

# THE TRANSLATION OF IDIOMS IN CHILDREN'S CARTOONS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH DIALOGUES AND LITHUANIAN SUBTITLES

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**Abstract.** The article is focused on the translation of English idioms in the Lithuanian subtitles of children's cartoons. The aims of the article are to find out whether the element of meaning or the composition of meaning and form gets preference in the Lithuanian translation; to present the perception and use of the term *idiom* in English and Lithuanian; and to show the processes which take place during the translation of English idioms containing proper nouns. The article is a case study and refers to the analysis of five children's cartoons.

**Keywords:** idioms, phraseology, subtitling, cartoons, English, Lithuanian

## 1. Introduction

The rendering of idiomatic expressions is considered one of the most problematic aspects of translation which has been widely discussed by various scholars all over the world, such as Charles Hockett (1958), Jürg Strässler (1982), Mona Baker (1992), Rosamund Moon (1998), to mention but a few. For instance, Baker (1992), among other difficulties, points out the difficulty of noticing idiomatic expressions in a source language (SL) text. As regards Lithuanian idioms, they may contain words of 'non Lithuanian origin, barbarisms, and rarely used vernacularisms' (Paulauskas 2003: 7), all of which may result in miscomprehension of such idioms. Apart from the widely discussed issue of the absence of appropriate equivalents in a target language (TL), Ghazala (2003: 213) notes that different cultures may have taboos related to religion, social and cultural practices; such taboos may lead to the elimination of SL idioms in a TL text.

The rendering of idioms in audiovisual translation (AVT), which is a comparatively new branch of translation studies, has also received considerable attention

internationally. However, idiomatic expressions in the subtitles of children's cartoons have to date received little attention from researchers internationally and it is a virtually unexplored topic in Lithuania.

It has to be noted that dubbing is the preferred mode of cartoon translation for child audiences in Lithuania, especially in cinemas where all children's cartoons are dubbed. Yet, the situation is different in the DVD sphere, where subtitling is still present as the form of translation. Moreover, Judickaitė-Pašvenskienė (2013) notes that some 'children tend to choose the subtitled versions of cartoons, since they are interested in hearing the original soundtrack with the attempt to try to understand the dialogue themselves'; in addition, there are cases 'when parents buy subtitled cartoons for their children with the purpose of exposing the children to a foreign [---] language in this way accelerating foreign language acquisition' (Judickaitė-Pašvenskienė 2013: 165). Thus, subtitling for children is an important sphere for investigation, as it may serve as a mean of foreign language learning.

## 2. Aim, material and method

The main aim of the article is to find out which element, the meaning or the composition of meaning and form, is given preference in the translation of English idioms into Lithuanian in five children's cartoons. In other words, the article investigates whether the SL idioms are translated in the subtitles with an attempt to retain their meaning, without regard for their idiomatic form, or whether an attempt is made to maintain both idiomatic form and meaning. The study also aims to indicate the differences in the use of the term 'idiom' in English and Lithuanian, as well as to show how Lithuanian subtitlers handle the challenge of the translation of culture-specific SL idioms which contain proper nouns.

This article presents a comparative analysis of 192 (including repetitions) English language idioms and their Lithuanian translations in the subtitles of five children's cartoons on DVD which are on release in the UK or the USA: *Valiant* (2005), *The Wild* (2006), *Over the Hedge* (2006), *Horton Hears a Who* (2008) and *Rio* (2011). It should be noted that phrasal verbs, common discursal expressions such as *how do you do?* and foreign phrases are not included in the corpus. English phrasal verbs usually have as their counterpart a single word in Lithuanian, which cannot normally be ascribed to idioms, whereas discursal expressions rarely present any idiomatic problems in translation. In order to indicate the levels of idiomaticity and to highlight their possible influence on the TL translations, SL idioms are subdivided into three categories. The first two categories, *semantically unmotivated* (also called pure or opaque by different authors) and *semantically motivated* (also called literal or transparent), make use of Evalda Jakaitienė's (1980: 100) classification and are discussed in more detail in section 3.1. The last category of idioms in this study is culture specific idioms which contain proper nouns; they are discussed in section 3.2. Despite the fact that researchers of idioms tend to outline one more group, semi-idioms or semi-opaque idioms, this has been avoided in the present study since in many cases the distinction between semi-idioms and semantically motivated (or literal) idioms is arguable. Therefore, the category of motivated idioms in this study contains both semantically motivated and

semi-idioms. It should be mentioned that the analysis also includes idioms which appear in transformed versions in the cartoons. For instance: *read my beak* is the transformation of *read my lips*; the use of such transformations corresponds with the situations in the cartoons, where the characters are mainly animals.

There were two criteria which governed the choice of the cartoons: they needed to have been played in cinemas in Lithuania (presumably, such cartoons have attracted more attention from the viewers than those released only in DVD format and not played in cinemas, as the former are much more widely advertised) and to have been released during the last ten years. The cartoons selected for the study are the subtitled DVD versions of the dubbed ones that had previously been played in cinemas. All the cartoons are treated as separate individual translations since the absence of the names of their subtitlers, except in one case, prevented the present author from tracing the practices employed by the same translator or searching for similarities and differences between the translations done by different translators.

This article is a descriptive case study and makes use of the product-oriented approach by James S. Holmes in that it is aimed at analyzing a product – children’s cartoons – and presenting a description of translation processes in a single ST (English dialogue) – TT (Lithuanian translation) pair (Holmes 1988 [1972]: 177). Also, the method of coupled pairs by Gideon Toury is used, as only specific language units, i.e. idioms, are analyzed and compared instead of concentrating on the SL and TL texts as a whole (Toury 1995: 81).

### 3. Theoretical background

#### 3.1. The notion of idiom

An *idiom* can be traditionally defined as ‘a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words’, as stated in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2000: 643), or ‘a type of collocation’ or ‘multiword lexeme’, as indicated by Jackson and Amvela (2001: 65). However, a deeper analysis of the term shows that its definition varies. Moon (1998) looks at the use of the term *idiom* by various researchers and states:

In broader uses, idiom is a general term for many kinds of multiword item, whether semantically opaque or not... Makkai uses idiom to cover non-compositional polymorphemic words such as *blackbird* as well as collocations and constructions that are not freely formed (1972). Hockett’s view is still broader, embracing even single morphemes, since their meanings cannot be deducible (1958: 171 ff.) [---] Sadock (1972) draws attention to the ambiguity of utterances which have more than one pragmatic function: ambiguity leads to status as idioms. (Moon 1998: 4)

Thus, the perception of *idiom* differs with different authors and in many cases a deviation from the traditional ‘dictionary’ definition can be noticed, yet some generalizations are still possible. For example, Ghazala (2003: 204) summarizes various dictionary definitions of idioms and states that several common points can be outlined: idioms are metaphorical and not literal; they have fixed syntactic form; their meanings are invariable; idioms are usually culture-specific and informal.

Similarly to the definition and perception, the classification of idioms is also a complex and variable matter. For instance, Baker (1992) separates idioms from such units as collocations and fixed expressions. Such a division is based on two criteria, namely the flexibility of patterning and the transparency of meaning. Baker sees idioms and fixed expressions as more or less frozen units, while collocations, on the other hand, are seen as being flexible in form. In contrast to idioms, fixed expressions and collocations are considered fairly transparent in meaning (Baker 1992: 63-64). Moon (1998: 2) notes that some authors use the term *fixed expression* as an umbrella term for such categories as idioms, frozen collocations, grammatically ill-formed collocations, proverbs, routine formulae, sayings and similes. It is also important to stress that despite the traditional understanding of an idiom as a metaphorical unit, such items as jargon, common phrases and terms, which do not present any metaphorical problems, are sometimes ascribed to the category of idioms by some authors (Ghazala 2003: 206).

In comparison to the English language, the term *idiom* is not so widely used in Lithuanian. Instead, an umbrella term *phraseologism* or *phraseological unit* is more common. According to one of the main Lithuanian lexicologists, Jakaitienė (1980), a *phraseologism* is understood as an opposition to a free word unit and defined as a phrase ‘whose meaning is totally or partially different from the meanings of the constituent words [---] for example *to sit in somebody’s pocket* means “to be indebted”’ (Jakaitienė 1980: 95).<sup>1</sup> In this respect the Lithuanian terms *frazologizmas* ‘phraseologism’ or *frazologinis junginys* ‘phraseological unit’ is similar to the English *idiom*.

From the semantic point of view, Lithuanian phraseologisms are divided into two main groups, namely, *semantically unmotivated* and *semantically motivated* ones. The former group includes *idioms*, which are understood as ‘totally fixed, self-contained phraseologism whose meaning is very distant from the meaning of its constituent words’, for instance, the Lithuanian idiom *a wind’s whip* refers to a frivolous person (Jakaitienė 1980: 100). Thus, the denotative (direct) meanings of the constituent words do not motivate the overall meaning of the idiom as none of the words are used literally; ‘the image presented in the idiom is not real [---] and its relation with the denotation is not tangible’ (Jakaitienė 1980: 101). In opposition, semantically motivated phraseologisms are word combinations ‘in which the connection between the meaning of the individual words and that of the whole expression is tangible, although the connection is more or less obscure’ (Jakaitienė 1980: 102). The group of semantically motivated phraseologisms includes tropes, which are understood as metaphoric or metonymic phraseologisms, similes and phraseological combinations, which are considered to be the loosest in form and are in the periphery of Lithuanian phraseology (ibid.). For example, the expression *to convert something into ashes* means ‘to burn’; here the connection between the image created by the expression and the idiomatic meaning is clear as ashes are the result of burning (Jakaitienė 1980: 105). Although different traditions in the use of terminology can be noticed in English and Lithuanian, for the sake of clarity the term *idiom* is used in this article to refer to figurative expressions which otherwise would be called *phraseologisms*, *similes*, *proverbs* or *sayings* in various reference books.

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<sup>1</sup> The citations and expressions in Lithuanian are translated into English by the author of this article.

### 3.2. Idiom as a multifunctional item in translation

One of the reasons why idioms are difficult to translate is their multifunctionality. Indeed, it can be claimed that idioms are comprised of several constituent elements which serve different functions. This article is focused on three main elements: meaning, syntactic form and cultural specificity.

Baker (1992: 66) states that '[a] large number of idioms in English, and probably all languages, have both a literal and an idiomatic meaning [---]'. In cases where idioms are grammatically ill-formed they prevent themselves from possible literal meanings, as the grammatical relationship between the words do not allow for literal interpretations. However, when idioms are formed according to the rules of grammar, they may create a false impression of being unidiomatic (1).

- (1) No. I'm not falling for any more of your smooth talk!  
I don't know what you're up to, but my entire shell is tingling.  
Know what? I'm listening to it this time,  
– and **I'm putting my foot down.** (OH)

In this scene the turtle character, in his quarrel with the raccoon character, uses the idiom *to put one's foot down* to show his objection. Considering the grammar, the idiom can be interpreted both literally and idiomatically. However, according to the situation in the scene, the idiomatic meaning is the one which is important in this case. Thus, one of the functions of idioms is to carry a message or to convey a meaning which is important to be understood by the recipients.

There also appear cases when both the literal and the idiomatic meanings of the idiom are present at the same time (2).

- (2) I took a few clippings out of my quills to do a little comparison.  
Look at this, **the grass seems to be greener** over here. (OH)

In this episode the viewers are shown a group of animal characters who cross the hedge which separates their forest from the newly built suburb and enter the to-them-undiscovered world of human civilization. As they stand on the neatly cut lawn in one of the yards of the suburb, the porcupine character uses a modified version of the proverb *the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence*. In this case both the literal and the idiomatic meanings are present since the character is pointing at the grass and, at the same time, expressing the idea that the life on this side of the hedge is better than their life in the forest. Such polysemy serves a comic function.

One more element of the idiom is specific syntax. As stated in Paulauskas (2001: VII), the meaning of the phraseologism can 'often be expressed by a single, totally different word', thus, by its specific syntactic form the idiom 'often expresses the speaker's attitude towards a certain issue [---] in this way serving a stylistic function in a language'.

- (3) Hang on a sec!  
I've got miracles **comin' out my ears!** (W)

The meaning of the idiom *coming out of one's ears* (3) can also be expressed by such stylistically neutral phrases as *a huge amount of something, more than one*



*needs*, etc. Yet, these phrases lack the vividness and the dynamism of the idiom. Thus, the form is important as it is used for the specific purpose of creating a particular style.

The last element of idioms which is considered in the present study is culture specificity. Baker (1992) equates culture specificity with various patterns of social behavior, fixed linguistic formulae or references to specific places or objects (e.g. *to carry coals to Newcastle*), etc. (Baker 1992: 68–69). Often, such idioms have no equivalents in a TL since social behavior may differ in different cultures and the referents of SL idioms are totally unknown or have different connotations in a TL. This article presents the analysis of only a small fraction of culture specific idioms, namely those which contain proper nouns and refer to places, objects or people. They are close to Pedersen's notion of *extralinguistic culture-bound references* (ECR) since they pertain 'to realia, or cultural items, which are not part of a language system' (Pedersen 2005: 2). Although Pedersen excludes idioms from the notion of ECR, it has to be noted that references to places, objects or people in idioms call more for knowledge of an SL culture rather than (its) language.

### **3.3. Idioms in subtitling**

Subtitling is a mode of audiovisual translation in which spoken language is changed into writing and is presented at the bottom of the screen in the form of one or two lines of text. Given the fact that the translation needs to fit into a maximum of two lines which consist of roughly up to 40 characters each and have to be synchronic with and match the visual information on the screen, the otherwise problematic task of idiom translation in literary texts becomes even more challenging in subtitling. The multimodality of the film comes into play as apart from the verbal and the audio codes, the visual code becomes very prominent. In order to preserve the entirety of the film, it is important that the three codes be presented in harmony with each other. Example (2) in the previous section shows that the image of grass is present not only in the idiom which the porcupine character utters, but is also shown on the screen; thus, such interconnectedness of the two codes makes the image of grass important to be retained in subtitles.

Considering cartoon subtitling for children, several problematic aspects specific to this field should be emphasized. Professional subtitler Tortoriello (2006: 55) notes that, unlike adults, children are a specific audience 'with a rather limited knowledge of the world' who want to 'get the message immediately'. In cases when SL idioms are culture specific and have no equivalents in a TL the translation may be in danger of being misunderstood. Tortoriello (2006: 56) also emphasizes that reading speed is different for adult and children audiences (160 and 120 words per minute respectively), and thus dialogues need to be presented in an extremely condensed form. Consequently, the opportunities for explicitation, while limited in subtitling in general, become even more limited in subtitling for children. In addition, idioms function as a feature of spoken language and are important to be retained in subtitles according to the requirement presented in *Code of Good Subtitling Practice* (Carroll, Ivarrson 1998), which states that '[t]he language register should be appropriate and correspond with the spoken word'.

Despite the fact that subtitling and audiovisual translation in general is a comparatively new branch of translation studies which emerged only in the 20th century, researchers of subtitling have shown a great interest in idioms; Henrik Gottlieb's book *Subtitles, Translation & Idioms* (1997) is probably the most prominent work in the field so far. A number of smaller case-studies also show a great distribution among different languages. For instance, Abd-el-Kareem (2010) investigates idioms in Arabic–English subtitled films; Theodoropoulou (2006) presents the analysis of English idioms in Greek subtitles; Chen (2009) devotes a part of his article to the translation of idioms from English into Chinese in the film *Spellbound*, etc. However, idioms in subtitling, like AVT on the whole, are still an unexplored sphere in Lithuania. During the period 2005–2009 several authors published their articles on both national and international levels. Baravykaitė (2005, 2006, 2007) addresses such topics as the general position of AVT in Lithuania, subtitling as a means of language learning and general translation problems in subtitling. Baranauskienė and Blaževičienė (2008) take sentences as units for their analysis with the aim of finding the most frequently used translation procedures in the voiced over Lithuanian version of the film *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Judickaitė-Pašvenskienė (2009a, 2009b, 2013) concentrates on cartoon subtitling: she has analyzed the translation of culture specific items and presented the analysis of spoken English discourse and devoted part of the analysis to the translation of idioms; she has also considered subtitled cartoons in the context of language teaching and learning. Thus, even though initial investigations have been made, the translation of idioms in AVT, especially in children's cartoons, still lacks scholarly attention in present-day Lithuania.

## 4. Translation of idioms

As mentioned in section 2, the principal aim of the present study is to find out which element, the meaning or the composition of meaning and form is given preference in the translation of idiomatic SL expressions. Given that subtitling is a constrained form of translation and idioms are one of the most challenging items in translation, it should be noted that the classification of the Lithuanian renderings do not follow the traditional patterns. To make it clearer, if the Lithuanian translations of the SL idioms preserve the meaning of the original and contain one or more words which are used in their figurative sense, such renderings are treated as containing both the idiomatic form and the meaning. The renderings which present the meaning of the SL idioms and contain the words which are used in their denotative meaning are treated as having no qualities of idiomatic form.

### 4.1. Unmotivated idioms

The analysis shows that the dialogues of the cartoons contain 34 unmotivated idioms, which comprise 18% of the total number of idioms which appear in the cartoons. Table 1 illustrates which elements of the SL unmotivated idioms are given preference in the Lithuanian subtitles.

**Table 1.** The elements of the SL idioms which are transferred in the TL subtitles

Elements transferred	Findings
Composition of idiomatic meaning and form	6
Meaning	25
Changes in idiomatic meaning	3
Omission	0
Total number of unmotivated idioms	34

According to the data presented in Table 1, the translators' major attempts are to retain the meaning of the English idioms in the Lithuanian subtitles; in this process the idiomatic form is not retained.

- (4) English dialogue: I am beat. Time **to hit the hay**, I guess. (HHW)  
Lithuanian subtitle: Visai nusivariau nuo kojų. Ko gero, laikas **eiti miegoti**. (HHW)  
Back-translation: I'm completely worn out. I guess it's time **to go to sleep**

As example (4) shows, the SL idiom *to hit the hay* is reduced to its meaning in the Lithuanian subtitle and the idiomatic form is not retained. It should be noted that in this case the translator might have been constrained by the number of characters, as the subtitle already consists of 29 characters. The analysis shows that in half of the cases in which the SL unmotivated idioms are reduced to meaning the subtitles are constrained by a limited number of characters or a fast rate of speech.

In six cases both the meaning and the idiomatic form are retained in the Lithuanian subtitles.

- (5) English dialogue: I've got miracles **comin' out my ears!** (OH)  
Lithuanian subtitle: Stebuklą turiu **per akis!** (OH)  
Back-translation: I've got miracles **over my eyes!**

In the example (5) the English idiom, which has a meaning 'a huge amount of something', is translated using the Lithuanian idiom of the same meaning.<sup>2</sup> It is noticeable that the main image of the SL idiom is changed in the translation (*ears-eyes*). However, both the figurative meaning and the idiomatic form are retained, and such a change does not contradict the images on the screen.

It should also be noted that there appear three cases in which changes in idiomatic meaning of the SL idioms can be noticed, i.e. the TL idiom has a different meaning from that of the original; the image created by the TL rendering is obscure to the TL audience, evokes different connotations in comparison to the SL idiom or does not correspond with the plot line of the episode, e.g. (6).

- (6) English dialogue: If we don't find some more birds fast, **our goose is going to be cooked.** (V)  
Lithuanian subtitle: Jei mes greitai nesurasime daugiau paukščių... **mūsų žąsis bus iškepta.** (V)  
Back-translation: If we don't find some more birds fast, **our goose is going to be cooked.**

<sup>2</sup> Lietuvių kalbos žodynas [Dictionary of the Lithuanian Language], <http://www.lkz.lt/startas.htm> (27.12.2013).



The cartoon *Valiant* is set in 1944, when Britain fights against Germany in World War II. In the scene presented in example (6) Wing Commander Gutsy receives a message from a seagull near Dover that all of their top flyers were killed and did not manage to come back to Britain. Wing Commander realizes that in order to be able to continue fighting they need more flyers and indicates that by using the idiom *our goose is going to be cooked*, which has a meaning of ‘one is finished’ or ‘our plans will be spoilt’. The word-for-word translation in the subtitle reflects only the literal meaning of the idiom, which is different from the idiomatic one. The overall image created by the Lithuanian rendering does not carry the negative connotations which are present in the original. The *Corpus of the Contemporary Lithuanian Language*<sup>3</sup> shows that the phrase *to cook the goose* (“iš)kepti žąsį”) is used in culinary contexts, e.g. ‘We [---] start cooking the goose at the temperature of 180 degrees Celsius’. Although some traces of ‘being finished’ may be noted in the word *iškepta* (‘cooked’), such an interpretation may lead to an assumption that Gutsy is referring to a goose character who is going to be killed (‘cooked’), which does not correspond with the plot line of the cartoon, as none of the characters are geese, and may mislead the audience. It should be noted that in this episode the war map with various pins is shown in the background. While uttering the idiom, Gutsy takes one pin, which is in the form of a bird, off the map and throws it on the ground. Such action can be interpreted as having negative connotations (e.g. destruction) and therefore may serve as the reinforcement of the idiom. Considering the fact that all the characters in the cartoon are birds, the idiom also functions as a pun and it might be one of the reasons why the translator attempted to preserve the image of a bird in the Lithuanian subtitle.

The analysis of the three cases in which a change in idiomatic meaning of the SL idioms is observed shows that in two cases the meaning of the SL idioms is not clearly reinforced by the plot of the cartoons or the action in particular episodes and this might be one of the possible reasons for the changes which occur in the subtitles.

## 4.2. Motivated idioms

The SL dialogues of the cartoons contain 156 motivated idioms, which make up 81% of the total number of all SL idioms that appear in the cartoons. Considering the elements which get preference in the process of translation, the tendencies are similar to the aforementioned unmotivated idioms.

**Table 2.** The elements of the SL idioms which are transferred in the TL subtitles

Elements transferred	Findings
Composition of idiomatic meaning and form	68
Meaning	81
Changes in idiomatic meaning	5
Omission	2
Total number of motivated idioms	156

<sup>3</sup> <http://tekstynas.vdu.lt/tekstynas/> (27.12.2013).

As Table 2 illustrates, the element of meaning gets preference in the translation of motivated SL idioms in the Lithuanian subtitles.

- (7) English dialogue: Nothing you say **makes any sense**. (RI)  
Lithuanian subtitle: Kalbi **visiškas nesąmones**. (RI)  
Back-translation: You're **talking total nonsense**.

In the example (7) the meaning of the SL idiom is transferred in the subtitle; however, considering the form, the Lithuanian translation is not an idiom and none of the words are used in their figurative sense. The comparison of unmotivated and motivated idioms shows that motivated idioms are reduced to meaning disregarding the idiomatic form 1.3 times less often in the Lithuanian subtitles. Therefore, it can be stated that motivated idioms are easier to subtitle such that both the meaning and the form are retained.

The second element which gets preference in the translation is the composition of meaning and form, as illustrated in example (8):

- (8) English dialogue: You done **runnin' your mouth** yet, Carmine? (W)  
Lithuanian subtitle: Ar dar nebaigei **malti žabtais**, Karmainai? (W)  
Back-translation: Haven't you finished **beating your jaws**, Carmine?

In this scene one character gets angry with the other and uses the idiom *run your mouth*, whose meaning is 'to talk a lot'. In the subtitle the idiom is replaced with the Lithuanian metaphoric phrase *malti žabtais*, in which the verb *malti* has a figurative meaning of 'to speak fast'<sup>4</sup> and the noun *žabtai* is a pejorative form for 'mouth' or 'lips' (ibid.). Although the *Corpus of the Contemporary Lithuanian Language* shows that the phrase *malti liežuviiu*<sup>5</sup> ('to beat one's tongue') is used in the contexts which refer to talking a lot, the word *žabtai* serves as an insult and thus matches the mood of the character. Thus, it can be claimed that both the idiomatic meaning and form are retained in the subtitle. The comparison of unmotivated and motivated idioms with regard to the composition of meaning and form shows that in the case of motivated idioms the meaning together with idiomatic form is retained 2.5 times more often in the subtitles.

It should be noted that in five cases changes in idiomatic meaning of the SL motivated idioms can be noticed in translation, e.g. (9).

- (9) English dialogue: Rafi has some special guests from **out of town** and let's show them some love. (RI)  
Lithuanian subtitle: Rafis atsivedė ypatingus svečius **iš miesto**, būkim jiems svetingi. (RI)  
Back-translation: Rafi has brought some special guests **from town**, let's be hospitable to them.

In this episode the bird character Nico introduces two macaws, one of which is a foreigner while the other is from a different town, to his friends at a discotheque and uses the idiom *out of town* to indicate that the two guests are not locals. However, in the TL subtitle one reads that the guests are *from town*, as if the opposition between the town and the suburb or a village is intended to be made, which is not present in the scene. The analysis of all cases of motivated idiom mistranslation

<sup>4</sup> Lietuvių kalbos žodynas [Dictionary of the Lithuanian Language], <http://www.lkz.lt/startas.htm> (25.2.2012).

<sup>5</sup> <http://tekstynas.vdu.lt/tekstynas/> (27.12.2013).

shows that one of the possible reasons for changes in idiomatic meaning could be the challenges in noticing the SL idioms.

Finally, two cases of omission appear in the subtitles, yet no information is lost as in both cases the subtitler omits the repetitions of idioms. On the whole, considering the constrained nature of subtitling, the number of omissions is very small. However, it is reasonable as most idioms are semantically important units which, in addition to their stylistic functions, carry relevant information.

### 4.3. Culture-specific idioms

Only two culture-specific idioms which contain proper nouns are present in the dialogues of the cartoons (10), (11). None of the proper nouns are transferred in the subtitles or replaced by Lithuanian proper nouns.

- (10) English dialogue: Just follow us and **Bob's your uncle**. (W)  
Lithuanian subtitle: Sekite paskui mus ir **rūpesčių nematysit**. (W)  
Back-translation: Follow us and you **won't see any troubles**.
- (11) English dialogue: I'm from New York City, **for Pete's sake**. (W)  
Lithuanian subtitle: Juk aš iš Niujorko, **po šimts pypkių**. (W)  
Back-translation: After all, I'm from New York, **for a hundred pipes**.

The unmotivated SL idiom *Bob's your uncle* is usually used as a concluding phrase for a simple instruction to mean, 'and there you have it,' or 'you're all set'<sup>6</sup>. As the idiom is culture-specific, no equivalent with the same proper noun exists in the Lithuanian language; thus the Lithuanian rendering is a motivated phraseologism in which the verb *nematysit* ('you will not see') is used in its figurative sense 'you will not experience'. The unmotivated idiom in the next subtitle, *for Pete's sake*, is used to express annoyance; similarly to the previous idiom, it has no equivalent in Lithuanian which would contain the same proper noun. Therefore, the translator uses the Lithuanian unmotivated idiom *po šimts pypkių*, which is also used as a mild curse to express annoyance.

Since only two culture-specific idioms which contain proper names appear in the selected cartoons, no conclusions can be drawn on this part of the study, nor can any tendencies be traced. A study on a larger scale is needed in order to get more revealing results.

## 5. Conclusion

According to the analysis, the dialogues of the cartoons contain 34 unmotivated, 156 motivated and 2 culture-specific idioms containing proper nouns. In the translation of unmotivated idioms the element of meaning gets preference, as 25 idioms are reduced to meaning without transferring the idiomatic form. One of the reasons for that is the very nature of subtitling, i.e. a limited number of characters and a fast rate of speech. Six idioms retain both the form and the meaning in the subtitles,

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<sup>6</sup> The Free Dictionary, <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Bob%27s+your+uncle> (12.1.2012).

while in three cases changes in idiomatic meaning are noticed. One of the possible causes for such change might be the fact that the meaning of idioms is not always reinforced by the images on the screen or the plot of the cartoons.

With regard to motivated idioms, in the majority of cases, 81, the element of meaning is retained in the subtitles; the composition of meaning and form is retained in 68 cases, which is 2.5 times more often than in the translation of unmotivated idioms. This shows that the subtitling of motivated idioms is less challenging. In five cases changes in idiomatic meaning are noted. Also, there appear two cases of omission, although it is partial, as only the repetitions of idioms are omitted in the Lithuanian subtitles, which causes no loss of information.

Considering the group of culture specific idioms containing proper nouns, no conclusions can be drawn as only two such idioms appear in the corpus. In order to trace any tendencies in their translation, a much larger study is needed.

### **Abbreviations**

AVT	audiovisual translation
ECR	extralinguistic culture-bound reference
SL	source language
TL	target language

### **Corpus bibliography**

- HHW = Horton Hears a Who. B. Anderson, B. Gordon (Producers), J. Hayward, S. Martino (Directors) 2008. [Animated movie.] USA: Twentieth Century Fox Animation.
- OH = Over the Hedge. B. Arnold (Producer), T. Johnson, K. Kirkpatrick (Directors) 2006. [Animated movie.] USA: DreamWorks Animation.
- RI = Rio. B. Anderson, J. C. Donkin, C. Wedge (Producers), C. Saldanha (Director) 2011. [Animated movie.] USA: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment.
- W = The Wild. C. Goldman (Producer), S. Williams (Director) 2006. [Animated movie.] USA: Walt Disney Pictures.
- V = Valiant. J. H. Williams (Producer), G. Chapman (Director) 2005. [Animated movie.] UK: Buena Vista Home Entertainment.

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# IDIOOMIDE TÕLKIMINE LASTE MULTIFILMIDES: INGLISKEELSETE DIALOGIDE JA LEEDUKEELSETE SUBTIITRITE VÕRDLEV ANALÜÜS

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Artikkel on deskriptiivne juhtumiuuring, milles analüüsitakse kuue multifilmi subtiitreid, keskendudes inglise keele idioomide tõlkimisele leedu keelde. Uurimuse põhieesmärk oli vaadelda, millist inglise idioomide aspekti eelistatakse leedu subtiitrites: kas tähendust või tähendust ja vormi üheskoos. Lisaks annab artikkel ülevaate, mida mõistetakse idioomi all inglise ning leedu keeles ja kuidas saavad Leedu subtiitrite tõlkijad hakkama idioomide tõlkimisega. Analüüsiks kasutatud korpus sisaldas 192 ingliskeelset fraseologismi (kordused kaasa arvatud), mis omakorda olid jaotatud motiveerimata, motiveeritud ja pärisnimesid sisaldavateks kultuurispetsiifilisteks fraseologismideks. Analüüsi tulemusena selgus, et multifilmides esinenud ingliskeelsetest fraseologismidest 18% olid motiveerimata, kusjuures motiveeritud ja kultuurispetsiifilised idioomid moodustavad vastavalt 81% ja 1%. Kahe esimese rühma puhul domineerib tähenduse edasiandmine, mis on osaliselt seotud subtiitritele esitatavate piirangutega ja osaliselt sellega, et tähendus ei ole otseselt seotud sündmustikuga. Kultuurispetsiifiliste idioomide kohta ei saa järeldust teha, kuna lastefilmide dialoogides esines vaid kaks niisugust idioomi ning seega seaduspärasuste leidmiseks oleks vaja laiapõhjalisemat uurimust.

**Võtmesõnad:** idioomid, fraseoloogia, subtiitrid, multifilmid, inglise keel, leedu keel

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