, which are animated films, because of their peculiar audience consisting not only of children but also adults, who are watching the films mostly with their offspring. Another reason for the praise that the monograph is deserving is its large corpus, which comprises 37 English-language animated films produced by US companies. As the author points out in reference to Toury's approach (Toury 1978/1995; 1980), it "enables us to observe patterns and regularities and provide a quantitative analysis which may lead to identifying norms regulating translational practice" (p. 8).

The second chapter gives a detailed description of particular stages in the process of dubbing animated films. It enables the readers who might be unfamiliar with the peculiarity of dubbing this kind of films to imagine the complexity of the process and the involvement of many agents in it. This approach shows also the author's awareness of the necessity for a holistic depiction of the translation system including all its agents.³ The author stresses *inter alia* the significant role of production companies and distributors, for whom she uses the all-encompassing term *client*: "The client is an umbrella term used by dubbing practitioners to refer to the entity commissioning the dubbed version and for whom they work" (p. 85). Although this term is commonly used by dubbing practitioners, it is arguable whether its usage is appropriate. It implies a commercial aspect and financial conditions, which admittedly are important, but more important is the communicative aspect of the whole process.⁴ Therefore the term *translation initiator* proposed by Żmudzki (2004: 323; 2014: 181f.) seems to be more accurate, since it emphasises the translation initiator's communicative role in the translation process. He is the person who determines the translation task, defines the realisation of the translation and its aim. He plays an important role "in the choices made regarding languages and accents" (p. 383f.), as Minutella points out hereinafter. Nevertheless, the holistic view on the dubbing process presented in the reviewed book deserves commendation. As the further analyses in the monograph show, it is a necessary condition for understanding what factors influence and determine

3| The necessity for a holistic view on the translation process that includes all agents involved in it is often stressed in the works of Żmudzki (2013).

4| At this point it should be pointed that a translation act should be perceived and understood foremost as a mediated communication (Grucza 1981; Żmudzki 2013).

the translator's decisions, as well as for deriving patterns and strategies in the dubbed films.

The translation of language varieties and multilingualism in audiovisual texts form the centre of the third chapter. In this part the reader can find definitions of crucial terms for the study based on representative references. Furthermore, the author describes the typology of translation strategies used in the analyses and points out the need for a distinction between foreign languages (i.e. other than English), native varieties of English (i.e. other than American English) and non-native varieties of English. As the author legitimately indicates, this need is connected with the linguistic identities of the characters of the films that "greatly differ if they speak a foreign language, English with a foreign accent or English with a native accent" (p. 77). Next, the theoretical assumptions are confronted with the information gathered from interviews with dubbing professionals. This chapter forms the basis of the analyses carried out in further parts of the monograph, where the author compares the theoretical assumptions and approaches of dubbing professionals with the solutions used by translators in the dubbed films analysed in the book with regard to the usage of standard Italian, Italian with an accent and regional Italian or dialects in dubbing.

The next chapter proposes an exact description of language varieties and multilingualism in every particular one of the animated films analysed in the book. Minutella presents linguistic variations in each analysed film by mentioning each character that uses a language variety. Worth mentioning is that a short outline of each film used by the author gives an idea of its plot for those who are not familiar with the plot of a particular film.

In chapter 5 Minutella elaborates on cases in which native varieties of English are used in animated films. She points out which role they play in the analysed material and how they were translated into Italian. Among native varieties of English taken into account there are British English, Scottish English, Australian English, Southern American English, African American Vernacular English and New York/Brooklyn Accent.

Minutella focuses her attention in chapter 6 on signs of multilingualism in the analysed corpus and the manners of translating it into Italian. Besides French, Russian, Japanese, Brazilian Portuguese and Spanish the author scrutinizes two sorts of cases of multilingualism in the source material, which are in particular problematic and put the translator's competence to the test. The first one concerns examples where the third language equals the target language (Italian), i.e. L3=L2. The latter one covers situations, where the third language is an invented language (in this case Atlantean).

The non-native varieties of English as well as foreign-accented English and the manners of their transposition in the dubbed films in Italian are in the spotlight of chapter 7. Just as in the previous parts of the book, where the author describes

different types of linguistic variations in animated films, also here Minutella attempts to derive main translation strategies and seeks explanation for their usage.

Next, the author moves seamlessly to chapter 8, which consists of a description of cases signalised in chapter 6 and 7, where the third language equals the target language, that is Italian, or where the language variation used by the characters of the films turns out to be Italian-accented English.

It must be stressed that in the analyses conducted in chapters 6–8 Minutella acknowledges important aspects connected with the choice of a specific translation strategy as cultural differences or stereotypes prevailing in a particular community. In this regard she points out risks, that a substitution of a variety of English with a variety of Italian entails: “However, were all the varieties conveyed in a single film by Italian ones, we would hear several regional accents each carrying specific local connotations and cultural stereotypes distant from the American or British ones” (p. 384).

In conclusion, the reviewed book by Minutella is a meaningful contribution to translation studies and deserves to be praised. Praiseworthy is the holistic view on the dubbing process in which all agents of this process are taken into consideration. It shows inter alia how important it is to be cognizant of the translation initiator that has a significant influence on the translators’ actions. Other commendable aspects of the book are the choice of an interesting research material, i.e. animated films, which have a peculiar audience, and the impressive extent of the corpus that allows to determine a representative outcome of the study and to derive patterns and strategies in the Italian dubbing of animated films. The book is doubtless worth recommending to AVT researchers interested in multilingualism and language variation in dubbing. Likewise, although the study focuses on dubbing in Italy, the results of it can find references to other countries (cf. p. 2). Due to the accurate description of the dubbing process, all agents involved in it and their roles and tasks in chapter 2, the reviewed monograph can also sparkle beginning practitioners’ and students’ interest.

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