Through the Lens of Translation: English Film Titles in the Armenian Context

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.58726/27382915-2023.2-8

Key words: film title, literal or direct translation, partial transformation, complete transformation, lexical and grammatical transformations, stylistic aesthetic function, semantic adaptation, transliterations

Introduction

The present article introduces the translation tenets and strategies of English film title based on an analysis of the traits and roles of English movie names. Academic atmosphere is too dreary and disputes are always united in the movie title translation research. Many academic articles only handle film names translation in detailed skills, for instance, literal translation, free translation and transliteration. However, they ignore the influences of culture and its versatility in film name translation.

In recent years an increasing number of films in English have penetrated into Armenian reality from various sources. The art of film encompasses many different areas of human reality embodying aesthetic, artistic and commercial value. From this particular perspective the title translation may arouse interest within film watchers and generate special aesthetic value. The acquired interest may result in the enrollment of different layers of society, who will enhance the ability to watch the film and analyze its plot. Films are getting more and more prevalent from the last century. Translating the films' titles would be of a vital importance to promote the cross-cultural communication. The article aims at exploring film title translation peculiarities in general and then delve into specific translation challenges and strategies in two languages. The focus of the article is to shift and boost the attention of film watchers to assist in targeting their interest on the world culture through the suggested films on the one hand, and on the other – to facilitate translators to create a deeper glance and acquire the skill of eye-catching and qualified translations. The above mentioned will create a platform for the audience to be passively enrolled in the European and American movie culture through the translated titles. Film translation is an essential aspect of the global film industry, as it bridges cultural and linguistic gaps between different audiences worldwide. Translating film titles may seem challenging, as it involves capturing the essence of the source title while making it appealing and relevant to the target language or audience. English and Armenian languages have their peculiarities presenting their own set of challenges and opportunities in the realm of film translation.

The 21st century is characterized by the intense links between different cultures in one word - in the notion of globalization. It is a process or state that is relevant to the whole world as one unity. Subsequently the actuality and novelty of our research is
conditioned by the fact that it is an attempt to stand closer to the notion of globalization through film title translation problem. The research is an attempt to draw parallels between the peculiarities of English and Armenian film titles, which may bring a new glance and approach to translation peculiarities in the problem solution.

**The theoretical** point of the research is conditioned by the fact that it may serve as a profound source for the new upcoming researches in the field of translation studies. **Practically** the results, as vivid examples of the research, may serve as a practical part of theoretical subjects, in particular in the courses of Translation Studies and Stylistics. The present study was conducted implementing theoretical-empirical research methods of observation, description, comparison, contrast and analysis.

**On Film Title Translation Observations and Outcomes:** The translation of the films and consequently their titles plays a special role in the cultural communication of different countries, especially for the foreign audience, because it is through the translation that they get the opportunity to understand and meanwhile to appreciate the art and culture of the other countries [6]. Movie is not only an art but also merchandise. The Armenian market is becoming more and more challenging, and there are an increasing number of English films. A beautiful title can make an influence on adding the finishing touch, appealing to audience and giving the viewers enormous energy. Movie titles often not only reflect the main idea of movies but also attract the audience with concise and unfamiliar form. The film name is the first thing through which the viewers can get the idea about the movie, so the translation of English film titles is very important. A perfect translation of the title can express the main thought of the movie and attract the audience’s desire of going to the movie. [9]

While being engaged in the process of translation the translator should take into account definite factors which s/he may face in the process of translation.

- **Cultural Nuances:** Film titles often contain cultural references, wordplays, or idiomatic expressions that might not have direct equivalents in other languages. Translators must find creative solutions to retain the intended meaning and impact of the original title while adapting it to the cultural context of the target audience.

- **Marketing Considerations:** Film titles play a crucial role in marketing and attracting audiences. Translators need to ensure that the translated title not only conveys the essence of the film but also generates interest and curiosity among the target audience.

- **Length Constraints:** Different languages have varying word lengths, which can lead to issues in fitting a concise and impactful title within the character limit. Translators must maintain brevity while preserving the core message of the original title.

- **Sensitive Topics:** Some film titles might deal with sensitive subjects or topics specific to the culture of the source language. Translators need to handle such titles with care to avoid cultural misunderstandings or controversies.

**Translation Peculiarities into Armenian:**

- **Alphabet Differences:** Armenian has its own unique script, which poses
challenges for translators when transliterating film titles from Latin or other scripts. Maintaining the original phonetic and semantic essence while adapting to the Armenian script requires careful consideration.

- Sentence Structure: Armenian has a distinct sentence structure compared to English or other Indo-European languages. Translators need to rearrange words or phrases to ensure a natural flow in the title while preserving its meaning.

- Inflectional Language: Armenian is an inflectional language, meaning words change their form based on grammatical roles and contexts. Translators must handle inflections properly to convey the intended message accurately.[10]

- Cultural Adaptation: Armenian culture has its own unique values, symbols, and idiomatic expressions. Translators must be sensitive to these cultural aspects and ensure that the translated title resonates well with the Armenian audience. Film translation is a complex, multifaceted type of human activity where different nations, different cultures, mindsets, levels of development, traditions and habits can meet. Film titles constitute important units of film translations.

The translation strategies of English movie titles include literal translation, free translation and transliteration.

The researches in focus on the movie title translation skills, methods and the factors should be taken into account in the film title translation [8]. They think translation is a language transformation based on the original content, it is restricted by the readers’ demand, the translators’ translation purpose and the target language culture. And the translation must be consistent with the original text in the content, form, style and function” [8]. Their researches emphasize that the title translation should be faithful to the original content.

Through the British translator Peter Newmark’s [7] idea, there are six functions of language. It includes expressive function, informative function, vocative function, aesthetic function, phatic function and metalinguistic function. The film name is a work of the translator’s diligence; it can highly sum up the main idea of the film and deeply trigger the audience’s appetite of going to movies. Thus, the article will detail the next three functions, containing informative function, vocative function and aesthetic function.

1. Informative Function: The informative function means that film titles conclude the information about the idea of the film to the audience and make them understand the movie and the opinion better. The informative function is a primary function of film names and it is the most important function.

2. Vocative Function: We heard that everyone is curious, if we see something strange and fresh, we will feel excited. And we will take pleasure in learning and readily be affected. The vocative function is just to affect the audience’s sentiments and improve their interest and make the film to appeal to the audience, express the main thought of the film.

3. Aesthetic Function: In order to emerge from the original text, the translation should emphasize restraint, and know about the deep content of the article. The
translator should use the artist's ingenuity to treat the original film, make a new artistic creation and bring audience enjoyment from the title. The aesthetic feeling is a primary element that attracts audience to decide whether they will go to a movie or not. The aesthetic function always happens in the romantic movies.

Films are generally viewed as paratexts and include titles, prefaces and epilogues, which may have special illustrations that accompany the film. Therefore, they all are undoubtedly interrelated. In Armenian when translating a film’s title, the translator must take into consideration religious and cultural backgrounds not to lose them in the translation [11]. Thus, for example, an American film "Seven" tells a story of a murderer who kills his victims in a strange and abnormal way. According to the Bible, there are seven sins that are unforgivable and deserve God's punishment. In the film, the murderer tries to play the role of the God by killing seven people, including himself where each victim is a representative of one of the seven sins. Definitely, the title refers to the seven sins mentioned in the Bible and requires the knowledge of Christianity.

When translating movie titles into Armenian, it is possible to preserve the information function of the movie titles so that the viewer understands the main idea expressed in them. Adaptation strategies are widely used in the translation of film titles, revealing the difficulties of translating film names due to language differences, public consciousness, vocabulary compatibility, equivalence, thinking in relation to language, communication with society and culture, genre-style features and other language systems. Thus, three main strategies for translating movie titles are distinguished: literal or direct translation, partial transformation and complete transformation [1].

The first strategy is a **direct or literal translation** which remains as close to the content and the expression of the original as possible thus trying to recreate the exact meaning of the source text within the grammatical structures of the target language; to remain completely faithful to the director's intentions. Many titles are translated in the following way:

The American action movie "Awakening of Death" has the Armenian equivalent of "Ընծանոթացում դահի" which, apparently, is a direct translation, and it fully conveys the intended meaning. Another example is the American Christmas comedy "Home Alone," the title of which is translated as “Սուրբ մարդու" [13].

The British crime drama "Slumdog Millionaire", which tells the story of an 18-year-old Jamal Malik, who is poor but participates in the TV show "Who wants to be a millionaire?", has its Armenian translation as “Անվճար միլիոնարիում”. We see that this is also a direct translation which performs its function in a proper way. When translating equivalent items transliteration and transcription methods are used in the following way: “The Harry Potter” English film series has been translated into Armenian under the title “Հարի Փոտեր” [12].

**Calque translation** is a translation method in which the word unit of a foreign language is reproduced through the target language while preserving its morphological structure. When tracing, the components of a borrowed word or phrase are translated separately and linked according to a foreign word or phrase model [4]. Calque
translation is the most needed type in the translation of film titles, especially when it comes to names, as the expressions of the languages do not always coincide with those of other languages. Calque translation aims to solve such problems and make the target title more natural and suitable for the audience. But it can sometimes be complicated leading to a misunderstanding. For example, the film title “The Great Gatsby” is translated as “Սարդիկ Գայթբեյ” [14]. The first part “Great” is translated into Armenian as Սարդիկ, and the second part - Գայթբեյ. The first part of the translation is realized through highly literal note, whereas the second part is done through transliteration. Thus, the Armenian translation of the film title is “Սարդիկ Գայթբեյ”, which is an example of a half-length translation. Often the calque translation method is used when the film's name is the protagonist's name, which has already rooted in the target/recipient country. In this case it does not require a proper translation.

Often literal translation is quite effective as a strategy. However, there are cases when the literal translation fails and does not correspond to the source language. For example, the title of the American crime drama film, “Foxcatcher”, is translated into Armenian as “Պոքսեթտեր Պայտագորս”. This is a vivid case in which the direct translation turned irrelevant [16]. Foxcatcher is the name of the wrestling team, and this movie is actually about a multimillionaire E.I du Pont family and wrestling enthusiast John du Pont who has recruited two Olympic gold medalists Mark Schultz and his older brother, David, to help train US wrestlers to compete in national and world Olympics. Nothing is said on catching a fox. Moreover, when we come across the headline “Պոքսեթտեր Պայտագորս” it becomes unclear whether it is a man catching a fox or a man who is skilled in hunting, or may be the hero is as cunning as a fox. Thus, in the case of literal translation, it is the functional and information-equivalent translation that highly elaborates on the basic idea of the source text [15].

The next strategy we have focused is partial transformation. Translators use this term when the original translation could not convey the meaning of the original text. The original name was changed to appeal to a larger audience for other localization reasons.

1. **Lexical transformations**: addition of concept, omission, replacement, concretization, generalization.

The add-on is an extension of the original movie name because of the need to add vocabulary elements to convey the full meaning. It reveals the meaning of the original inadequate vocabulary and sometimes fails to perform the laconic function of the film name [2]. As one of the main features of film names is laconicism, this method is not frequently used. The animated comedy “Paddington” has the Armenian translation as “Փադդինգթոն Պադդինգթոն”. The case of adding in the target language translation is obvious. It aims to convey more information about the film, as well as to convey the mood and the genre of the story.

**The omission** includes the refusal to convey semantically redundant words, the meanings of which are out of place in the translation or which are easily restored in context. One of the reasons for its use is the extreme uniqueness of the English text,
where it is not sufficiently motivated by the content. For example, the title of the English animated film «How to Train Your Dragon» has an Armenian equivalent of «Դրագոնի մասնագիտությունը» The dominant pronoun is omitted in the translation because its inclusion in the translation will make it sound overloaded.

**Substitution (semantic modulation)** is the replacement of one or more parts of a word. Substitutions are made taking into account ideological, aesthetic and moral considerations, as well as the content of the original version of the realities. American comedy film «Get Smart» is translated into Armenian as «Գետ Սմարթ Լութ Բռնչյությունը». The meaning is preserved and can still convey the mood and the plot of the story. The title of the film, «Just Visiting», tells the story of a medieval knight, his serf, who travels to the 21st-century Chicago to meet the knight's descendant. The Armenian translation is «Ջուս Վիզիտինգ Անդիմադրությունը», which is done by transforming the vocabulary, specifying it in the target language. The method of concretization is accompanied by addition, omission and even replacement.

The opposite of concretization is the generalization of the idea. For example, the English title of the movie "Married Life" is translated into Armenian as «Մարիադ Լիֆ». The title of the English film reveals the element of the film, especially about life after marriage. Meanwhile, the Armenian translation has been chosen in such a way that the first impression of the film is perceived as if a film is about marriage. However, this translation is appropriate, because with its chosen title, it expresses the main plot in the same way, which does not cause a strong misunderstanding among the audience. In addition, it corresponds to one of the main features of the film’s name, which is laconic.

2. **Grammatical transformations**: replacement of a sentence structure, rearrangement of sentence members, transpositions, change of word order, replacement of parts of speech.

The English filmonym «War for the Planet of the Apes» has been translated into Armenian as «Առաջացույցի Ապեսի ռեժայսանությունը». The order of the words in the Armenian translation has been changed, which also affects the structure of the sentence and implies a metaphor. We should state that in the Armenian translation the title comprises two units, i.e. two sentences, which sounds brief, more emphatic and impressive.

3. **Stylistic transformations**: descriptive translation (explanation), compensation, replacement of synonym;

   a) Descriptive / explanatory/ translation is used when the title of a film represents elements of a foreign language culture that may be incomprehensible to the target language audience or a proper name that may not always be relevant to a viable film. In both cases there is a complete lack of details. For example, «The Good Lie» movie title has an Armenian equivalent of «Ուտար Զամինի Փրինսեպություն», where the descriptive translation aims to describe and be combined with the summation method.

   Synonym replacement is the replacement of an SL/source language/ word unit with a similar TL/target language/ word unit that has a different semantic nuance, for
example, «The Expendables» - «Միջոցառումները». In the film title, the word expendable has dictionary meanings of օգնելություն, իսկի, իմաստավորական, արձանագրություն-ին. However, none of these words matched the plot of the film, so the translators chose the word օգնեկցություն to convey the meaning in order to achieve adequacy and exactness with the plot of the story.

Sometimes it is impossible to do a translation close enough to the source text due to a number of reasons and factors, therefore, some filmonyms undergo the third strategy: **complete transformation**, also known as semantic, pragmatic or free translation, i.e. a new name for the film is created by the translator. In translation practice, there are cases when literal or direct translation is impossible and the knowledge of the basic methods, techniques and strategies of translation may not be enough. There are various reasons for neglecting the basic principles of translation. One of such reasons is the presence of words that has no equivalents in the target language. For example, non-translatable socio-cultural realia have no equivalent analogues in the foreign culture.

In some cases this may be due to the dissonance of the literal translation which requires the use of transformations based on the logical development of the film's plot. One of the reasons for this transformation is that direct translation cannot become a viable title in Armenian. If the title of the target language consists of only one word, which is an adjective, a verb or an adverb, then such a name may not always be able to perform the basic functions of a movie title, so it will not even give it to the viewer, e.g. a filmonym «Scorched» has an Armenian translation of «Խաչորեց», which is done through a complete conversion, as the literally translated version would cause some dissonance.

In many cases, the synonym, which consists of the name of the main character or the place where the plot of the film unfolds, can be translated in this manner. When translating it freely, the translator can convey the meaning with the help of substitute clauses and create a rather appropriate translated version. Thus for example, the English name «Danny Collins» is translated into Armenian as «Դանի Կոլնս». This title corresponds to the film that has a melodramatic mood, so from this point of view it is perfectly chosen. But the translation lacks the name of the main character, while the translators could have combined the two factors of "transferring the genre" to naming the hero, translating the title of the film as e.g., «Դանի Կոլնս ժամանակ» or «Դանի Կոլնս երգիչություն».

Turning to the source may cause the movie change its original name. It is used when the film is based on a book, biography, article, event or even a song. In such cases, the source may interfere with the translation of the film's name or not even cause difficulty, as in some cases it is better to keep the name of the known source so that the film does not lose its potentially interested audience who is already familiar with source [3]. For example, «Rise of the Guardians» - «Տարածաշրջանայինները», is an animated film based on the William Joyce series «The Guardians of Childhood». So the name of the movie can be translated as «Տարածաշրջանայինները».

Semantic adaptation is the addition of lexical elements, including keywords that
compensate for the semantic or plot insufficiency of the literal translation, expanding it. For example, in the translation of the filronym «Secret of the Wings», translators made a reference to a series of animated films about fairies, adding the characters "Փիլմահուպ" at the beginning of the name: "Փիլմահուպ. Զայթայալսան Մատուրի Սառուբար". Perhaps in order not to reveal the main idea of the plot, the word “Wings” (փիլմահուպ) was replaced by “Զայթայալսան Մատուրի”. According to the plot, the secret was in the wings, and not in the winter forest in which they were. Thus, in the translation, several tricks were used, such as addition and substitution, which ultimately led to the use of semantic and genre adaptation, since this name revealed the genre of the movie and the place in which the events will develop.


For filronym translation the knowledge of all strategies, techniques, methods and adaptations of translation is needed. In some cases, there is a need to apply more than one method and transformation during the translation, combining them and analyzing the results, without departing from the original [5].

The results of the present research can be introduced through the following diagrams:

Based on the analyzed examples, it can be concluded that literal (direct) translation is the most preferred and relevant strategy though the cases are not rare when literal translation does not function properly and the translators have to use the method of omission, skip word items which do not comprise a specific informative value leading to a loss of title conciseness.
Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that partial transformation have become actual by means of addition, omission and substitution.

During the analysis we noted that most of the translations of filmonyms achieved adequacy. The results are shown in diagram below:

Thus, we may conclude that while translating filmonyms from English into Armenian translators mostly succeeded in achieving adequacy.
**Conclusion**

Movie title is the first thing through which the audience can obtain the primary idea. It has four staple features: brief and concentrated, cultural, artistic quality and commercial. It also has three functions: informative, vocative and aesthetic. Different kinds of film names decide different translation strategies. After analyzing the features, functions of the film names, translators can use transliteration, literal translation, and free translation to give audience the best translation. In the translation of the name of the film, the translator must handle source language and target language and find the differences between the source language, the target language and national culture. The translator also should require the aesthetics ability of a film and their sensitivity to cross-cultural communication. It is supposed that using the appropriate translation skills helps to retain their cultural characteristics, try their best to give the people the ideal translation of film titles to appreciate. Translation is a bridge of intercultural exchange; it is not a language translation, but a cultural translation. Thus, in the course of translation, the translator should not only focus on denotational meaning of the word, but also be aware of the cultural significance it expresses. For commercial purposes, the translators have to offer a noticeable movie title to attract the viewers. English movie name translation is a complex work: to make a good name, the translator should have strong language foundation of basic knowledge, the strong cultural background information and translation exercise. In case of Armenian film title translation, the uniqueness of the Armenian language and its rich cultural heritage add an extra layer of complexity to the process. Translators must navigate the challenges posed by alphabet differences, sentence structure, inflectional language, and cultural adaptation to ensure that the translated film titles captivate the Armenian audience while staying true to the original essence of the films. A successful film title translation can contribute significantly to the success of a movie in the Armenian market and create a lasting impact on the audience. Translators should spare no effort to the title translation practice to find the regularity, the advantages and the disadvantages, then apply it to the English movie name translation to make the translation of English film titles be better.

**DOI:** https://doi.org/10.58726/27382915-2023.2-8
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Sources of Data

Перевод через призму: названия английских фильмов в контексте армянского языка

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Резюме

Ключевые слова: заголовки фильмов, дословный или прямой перевод, частичная трансформация, полная трансформация, лексико-грамматические трансформации, эстетико-стилистическая функция, семантическая адаптация, трансляция

Данная статья посвящена особенностям перевода заголовков фильмов из английского языка на армянский.

В последние годы резко возросло количество фильмов, импортируемых в Армению из стран Европы и США. Перевод фильмов является важным компонентом мировой кинопродустрии, поскольку он служит мостом между двумя разными языковыми единицами и культурами. Английский и армянский языки имеют свои особенности с точки зрения языка, культуры и эстетической функции. Цель статьи – изучить особенности перевода названий фильмов, проблемы и стратегии, связанные с переводом на армянский язык.

Проанализировав особенности и функции названий фильмов, переводчики могут использовать транскрипцию, дословный перевод и варианты свободного перевода. Переводчик также должен обеспечить эстетическую ценность переведенного названия фильма. В современном мире кинопродустрия является эстетической и коммерческой ценностью. Перевод заголовков фильмов может повлиять на интерес аудитории. Названия фильмов на английском привлекательны тем, что могут обобщенно представить весь сюжет фильма. При переводе заголовков могут возникнуть языковые и культурно-нравственные проблемы, и переводчики должны найти эффективные способы для их решений.