

## What is the Successful Film Localization? The Case Study of Dub Localized Songs in Garfield Story

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### Abstract

*Animated feature films, intended for the entertainment of family and children in particular, could be considered a real challenge for localizers. The paper aims at analyzing dub localization of songs in the animated film Garfield's 2as compared to the original –Garfield Story. The research has revealed that the songs have undergone the greatest modification during localization: the original sound tracks have been replaced by Lithuanian popular songs, both pop and folk. The verses have been trans-created, the original music tracks changed or, on the contrary, added to replace the plain monologues in the original version of the film. It has turned out that the overall success of the film dub localization mostly relies on the proper choice of popular local actors, who have got the skills to make a show by their voices and thus attract the viewers to the cinemas in the target culture.*

**Keywords:** localization, dubbing, cultural adaptation, translation, film, Garfield story

### 1. Introduction

Global interactions and information exchange have pushed translation activities, adaptation and localization to a high peak. Audio-visual translation and localization has become indispensable nowadays. Films –animated feature films in particular – are entertaining lots of viewers, especially if they are well localized to the target audiences.

One of the ways to increase the popularity of a particular film might be the use of dub localization. By dub localization, we mean a process of altering the dubbed translation of the source language film and adapting it to the target local audience. During the dubbing process many necessary changes might be made. Thus, as Lambert (2011) notes, the line between the localized product and the new one might be very thin.

The paper aims at analyzing the complex issue of dub localization, songs in particular, in case of the original animated feature film *Garfield Story*(2004) and its Lithuanian counterpart *Garfield's 2*(2006). To accomplish the aim, the comparative descriptive analysis has been used. *Garfield Story* was directed by Peter Hewitt and produced by Davis Entertainment for 20th Century Fox, and features Bill Murray as the voice of Garfield. It was released in the United States on June 11, 2004. Reviews of the movie were generally very mixed, although Murray's voice work received some positive notices.

The film *Garfield as 2* was dub localized into Lithuanian in 2006. In five days this film has earned 142,400 Lt. It has climbed into the third position among the most profitable films of the year 2006, earning 676,400 Lt, after the top ranked *Ice Age 2*(1,63 mln. Lt.) and *The Da Vinci Code* (1,26mln. Lt.) (Komedijs, Garfieldas 2“, 2006).

The paper is subdivided into two major parts – first it provides the general overview of adaptation and translation problems usually encountered in the process of film localization, songs in particular, and the second part discusses the results of the empirical analysis, comparing the songs in the two film versions –English and Lithuanian.

### 2. Dubbing or Subtitling? Localization and Dub Localization

Over the past decades, localization has become an important issue for companies that want to sell their products internationally. In film industry localization is the key factor in order to gain international acceptance and success.

Esselink (2000:3) defines localization as a process during which a product is linguistically and culturally adapted to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold. In order to perform a good localization, one has to be aware of culture, traditions, and values of the target market. Consequently, dubbing dialogue into different languages involves a great deal of skill on the part of the translator as well as the voice actor. While some lines may be relatively simple to translate, many more must be condensed (for subtitling) and changed to fit the culture of the target language. A plot point that hinges on a phrase with a double meaning can completely go over an audience's head if the translation is not handled carefully. In some cases, the translation might be even more complicated if regional dialects are to be reflected in the target language. Thus the overall process of film localization is a complicated issue and deserves a thorough analysis.

According to Lambert (2011), dub localization, also often simply referred to as localization, of which it is a form, is the practice of altering the dubbed translation of a foreign language film or television series to further adapt it for a local audience. Dub localization is a popular form of translation of animated films. While some localization is virtually inevitable in translation, the controversy surrounding how much localization is "too much" is often much-discussed in such communities, especially when the final dub product is significantly different from the original. Some criticize extensive localization, while others appreciate it. Some dub localizations are considered so extreme as to have produced an entirely different show or film. With the reference to Szarkowska (2005), "dubbed films may frequently appear to the viewer to be brand – new products rather than transformed ones". Among all kinds of film translation, dubbing is the one that interfere the most with the structure of the original. Although the two most widely established forms of film translation, dubbing and subtitling, differ greatly in character, it is by no means obvious which of the two is superior. Research suggests that although there are clearly established preferences amongst viewers in favor of one or another, these vary between different countries and the tendency seems to be that viewers in so-called subtitling countries such as the Netherlands or the Scandinavian countries state subtitling as their preferred form of translation, whereas viewers in the so-called dubbing countries such as France, Italy, Germany or Lithuania, clearly prefer dubbing– withsocial class, education background and the individual's own command of a foreign language proving to be important factor influencing the strength of the preference stated.

The author of *Dubbing* Anthony Burgess (1980:297) states that "dubbing implies not just the addition of sound to film shot silently. It affects an original sound track to be modified either partially or totally". Burgess defined *dub* in three ways: "a) to make a new recording out of an original tape or record or track in order to accommodate changes, cuts or additions;b) to insert a totally new sound track, often a synchronized translation of the original dialogue; c) to insert sound into a film or tape".(Burgess 1980:297)

All these three definitions share one very important property – the process of dubbing changes the original language. As a result, it is being modified, trans-created and adapted as well as localized to a target market. Dubbing is one way of ensuring that due emphasis is given to the respective national language. Ferrari (2008:102) explains that hearing one's own language spoken not only provides confirmation of its importance and relevance in an increasingly homogenized world, it is arguably a more potent way of reinforcing a sense of national identity or autonomy than reading the subtitles text. The author continues arguing that "dubbing allows for more possibilities in terms of *manipulation*, *nationalization*, and *indigenization* of the new texts, as compared to subtitling, and offers an ideal ground for a discussion about cultural and national specificity in the industrial practices of media import/export"(Ferrari 2008:104).

Dubbing allows texts to become culturally and nationally specific, thus, reinforcing a sense of national identity and national belonging. The effective re-creation of original linguistic significance usually does not simply result from a literal translation. Thus, a good translator is not particularly concerned about giving a paraphrase of the original version. He or she focuses instead on the re-creation of those linguistic relations that ultimately produce specific feelings and reactions in the audience. Thus, significant changes from the original version which are more than exact conversion could be described as *adaptation* rather than a simple *translation* (Ferrari, 2008:105). Dubbing, as Burgess (1980:298) notes, is subjected to constraints of a different type. One major problem is presented by finding suitable voices to match the voices of the characters of the original film. In practice, this is not as difficult a task as it may seem since research has shown that there is absolutely no need for the voices of original actor and a dubbing actor to be similar.

Viewers tend to accept a particular voice as that of a given person, and apparently it is only in cases where one actor dubbing a particular character has to be replaced by another for one reason or another that viewers complain that the new voice is unnatural or artificial (Trosborg, 1997:291).

Dubbing actors are classified according to a limited number of voice-types or profiles that neatly cut up the whole spectrum of film characters, generally resulting in a few broad categories: villain, hero, heroine, clown, vamp, child, and so on. Dubbing actors do not tend to be creative but rather imitate the dominant speech and intonation patterns, which make each category even more paradigmatic. Children are dubbed by women. Male characters are usually dubbed with low voices, unless the character is to be laughed at or is effeminate.

### 2.1 Dub Localization of Animated Films in the Lithuanian Context

Audiovisual translation is regulated by the law in Lithuania. Article 13 of the law on National Language of the Republic of Lithuania states, that “public audiovisual programs, films in Lithuania must be translated into the national language or broadcasted with Lithuanian subtitles“(Lietuvos Respublikos valstybinės kalbos įstatymas, 2002). Lithuania is considered to be a voice-over country because the majority of foreign production is voiced-over with some exceptions for Russian films and programs, in case of TV broadcasting. Films, on the contrary, in Lithuania are usually subtitled with the exception for animated movies for children that are dubbed.

Some authors consider dubbing to be equal to film localization. Szarkowska notes, that “dubbing is film localization method popular in some Western European countries. The dialogue is spotted, translated, edited and then the hired native-speaker actors with similar voices to the original speak the dialog, lip-syncing with the original” (Szarkowska, 2005). Poul Wells (2002:1) states that animation is arguably the most important creative form of the twenty-first century. Animation as an art, an approach, aesthetics and an application informs many aspects of visual culture, and functions on a range of new communication technologies. Long dismissed as merely children’s entertainment, only in recent years it is recognized as an art. Nowadays animated films are acknowledged and much more appreciated.

The majority of animated films in Lithuania are dubbed by the voices of the famous actors, which results in attraction of children and adult audiences to the cinemas. According to the statistical data, Lithuania is the country where animated films are extremely popular. During the period of Independence, since 1991 among the most popular 30 movies, 16 of them were animated films. The most popular film of all times in Lithuania is *Ice Age 3*. This film has attracted 232, 7 thousand viewers and has earned 3, 38 mln. Lt. *Ice Age 3* has been dubbed into Lithuanian by the famous actors: A. Sakalauskas, V. Šapranauskas, D. Siaurusaitis, etc. According to the critics, the success of this film might be allotted to dub localization and the voices of the well-known and popular actors (Kokiuskino aktorius mėgstalietuviai, 2010).

Paradoxically, but the film under study – *Garfield Story* has been considered an absolute disaster, while in Lithuania it has gained the great success. The main character – the cat, was dubbed by the famous actor V. Šapranauskas (the localized script including free interpretation by A. Rožickas). The result was successful to such an extent that many viewers have come back to watch the film several times in order to enjoy the voice show of the famous actor V. Šapranauskas, who has dubbed the main character. This film has collected 109 thousand spectators and has earned 1, 09 million Lt. (Kaipatsiranda animacijos stebuklai, 2010).

To compare with the original versions of the films, popularity of them differs greatly. The movies that have become top hits in Lithuania, have not gained attention in the USA. The rating of *Garfield Story* was no good at all, only 1, 5 million people in the whole USA have attended the movie. Opposite to attraction of V. Šapranauskas as voice in the movie, Bill Murray, who has voiced the main character in original version, was not that popular. Bill Murray says that he only agreed to make *Garfield* because he thought the script was written by the Coen Brothers. But it wasn't, it was written by Joel Cohen.

### 2.2 Cultural Adaptation and Translation of Songs

*Cultural adaptation* explores how creative ideas are packaged and nationalized, to paraphrase A. Moran (2009), to meet local taste in entertainment media, ranging from motion pictures to mobile phones. That is why before deciding how much adaptation is necessary the translator has to consider the purpose of the document in terms of its use and audience.

Adaptation takes the ideas of the source text and re-writes them in a completely new way. The source text may be altered to appeal more to a new audience or it may be placed in a different setting.

Stupples (2009) explains that adaptations are more common in literary, poetic or advertising media, where you can choose to resign either media (form) or literal meaning in favor of conveying a particular message or emotion, if one or the other is considered more important to the individual situation. Most “translated” poetry is also the result of adaptation and not translation, because it is nearly impossible to convey the same emotions to readers of another culture while retaining both the same form and the same words as the source poem. Poetry is very personal and highly culture-oriented; metaphors change from culture to culture, as do stylistic preferences. This does not mean that poetic translations are never done, but they are extremely rare. To be more precise, Beaton (2000) suggests the term *cross-cultural adaptations*. According to him, several different scenarios should be considered before deciding which ones fit the best to the target culture. Cross-cultural comparisons are vital to reach the good final results.

In song adaptation, the sense and facts of the source texts are often changed. The task of translating songs fits into a traditional, linguistic definition of translation as the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent material in another language. Translator can choose how correctly to render the meaning, however when the case is song translation, to find equivalent is not so easy. So Johan Frazon (2005:264) suggests using adaptation, because the target text lyrics must be adapted to the musical line. In song translation, adaptation may well be the only possible choice. According to Frazon (2005:266), “fidelity is what distinguishes a translated song from all-new lyrics to old music; formatting is what may transform a useless (literal) lyric translation into a singable and performable one”.

Gutt (2000:107) suggests using indirect translation in case of songs, where the translator decides what aspects in translation should resemble the original. Furthermore, indirect translators do not “insist on identity of the message in every detail; they are content with a high degree of approximation” (Gutt, 200:97). According to this, the translator is free to choose what aspects should be retained in translated and what might be changed. Thus, the trans-creation of lyrics in songs is an acceptable form of adaptation. The important thing is how these changes are perceived and embedded in the target cultural context.

### 3. Analysis of Song Dub Localization in Case of *Garfield Story –Garfield2*

Translation and adaptation of songs is a challenging task, especially in case of film dubbing, where all elements of songs might be changed: rhythm, lyrics or music. Finally the song might be replaced by a completely different one, which is familiar to the target audience. Transposition of song lyrics provides a free way to such adaptation. In this process of trans-creation it is important how the changes are suited to the original lyrics and the general context.

The analysis has revealed that in case of *Garfield2*, eight songs have been absolutely modified: two of them have been trans-created inserting a totally new sound track with trans-created lyrics (illustrations 1 and 2), in four cases a totally new sound track and lyrics have been added to replace the existing monologues (3, 4, 5, 6) and in two cases the lyrics have been changed, but the original melody preserved. The remaining five songs did not undergo such drastic changes and were kept close to the original version. Further on a more detailed analysis of those eight afore mentioned cases is provided.

The following examples illustrate how the source language songs are trans-created inserting a totally new sound and lyrics track.

EN	LT + back translation of the modified text
1. <i>Rule, Britannia, Britannia catches waves.</i>	1. <i>Nesikankinkdėlmedalio, nevertakakot.</i> (don't worry about the medal, no reason to shit on)
2. <i>Oh, the female ferrets sing this song, Nigel, Nigel, The female ferrets can't be wrong...</i>	2 <i>Šaliakeliokarčema, ten gyveno Naidželomerga</i> (the pub is near the road, where Nigel's girl lives)

In the original version *Rule Britannia* (1) is Britain's *defacto* National Anthem. In order to be closer to the meaning, in the Lithuanian version “Trysmilijonai” by Marijonas Mikutavičius has been chosen, the famous song which is considered to be the sports' anthem. Still, the lyrics of it have been slightly modified, some extra slang words added.

In the second example (2) the Lithuanian song was chosen according to the context of the film. In the movie the ferret is intoxicated from drinking cooking sherry. Accordingly, a well-known Lithuanian song has been chosen with some lyrics changed to suit the general plot.

Instead of the original line: *Šaliakeliokarčema, ten gyvenošinkorka/ (the pub is near the road, where a hostess lives)*, the modified line is entered: *Šaliakeliokarčema, ten gyveno Naidželomerga/ (the pub is near the road, where Nigel's girl lives)*. In the English version the ferret is singing an absolutely different song. These songs have been adapted following the context of the movie with the final goal to fit the cultural understanding of the Lithuanian audience. The scriptwriter was able to find equivalents that would make the dub localized movie even more attractive.

Moreover, the Lithuanian localizers of the film have moved outside the strict framework of the script and have converted some original text, mostly the monologues of the cat in the original version, into the songs. The melody was adapted from the popular Lithuanian songs and the lyricstrans-created according to the plot. The following examples illustrate how the original text of a monologue was replaced by the song in the target language:

EN	LT + back translation of the modified text
3. Yeah, we'll need about a half a pound of this.	3. Šoksime virtuvėje posūriolietumi. (we'll dance in the kitchen under the cheese rain)
4. Hup, hup, hup, hup	4. Nuonuo, jeiguturėčiau žirgelį, nešknėšk... (huphup, if I had a race-horse, go, go..)
5. Bombs away! I love this pond.	5. Plaukė žąselė per ežerėli (the little goose was swimming in the pond)
6. Get up! Get down. Get up! This baby is spring-loaded	6. Kasnešokinės, kasnešokinės kasnešokinės (who will restrain from jumping)

The song *Šoksimesgatvėje* (3) is performed by a famous Lithuanian pop group *Dinamika*. The target audience recognizes the song by the well-known melody and the beginning of the verse, which is later on recreated to fit into the plot of the movie (we'll dance in the kitchen under the cheese rain). Original verse of the song sounds – *we'll dance in the street under the rain of love*. This song perfectly fits into the scene where the cat was in the kitchen and under the actual cheese rain. In the original version of the movie, the cat does not sing, he simply states the lack of cheese. So in case (3) the movie scene containing the bear monologue is recreated into the song episode.

The following examples illustrate the cases when the source text is rendered into the song in the target language. All these songs are adapted according to the film scenes, thus this kind of adaptation makes film scenes more interesting and entertaining, especially for children, when they hear the songs that they know. The authors of the Lithuanian text probably were seeking to use the most popular and well know songs that would be familiar to the viewers of any age.

In example (4) the Lithuanian folklore song has been used, although the lyrics do not exactly correspond to the song, it was rearranged and adapted to the corresponding plot. In the English version the words *hup, hup* have been replaced by *nuonuo* and the lyrics of the song added – *if I had a race-horse, go, go..*.

The next example (5) comes from the Lithuanian folklore song *Plaukė žąselė/ the little goose was swimming*. This song is well known to almost all Lithuanians, whenever one sees the goose in the pond, this line comes to one's mind. In the original version of the film, there is no melody track in this scene – whereas in the Lithuanian version, the monologue is transformed into a song, similar to case (3).

In case (6), the monologue of a cat is converted into a song as well. And this song fits into the scene in the movie perfectly. The meaning of the words is very close to the original, only the melody is added. Thus we see that even in 4 cases we have the addition of song tracks to replace the monologues of the film characters and this case of localization adds a shade of entertaining mood which is very well understandable and appreciated by the target audience. The translator can choose how correctly to render the meaning, however, in case of song translation, to find an equivalent it is not so easy. Sometimes the translator has to employ various strategies to render the meaning, considering that the lyrics of the target text are well adapted to the musical line. The following example (7) illustrates the case when some parts of lyrics are translated and some parts are adapted or localized. The plot of the translated song remains very similar to the original, but *pasta* is changed by a special Lith. cultural realia – *kugelis* (*potatoes dish*). Moreover, the names of two drinks are added *kava/coffee*, *kakava/hot chocolate*. As they sound very similar *kava/kakava*, they make the pun which is attractive and adds humor to the song.

EN	LT
7.... <i>I sleep on a bed that's real fluffy I eat from a plate made of gold They feed me until I get stuffy My <b>pasta</b> never gets cold All of my devoted subjects They know it's all about Folks are so loyal to this cat who is royal</i>	7.... <i>Šokinėjauant minkštomatraso, valgau <b>kugelį</b> koktinkorui. Ir į lovą man nešakavą, <b>kakavą</b>. Ir dabar visiparodom, ką turim pietums. Visopasaulio žmonės, arkliai, žvėris man lenkias.</i>

The following example (8) illustrates the case when the song in the source language is rendered into absolutely different meaning in the target language.

EN	LT
8. <i>They give me cat scratch fever Cat scratch fever I got a bad scratch fever.</i>	8. <i>Aštokstipas, opa. Ašišdurinėjau, auu, nužudykit mane ir pakaskit negesintų kąsnių krūvoj</i>

“Cat scratch fever” is a song performed by Ted Nugent. It fits to the film scene where the cat feels powerful and mighty in the original text. The Lithuanian version is absolutely different. It does not have any connection with the original one. In the Lithuanian version the cat sings as if creating lyrics on the spot, consequently the song does not follow any distinct melody. But the image of a powerful character is retained. .

#### 4. Conclusions

The general extent of film dub localization in Lithuania is relatively small, but the animated feature film industry could be a new field where dub localization might be successfully employed. The success of dub localization mostly relies on the popularity of local actors, who are recognizable by their voices and are able to make a show by their voice. Among these the most popular in Lithuania are V. Šapranauskas, R. Kazlas, D. Siaurusaitis.

The current study concentrated mostly on dub localization of songs. Many other adapted and well localized episodes which have added to the final result of a successfully localized product have not been discussed in this paper. But the songs were considered as characteristic examples indicating to what extent the localization pattern was employed and how well has it worked out to gain acceptance by the target audience.

The analysis has revealed that in most of the songs the text of the main character – the cat – was absolutely different from the original version; however it did not alter the idea of the movie as such. Localizing made Garfield to sound funnier and more attractive to the audiences of all ages.

We may conclude that songs have been modified the most in the movie. Eight songs out of thirteen have been absolutely changed: in some cases totally new sound tracks with trans-created lyrics have been added. The original movie songs have been replaced by Lithuanian popular songs, both pop and folk. The lyrics have been trans-created but the new songs were chosen according to the plot of the movie. In some cases the songs were added instead of monologues in the original.

Inclusion of culture specific elements has made the movie more attractive to the audience. The right selection of the dubbing actors who talk, sing and joke in the native language of the target audience attracts the viewers, especially when the jokes and puns are taken from folklore. This prevents the viewer from cultural misunderstandings, dissolute the borders between cultures and people. Thus, the investment into dub localization pays a lot and is worth performing.

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