

“Lost in translation”.
**On some English movie titles and posters and their French and
Romanian equivalents**

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Abstract: The main focus of this article falls on the functionality of movie titles and posters in the language and culture in which they were initially produced and in the languages and cultures they were later transferred to. Apart from the techniques at work in the interlinguistic translation of the titles themselves, approached here as peculiar speech acts, we are also interested in intersemiotic translation aspects, namely in how (successfully) the messages linguistically conveyed in the movie titles are “translated” intersemiotically into the poster images, both in the English originals considered and in their Romanian and French target variants.

Keywords: communication maxims, interlinguistic translation, intersemiotic translation, movie titles, movie posters, speech act

Introduction

Though it may be generally believed that the longer the text the more translation difficulties it may pose, one-word or several-words sequences are often more challenging to render into languages other than that in which they were initially produced than what are traditionally considered “full texts”. Movie titles stand proof for this.

Their translation may often be a challenging endeavor because, on the one hand, in their case more than in others’, what lies behind the words themselves plays a vital role in how these words should be interpreted and, consequently, translated. Movie titles are “labels” of a multimodal and therefore, multi-semiotic product (Hoek 1981: 13, 274, 284), they rely on an assortment of codes – words (the linguistic code), images (the visual code), and sound (the auditory code), associated with the help of various filming techniques (yet another code, as long as the meaning of what is shown depends quite extensively on how it is shown). On the other hand, as few movies are produced with art for art’s sake intentions, most are commodities meant to attract as many viewers as possible, incite their curiosity and senses and make them spend for the entertainment offered (Quali Quanti report 2000, online). The mercantile dimension of the movie industry dictates that both movie titles proponents and translators of these titles should suggest something interesting enough to attract attention, a task that proves not to always be an undemanding one. For the latter, the target language and target culture in which the expectations and interpretation capability of the receiving audience are rooted represent further constraints.

The primary medium via which the movie title, functioning as its “name” (Hoek 1981), is conveyed is the movie poster. It goes without saying then, that special attention has to be dedicated to it as well.

In an attempt to prove all this, we investigated the ways in which five titles of American dramas and five titles of romantic comedies which are quite well-known to the international audience were translated into Romanian and French (the movie titles are provided in the Annex). We do not approach these titles as forming a corpus in the narrow sense the term is

known with in corpus linguistics, i.e. that of a collection of data that is stored electronically and is machine-readable and analyzable. Rather, we consider that they are items of a corpus in the sense accepted in translation studies, i.e. a multilingual collection of source language and target language(s) variants of a text, in our particular case, a corpus made up of movie titles in English, as the source language and their parallel variants in Romanian and French, as the target languages.

This represents the initial stage of a larger research project we plan to carry out so as to include more numerous titles and posters and, while keeping the same three working languages, to start not only from English, but also from French and Romanian as the source languages. Thus, the corpus of source titles, in one of the languages: English, in French or in Romanian, will be compared with the corpus of target titles in the other two languages.

Additionally, we focused on the original and the foreign variants of the ten movies' posters. The approach we took on the posters is admittedly not that of a poster design specialist or professional visual artist, but that of a linguist taking a rather subjective look at an image, in trying to see how successful it is in complementing the title words, and of a translation scholar seeking to compare the effect of the original movie title and that of its translated versions.

The main objective of our investigation was to check the functionality of the translated movie titles, as communication acts directed towards particular (potential) viewers, in given socio-cultural contexts, by comparing it to the functionality of the original titles in the source socio-cultural context. Examination of the functionality of the original movie poster and of its variants in the target cultures was our other research objective.

To meet these objectives, we have taken a three-fold approach to our mini-corpus: a) a translation-oriented one, focusing on the techniques applied in translating the movie titles and on assessing the functionality of the translated versions in the target languages and cultures; b) a linguistic communication-oriented one, focusing on the movie titles as linguistic (speech) communication acts (based on Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) Speech Acts Theory); and c) a visual communication-oriented one, focusing on movie posters as visual communication elements that aid in the interpretation of the movie titles (or, as the case may be, make it more difficult to some extent). Our choice of research perspective is motivated by the fact that a combined language – image approach will hopefully allow us to demonstrate the canonic, fully-legitimate (Searle 1969, Ducrot 1972) relationship between the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary components of a speech act in the case of movie titles on the one hand, and their close connection with their posters, on the other: they jointly construct meaning, influence interpretation of the title words and contribute to creating expectations on the part of the viewers.

Movie titles as speech acts. A perspective from the point of view of translation

A movie title may be considered a locutionary act as long as it is an act of “saying” something, intended as (part of) a thematic, rhematic or mixt (Genette 1987) proposition that carries some informational load.

As an illocutionary act, it primarily “names” the movie and, by doing this in a certain way, it answers (at least partly) the unasked, but implicit, presupposed question “What is the movie about?”. Movie titles may take a variety of forms in terms of illocution: from statements – *Boys Don't Cry*; *Sometimes They Come Back*; advice – *How to Lose a Guy in Ten Days*; *Never Say Never Again*; orders – *Don't Think Twice*; *Don't Blink*; *Come Back, Little Sheba*; questions – *Where Do We Go Now?*; descriptions – *The Cat in the Hat*, *The Bridges of Madison*

County, to combinations of illocutionary acts, e.g. a statement and a question – *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*. Despite this range of acts, we may consider that the main illocutionary function of a movie title is, as we have indicated, that of naming, of “baptizing” the referent it stands for; statements, questions, descriptions, orders, etc. are only secondary, actually infelicitous illocutionary acts. It is true, however, that the type of illocutionary act that the movie producer (and translator) embeds in its title triggers a particular (valid) communicational (conversational) implicature, the modalizing function of the title (Grivel 1973: 178) being thus fulfilled (e.g. if its title is a statement, the implicature triggered, and, at the same time, the expectation created, is that the movie will offer evidence for and further develop what is stated; if it is a question, it is most probably anticipated that the movie will offer an answer to the question; if it is an order, what it is likely to imply is that the movie will clarify whether the order was or was not obeyed, etc.).

Finally, a movie title has a double perlocutionary effect. On the one hand, once a movie is “given a name”, i.e. once the appellative function of the illocutionary act (Bammes 1911: 10, Faust 1972: 92, Kandler 1950: 70) is fulfilled, it will be identified by that name from that moment on. On the other hand, ideally, the movie title stirs interest and leads to the viewers actually watching it, or, on the contrary, if the worst, undesired scenario is enacted, it does not manage to trigger interest and subsequently, it has no bearing on the recipients’ attitude, decisions and behavior in the sense desired. The intended perlocutionary effect may be regarded as a reflection of the contractual function of the movie title, that of a promisory micro-act which prepares the recipient/ spectator for receiving something by creating expectations and, therefore tensions (Dressler 1972: 61). Metaphorically speaking, if the spectator decides to watch the movie, it means that the “contract” between him/ her and the movie producer has been “signed” and will be effected; if s/he decides not to, it means that the “contract” has been placed under his/ her eyes, but s/he refused to “sign” it and so it will not be effected.

A functional translation of a movie title must, therefore, not start from the assumption that the communication between the film producer and the viewers takes place along rigid coordinates and is a process in which a certain input from the former necessarily ensures a certain response from the latter and that, as a consequence, exactly the same words and the same image(s) on the poster should be transferred into the target context.

However, observation of the effective communication maxims (Grice 1975) by both the film producer and the translator is essential if a movie title is to be relevant and functional. Thus, as per the maxim of quantity, it should be expected that titles, both the original and the translated versions, are as informative as possible and that neither more nor less information that is needed is offered; presumption that the title provider is truthful and does not offer information that is false or that cannot be supported by evidence should correspond to the maxim of quality; relevance of what is provided in the context in which it is provided should be linked to observation of the maxim of relation; while it should be anticipated that, if the maxim of manner is not broken, the movie producer as well as the translator do their best to be clear, brief and orderly in what they say, while avoiding obscurity and ambiguity.

In observing Grice’s maxims, the translator may carry over the same communication situation as that of the original, if appropriate, or s/he may create a new one, suitable (i.e. relevant and functional) in the target context. If the original communication parameters are transferred unchanged in the target context, the secondary illocutionary function of the original is preserved. If, however, adaptation of the communication situation to the cultural and knowledge background of the receiving viewers is required, this may bring about the necessity of operating changes on it. Nevertheless, what is to be desired both for the original title and for

the translated one, is that their perlocutionary effect should not misfire, i.e. that they both manage to fulfill their attention-grabbing and change of behavior-determining function (i.e. as said already, they should trigger enough interest as to send viewers to cinema halls or before their home TVs).

To illustrate the type of analysis we carried on, in the following sections, we shall look in more detail at two examples of American movie titles in the group considered and their translations into Romanian and French and comment on them and on the posters that accompany them, along the lines suggested above. Hints at the other examples we considered will also be made.

English movie titles and posters and their Romanian and French equivalents. Romantic comedies

English title: *The Main Event. A Glove Story*, 1979, produced by Howard Zieff

Romanian translation: *Parfumul banilor (The Scent of Money)*

French translation: *Tendre Combat (Tender Combat)*

The Main Event. A Glove Story is the story of Hillary Kramer, a perfume magnate whose accountant robs her and then leaves the country. Going through all of her remaining assets, she discovers a boxer, Eddie “Kid Natural” Scanlon (now more at home with giving driving lessons than with boxing), once purchased as a tax write off. She decides to take him to the boxing ring again, hoping that he would be the key to her getting rich again. Things, however, do not happen to her advantage, since Eddie’s first fights all go awry, either because Hillary’s feeble knowledge of boxing makes her take wrong decisions or because Eddie himself is out-of-shape and generally afraid of being hit. As time and fights go on, the two characters develop an increasingly close relationship, which they ultimately admit to and which brings them in the position of deciding what they want to do about it.

Direct, word-for-word translation of the original title was not the choice either of the Romanian or of the French translator. The former opted for a completely altered title, related, however, to the topic of the movie, but placing emphasis on a different side of the story (subtly suggesting some connection with perfumes, later deciphered in Hillary being in the perfume business, and bringing to the fore the idea that money is the main matter in the movie, which proves to be so upon watching it). A similar translation option has generated the target language movie titles in the following situations of those investigated (switch of emphasis on different aspects of the movies accompanied these choices as well): En. *The Princess Bride* – Ro. *File de poveste (Pages of a Story)*; En. *Brown Sugar* – Ro. *O relație dulce și picantă (A Sweet and Spicy Relationship)*; En. *Must Love Dogs* – Ro. *Anunț matrimonial (Wedding Announcement)*, Fr. *La main au collier (Hand on the Collar)*; En. *The Shawshank Redemption* – Ro. *Închisoarea îngerilor (The Angels’ Prison)*, Fr. *Les évadés (The Escaped)*; and En. *Hacksaw Ridge* – Ro. *Fără armă în linia întâi (In the Front Line without a Gun)*.

Different translation techniques were applied in two other instances: there is one case in our mini-corpus in which the original title was transferred into the target culture: En. *The Princess Bride* was imported into French without the definite article, as *Princess Bride*; and one in which the English title was rendered partly by some other English words and partly by French words, none of which are synonyms to or equivalents of the words used in the original title: *Runaway Bride* – Fr. *Just Married (ou presque) (Just Married (or almost so))*. The fact

that the form and/ or the language of the original title was imported into the target context comes as no surprise, since it has been common practice to preserve the original title of movies when released on a foreign market. This seems to be particularly common with American movies, but also with French or German ones (e.g. *Love story*, *Forest Gump*, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Amélie*, "*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*", etc.).

The French variant of *The Main Event. A Glove Story – Tendre Combat* (*Tender Combat*) – seems ingeniously closer to the original. The English word “glove” may be interpreted in two ways: as a single word referring to the piece of garment worn on hands, and as a clipped word obtained by combining (parts of) “glove” and “love”. The “glove-love” combination in the title is not preserved in the Romanian translation, since there are no lexical resources available in this language that would allow it. However, in the French translation, an (indirect) connection to both the clipped English word “glove” and “love” may be discovered at a closer examination: French words which are semantically related to “love” and “glove” – “tendre” and, respectively, “combat” are used, the latter actually clarifying the metonymy “glove” which consists of the use of the instrument – the boxing glove, for the action performed with its help – the boxing fight itself.

As illocutionary acts, the original title and its translated variants may be set aside from each other, both in terms of their form and in terms of what implicature they may trigger. The original title may be interpreted as a statement: (*This is*) *The Main Event*, followed by an explanation: (*The main event is*) *A Glove Story*, so that the implicature and the expectation created are that the movie will be about something important connected to some glove. It remains for the viewer to find out what kind of glove it is and what role it plays in the “main event”. The Romanian title could be assimilated to a (metaphorical) descriptive act which, as already mentioned, switches the focus to the main feminine character’s professional background and, simultaneously, to making and losing money. *Tendre Combat*, in its turn, may also be considered a descriptive act, which directs implicature in yet another direction – the oxymoronic phrase raises the expectation that the film may be about some fight, which has a “soft” rather than “tooth and nail” (hidden) dimension (without, however, indicating what kind of fight it is).

All three variants of the title offer interpretation keys that work only half-way. They function rather cataphorically, i.e. the spectators need to see the posters and then look forward into the movie in seeking to understand the correlation between the titles and the plot. Thus, if the former are considered in isolation from the poster, Grice’s maxim of quantity is, most probably, deliberately flouted (not enough information is offered), and so is the maxim of manner (obscurity is not avoided).

The intended perlocutionary effect of “naming” the movie apart, that of raising the spectators’ interest seems to have been obtained, since the production managed to attract a sufficient number of viewers in their English, Romanian and French variant to be considered a box office success.

The following are the posters used to advertise the movie in the USA/ Romania and France; to our knowledge, the original poster was used in Romania as well:



The English (Romanian) and the French posters of 'The Main Event. A Glove Story'

It is clear from the very first sight that the two posters are similar, i.e. the title words and the image – the two centers of interest – are intertwined, they mutually condition one other and they complement one another naturally, in a coherent whole. In the English variant, since the two characters are pictured in a boxing ring, wearing specific equipment and captured in a specific posture, it becomes clear which “glove” story the film is about – a boxing one. Likewise, the French poster, preserving the image in the original, also aids in making it obvious what “combat” the movie builds on. The appropriate interpretation of the clipped English word “glove” (glove + love) and of the French word “tender” as suggesting a love story is supplementally sustained by the fact that the two characters placed in the center of the image, against a colour that is lighter and more luminous than the background and separated by the rest of the image by a line that encircles them (a quite conventional way of highlighting something), are a man and a woman. Thus, the two posters, as instances of intersemiotic translation in Jakobson’s (2000 [1959]: 114) acceptance of “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems” (in this case, the title words as transmuted into the poster image), may be considered functional. The two communication maxims – of quantity and of manner, which the title words themselves break when separated from their corresponding posters, are observed once the titles are correlated with the images (which proves the organic connection between the two that we mentioned in the introductory section to this article). When placed on posters, titles are anchored in a context; if this context helps in deciphering their meaning, it may be considered that they have gained relevance and that, therefore, the maxim of relation is also observed (this is what happens with the original and the translation into French of *The Main Event. A Glove Story* and the posters they are associated with).

With three exceptions (one to be discussed at large in the next section), all posters that accompany the movie titles that we investigated aid in at least partly decoding them, even if, as we indicated earlier, the translated titles are most often not word-for-word equivalents of the original. All are quite similar to the *The Main Event. A Glove Story* and *Tendre Combat* posters in that they show close-up pictures of the main character(s), in various postures, suggestive of the movie plot: her arm around his chest and both of them smiling happily, in all three posters of *Brown Sugar*; a man and a woman, face-to-face, but looking away from each other, in all three posters of *Million Dollar Baby*; the main protagonist carrying a wounded soldier, against a war background, in the English and the Romanian versions of the *Hacksaw Ridge* poster (in the French version, the character appears smaller, leaving room for the war atmosphere to be placed emphasis on); a middle-aged man and a woman sitting on a bench and a dog, the symbol

of what connects them (and himself a main character in the movie), sitting between them, in all three posters of *Must Love Dogs*; a man and a woman, he behind her in a protective posture, her smiling and him in a thinking mood, in the English and the Romanian posters of *The White Countess*, and them kissing passionately, in the French version (!); a man and a woman, face to face, apparently indicating there is some conflict between them (like in the *Glove Story* poster), her wearing a wedding dress and both smiling, in all three posters of *Runaway Bride*; and, finally, a princess portrait occupying two thirds of the poster and doubled by a smaller image, in a corner, showing her and a man in full body dimension, in the English and Romanian variants of the *Princess Bride* poster (in the French variant, there are a full-bodied young man and woman, in the upper part of the poster, and an older man, holding a book, and a child, in its lower part – an image that would have better suited the translation into Romanian of the title, which suggests that the story in the movie is connected to some fairy tale (that an older man reads to a child) – *File de poveste*).

The two instances in which the convergence of the title and the poster is not readily evident, in other words, in which nothing or very little of the title words is translated into images, are represented, on the one hand, by the Romanian title of *Shawshank Redemption* – the metaphorical *Închisoarea îngerilor* (*The Angels' Prison*), and its corresponding poster showing portraits of the two male protagonists (the most that can be anticipated based on title and poster together in this case is that the two men are positive characters, “angels”, metaphorically speaking, but there is nothing in the poster that alludes to the prison part). On the other hand, the French word-for-word variant of *Brown Sugar* – *Sucre Brun*, another metaphor, takes a quite significant interpretive effort to connect to the poster showing the couple (though a subtle key to how the title should be understood, i.e. referring to the fact that the protagonists are coloured people, is offered by their complexion in the picture).

An obvious clash between the poster and the title is also evident in the case of the Romanian title of *The Main Event*. A *Glove Story* and the poster by which the movie was advertised locally (the clash is enhanced, on the one hand, by the fact that the title translated into Romanian and the imported original poster were not present in the same medium and, on the other, by that there is no correspondence between the Romanian title and the English one). The English title aside, the correlation of *Parfumul banilor* (*The Scent of Money*) with the image showing the two ready to fight boxers, the man and the woman, being quite difficult to understand, the poster no longer contributes to disambiguation of the title words as it does in the English and the French versions, and, consequently, it does not contribute to either of the communication maxims being observed. If, in these two variants, the titles represent the first step towards anticipating the movie plot and the poster represents the second (one actually making the other easier to interpret), the association of the Romanian title with the original poster image does not allow the spectator to go farther than the first step – s/he remains trapped between two interpretive options: either that offered by the Romanian title, or that offered by the image and the English title. Nevertheless, we have to admit that, judging by how many viewers the movie attracted in Romania, this did not diminish their interest and, consequently, the ideal perlocutionary effect of title and poster combined was obtained.

English movie titles and posters and their Romanian and French equivalents. Dramas

English title: *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, 1975, produced by Miloš Forman

Romanian translation: *Zbor deasupra unui cuib de cuci* (*Flight over a Cuckoo's Nest*)

French translation: *Vol au-dessus d'un nid de coucou* (*Flight over a Cuckoo's Nest*)

The central character of the movie is criminal Randle McMurphy, who, after serving a sentence in prison for rape of a young girl, is moved to a mental institution for the rest of his sentence, though not really mentally-ill. One day, he steals the hospital bus, planning to go fishing with some of the other patients, which brings him the news that his sentence will be changed into an indefinite one. Faced with this gloomy perspective, he starts making plans to escape. In the meantime, McMurphy coopts “Chief” Bromden, another patient, into throwing a secret Christmas party for their friends, after Ratched, the pitiless, very strict head nurse leaves work. Following a night of partying, McMurphy and Chief prepare to escape, inviting Billy, yet another patient, to come with them. He turns them down, not yet ready to leave the hospital, but he has his share of entertainment having sex with Candy, one of the two girls McMurphy sneaks into the ward. Nurse Ratched arrives in the morning to find the place in disarray, most of the patients unconscious and Billy and Candy together. The nurse threatens Billy that she would tell his mother about her son's escapade, which overwhelms him with fear and drives him to commit suicide. Enraged, McMurphy strangles the nurse and is severely punished for his deed: he undergoes lobotomy. When Chief discovers the lobotomy scars on McMurphy's forehead, he smothers his friend with a pillow, thinking that his life is no longer worth living like that. He himself escapes from the asylum, throwing a hydrotherapy cart through the window and running away.

Unlike in the case of the romantic comedy title we talked about in the previous section, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* was apparently translated directly both in Romanian and in French (direct translation proper was applied in the case of En. *Brown Sugar* – Fr. *Sucre brun* (*Brown Sugar*); En. *Must Love Dogs* – Fr. *Doit aimer les chiens*; En. *Million Dollar Baby* – Ro. *O fată de milioane* (*A Girl of Millions*), Fr. *La fille à un million de dollars* (*The Girl of One Million Dollars*); En. *The White Countess* – Fr. *La Comtesse Blanche* (*The White Countess*)).

However, at a closer look, it becomes evident that it was transposition rather than word-for-word translation that was applied to obtain the equivalents of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* in both target languages. The indefinite pronoun “one” must have been erroneously interpreted as an indefinite article and it was deleted in Romanian and French, where the naturally sounding variants in the context given do not contain it. This triggered a further mistake – the past tense of the English verb “fly” – “flew”, was mistaken for its corresponding noun – “flight”, and translated accordingly, as “zbor” and “vol”, respectively. Transposition was accompanied by structure shift, imposed by the differences between the English synthetic genitive, where the modifier precedes the noun: “cuckoo's nest”, and the Romanian and French genitives, whose only possible neutral, unemphatic form presupposes that the modifier follows the noun: “cuib de cuci”, “nid de coucou” (lit. “nest of cuckoo”).

In English, the slang word “cuckoo” is used figuratively in the movie title and refers to a lunatic, a crazy person; “a cuckoo's nest”, then, stands metaphorically, and quite obviously, for an asylum, a lunatic house. The Romanian equivalent of “cuckoo” – “cuc (pl. cuci)”, is mostly used with its direct meaning and, though it may also be employed with figurative meanings in a number of idiomatic phrases, none of these refers to lunatics (e.g. “singur-cuc” (lit. cuckoo-lonely) = completely lonely; “de flori de cuc” (lit. of cuckoo flowers) = completely

useless; “lapte de cuc” (lit. cuckoo milk) = something absolutely impossible. The situation is similar in French, where the number of phrases is, however, reduced as compared to Romanian (“maigre comme un coucou” (lit. slim as a cuckoo)).

Thus, the allusive potential of the English title is unfortunately lost both in its Romanian and in its French translation, which means the communication maxims of quantity, relation and manner are all broken.

The kind of associations that the original and the translated titles may trigger makes them differ at the illocutionary level. Though, formally, all of them are descriptive acts, the implicit association of the cuckoo’s nest with an asylum in the English version will most probably yield expectations that the action of the movie will be set in such an institution. In addition, the English original title may narrow down the spectators’ expectations even more, if they have the necessary cultural background to know that it is part of a nursery rhyme (that one of the patients recalls in Ken Kesey’s best seller with a homonymous title, on which the movie is based):

Three geese in a flock:
One flew east, one flew west,
One flew over the cuckoo's nest.
O-U-T spells OUT
Goose swops down and plucks you out.

The rhyme is not reproduced as such in the movie, but if one is familiar with it, one may anticipate at least that, as each goose in the flock flies a different direction, so the characters in the movie will have different fates or the plot will develop in three different directions. The former hypothesis is the one that connects the nursery rhyme to the movie ending, when two patients die (Billy commits suicide and McMurphy is smothered by Chief, so “one flies east, one flies west”) and a third, Chief, manages to run away from the asylum (so, the third “flies over the cuckoo’s nest”).

In the translated versions, in the absence of evident connotations, the title words are not relevant in the sense the English ones are. They are rather likely to be taken at face value and consequently, either to create the expectation that the story in the movie will be connected to an actual flight over a cuckoo’s nest or to leave the potential viewers uncertain as to what exactly the movie may be about (depending on their imagination, a multitude of options are possible). Nevertheless, it is exactly the fact that they do not create expectations of a particular kind that may stir the spectators’ interest and curiosity.

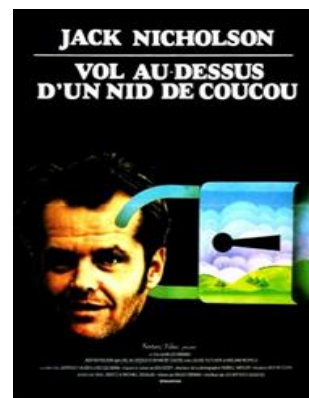
A similar situation in which the original carries cultural connotations that the translation does not convey and so, it does not succeed into creating the same kind of expectations, is that of the English title *The White Countess* translated into Romanian as *Contesa de gheață* (*The Ice Countess*). The metonymy resorted to, in which the material – “ice”, replaces the colour it is characterized by – “white”, is misleading, since the movie, set during the Russian Civil War, is about a Russian countess, a representative of the monarchy, known, together with the conservatives and liberals as “the Whites”, in opposition with their enemy at the time, the communists, known as “the Reds”. There is a difference, however, between *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and *The White Countess*. If, in the former case, the cultural element alluded to in the original is no longer recognizable in the target language when the word-for-word translation technique is applied, in the latter, it is exactly the fact that the word-for-word translation technique is not applied that leads to loss of the cultural allusion in the English title.

There are two reverse situations in our corpus as well: i.e. the translated versions, not the original, are the ones that are so chosen as to offer cultural hints. These are the Romanian version of *Runaway Bride – De bună voie și nesilită de nimeni* (*Willingly, not by Coercion*), which is actually the Romanian formula used during a marriage ritual to indicate that the decision to wed represents the person’s free will; and the French version of *Hacksaw Ridge – Tu ne tueras point* (*Thou shalt not kill*), the sixth of the Ten Commandments in the Bible (alluding to the fact that the main character’s religion does not allow him to fire guns). Both these translated versions may be thus considered more relevant for the target audience than if they had been translated literally and so, more successfully obeying the communicative maxim of relation.

Below are the posters that were used to advertise *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, the English and the Romanian side by side, and the two French versions below them:



The English and the Romanian posters of 'One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest'



The French posters of 'One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest'

Like in the case of *The Main Event. A Glove Story*, where the posters offer clues to at least part of what the spectators may expect, the English poster of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* help to disambiguate the title one (small) step farther: the barbed wire fence is symbolic

of confinement, of a place where people are deprived of freedom, much longed and hoped for by the character, as one can understand from his upward happy gaze; the broken red lock, a detail that catches the eye in an image dominated by grey and black, may suggest that freedom is ultimately obtained. Thus, when contextualized by being coupled with the poster image, the title becomes more informative and relevant and, simultaneously, less obscure (which contributes to reinforcement of the communication maxims of quantity, relation and manner).

One of the French posters, though fully identical to the English one, is not equally functional: since no connection can be established between the French translation of the title and the image that accompanies it, they do not work jointly in creating expectations on the part of the viewers, but rather create divergent expectancies, each on its own (and so, the above mentioned maxims are further on not obeyed). In the Romanian poster, the main character is placed emphasis on – the consequence of his half upper body occupying almost the whole space. Though different, it also fails to form a connection with the title words and, as a consequence, to direct the viewers on a clear interpretative path (we would say that, in this sense, it is even weaker than the English and its corresponding French versions, in which the idea of confinement is rendered more poignantly by the fence and the barbed wire above it being devoted more space in the image as compared to here, where only a very small part of both can be seen in the background). Hence, the prospect that it leaves the viewers with is the very general one that the story in the movie is that of a male character and that his story is connected to or unfolds in a strictly monitored space.

Finally, the most difficult to interpret and the most heavily loaded in metaphorical terms is the French poster picturing the head of the main character trapped in a lock, against a black and therefore dismal background. The image possibly touches on the dark side of the story: the lock around the character's head may suggest restriction of his freedom of thinking (possibly, about a serene, peaceful world outside, as pictured on the lock), unlike the barbed-wired fence in the other posters, which alludes to lack of freedom of movement rather than freedom of thinking. Since focus falls, like in the Romanian poster, on the main character, the expectation created is again mainly that the story may be about a man and, this time, that either this man has his own mental problems or is caused mental suffering by the others. Once more, the connection between the title words and the picture is not very easy to decipher (the metaphor not being a conventional one) and, subsequently, it does not lead too far into anticipating the movie plot. This time, too, the poster does not help in the maxims of quantity, relation and manner to be fully and functionally obeyed.

So far, the maxim of quality, requiring that what is said should not be false and should be supported with evidence, has not been brought into discussion. This is because it is the only one of the four for which knowing the title and seeing the poster is not enough to decide whether it is obeyed or not. Watching the movie is a must if one has to reach a conclusion in this sense. It may be anticipated, though, that the movie will contain the evidence based on which this conclusion may be reached and that this evidence will demonstrate that the movie producer's and the translator's choices were not random, but connected, more or less subtly, to the movie plot. It is actually the need to validate the expectations created by the movie title and poster that attracts viewers in front of the screen and thus contributes to bringing about their perlocutionary effect.

Conclusion

The translation of movie titles and the choice of posters that accompany them, i.e. interlinguistic and intersemiotic translation in the case of these two elements by which a movie

is identified, is not always a straightforward and easy endeavor. The difficulty seems to be rooted not so much in the words and the images themselves, but in what there is *behind* and *between* them and needs to be transmitted in a relevant and functional way to the target audience, and which makes the act of communication via these two means a peculiar one at all levels: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary.

The two examples that we commented on in this article have hopefully offered some hints as to what consequences the choice of certain translation techniques and the coupling of movie titles with poster images, both in the source and in the target language and culture, may have on the expectations that they create to the viewers and on how successfully they fulfill their main advertising function. We have highlighted the situations in which the choice of words, either in the original title, or in its translated versions, led to both obeying and flouting Grice's communication maxims of quantity, relation and manner and those in which the posters contributed or not to disambiguation of what was less clear at the linguistic level. What we did not say is that the fact that a break in smooth communication between the potential audience and the movie producer/ translator occurs as a consequence of translation choices made or poster images chosen does not necessarily mean that the perlocutionary effect of the title and the poster will fail to ever appear (in fact, our examples, demonstrated that this is not always the case). Rather, the conclusion that may be drawn is that there are levels of closeness or distance between the expectations the movie titles and posters create to particular viewers in a well-defined culture and what the movie really has to offer and, therefore, levels of their functionality. We dare say that the smaller the difference between the two, the greater the chance that the spectators will make an informed choice, will want to watch the movie, will do it from beginning to end and will consider it a pleasant and satisfying experience.

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Annex

Romantic comedy titles:

The Main Event. A Glove Story, 1979; Ro. *Parfumul banilor (The Scent of Money)*; Fr. *Tendre combat (Tender Combat)*

The Princess Bride, 1987; Ro. *File de poveste (Pages of a Story)*; Fr. *Princess Bride*

Runaway Bride, 1999; Ro. *De bună voie și nesilită de nimeni (Willingly, not by Coercion)*; Fr. *La mariée est en fuite (The Bride is on the Run)/ Just married (ou presque) (Just Married (or almost so))*

Brown Sugar, 2002; Ro. *O relație dulce și picantă (A Sweet and Spicy Relationship)*; Fr. *Sucre brun (Brown Sugar)*

Must Love Dogs, 2005; Ro. *Anunț matrimonial (Wedding Announcement)*; Fr. *La main au collier (Hand on the Collar)/ Doit aimer les chiens (Must Love Dogs)*

Drama titles:

One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest, 1979; Ro. *Zbor deasupra unui cuib de cuci (Flight over a Cuckoo's Nest)*; Fr. *Vol au-dessus d'un nid de coucou (Flight over a Cuckoo's Nest)*

The Shawshank Redemption, 1994; Ro. *Închisoarea îngerilor (The Angels' Prison)*; Fr. *Les évadés (The Escaped)*

Million Dollar Baby, 1999; Ro. *O fată de milioane (A Girl of Millions)*; Fr. *La fille à un million de dollars (The Girl of One Million Dollars)*

The White Countess, 2005; Ro. *Contesa de gheață (The Ice Countess)*; Fr. *La Comtesse Blanche (The White Countess)*

Hacksaw Ridge, 2016; Ro. *Fără armă în linia întâi (In the Front Line without a Gun)*; Fr. *Tu ne tueras point (Thou shalt not kill)*.

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