

## **Interpretation of Intertext in Multisemiotic Animation Discourse**

### **(Translation Problem)**

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**Abstract:** This article delves into intertextual references in animated films, examining verbal and non-verbal elements in the multi-semiotic discourse. Using discourse analysis and interpretation theory, the study identifies semantic and linguocultural losses in translating video-verbal text transcripts. Focusing on Russian and English animated materials, the research uncovers primary axiological losses and proposes translation transformations to address them. Theoretical significance arises from establishing the concept of multi-semiotic animated text enriched with intertextual references through various codes. On a practical level, the study offers insights for optimizing video-verbal text localization, taking linguocultural nuances into account. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of intertextuality in animated storytelling and provides practical guidance for preserving linguistic and cultural elements in translation, particularly in the context of multi-semiotic discourse.

**Аннотация:** Эта статья исследует интертекстуальные ссылки в мультфильмах, изучая вербальные и невербальные элементы в мульти-семиотическом дискурсе. С использованием анализа дискурса и теории интерпретации исследование выявляет семантические и лингвокультурные потери при переводе транскриптов видео-вербального текста. Сфокусировав внимание на русском и английском видео-вербальном материале, исследование выявляет основные аксиологические потери и предлагает трансформации перевода для их устранения. Теоретическая значимость заключается в установлении концепции мульти-семиотического анимационного текста, обогащенного интертекстуальными ссылками через различные коды. На практическом уровне исследование предлагает идеи для оптимизации локализации видео-вербального текста с учетом лингвокультурных особенностей. Эта

работа вносит вклад в более глубокое понимание интертекстуальности в анимационном искусстве и предоставляет практические рекомендации по сохранению языковых и культурных элементов при переводе, особенно в контексте мульти-семиотического дискурса.

**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqola animatsion filmlarning ko‘p-sayyoralik diskursida verbal va non-verbal elementlarni o‘rganadi. Diskurs tahlili va tafsilotlar nazariyasi yordamida tadqiqot, video-verbal matnlarning tarjimalari da semantik va til madaniyati yo‘qolganliklarni aniqlaydi. Rus va Ingliz animatsion video-verbal matniga e‘tibor qaratib, asosiy aksiologik yo‘qolganliklarni aniqlab, ularni bartaraf etish uchun tarjima transformatsiyalarini taklif qiladi. Nazariy ahamiyati, turli kodlardan o‘tkazilgan intertekstual havolalari orqali boyitilgan multi-semiotik animatsion matn va diskursning tushunchasini qat‘iy bilan isbotlaydi. Amaliy ahamiyati esa, video-verbal matnning lokalizatsiyasini optimallashtirish bo‘yicha fikrlar taklif qiladi, til-madaniy xususiyatlarini e‘tiborga olib. Ushbu tadqiqot animatsion qahramonlarning dunyodagi intertekstual ko‘lamini tushunishga va tarjima da til va madaniy elementlarni saqlash bo‘yicha samarali yo‘riqnoma beradi, ayniqsa, multi-semiotik diskurs kontekstida.

**Keywords:** interpretation, intertextuality, animation, polycode, Smeshariki

**Ключевые слова:** интерпретация, интертекстуальность, анимация, поликод, Смешарики.

**Kalitso‘zlar:** tarjima, intertekstuallik, animatsiya, polikod, Smeshariki

Modern society exists and functions within a multisemioticsemiosphere, as defined by Y. M. Lotman. This is perceived as a given, within which a continuous process of semiosis takes place – the process of sign generation and interpretation. The structure and quality of semiotic systems surrounding humans are rapidly changing and constantly becoming more complex. Polycode (creolized, multimodal) texts, which involve multiple semiotic codes such as verbal, iconic, and others, have been known to humans for quite some time. Since the moment when humans decided to record their knowledge and

thoughts, words and drawings, often presented simultaneously in a text, have become a natural form of such fixation.

Complex multisemiotic texts, whose component base has expanded to include movement, color, and later sound since the emergence of cinema in the late 19th century, have further developed with the active progress in animation. Although it is known that the first experiments of "animating" static drawings date back to the first third of the 19th century, and the release of the first animated cartoon is considered to be 1892, truly complex multisemiotic audio-visual animated products began to develop from the mid-20th century.

Often, in everyday consciousness, animated audio-visual texts are perceived as less significant compared to feature films. However, from the perspective of linguosemiotics, this is incorrect. Thanks to the characteristics of the partially simplified symbolism used in animated cinema and the universal semiotic codes, animated films are easier to perceive by viewers belonging to different linguocultures, thereby contributing to their convergence. However, the widespread use of intertext, most often directly related to the linguocultural worldview and the language in which the animated film is created, requires a comprehensive interpretation. In the case of translating such a complex multisemiotic text into a foreign language, this hermeneutic problem becomes even more complicated.

In order to conduct this study, it was necessary to first define the basic concepts such as discourse, animated discourse, multisemiotic system, intertext, and interpretation.

The number of contemporary works dedicated to discourse and discourse analysis is immeasurable, as is the variety of perspectives on this issue. In our study, we rely on the opinion of E. V. Sidorov, who understands discourse as «a certain area of linguistic reality in which human activity involves the production and understanding of verbal texts» [7, p. 6]. However, we expand this postulate to include not only verbal texts but also complex multimodal texts, including video-verbal animated texts. Thus, animated discourse is understood as a

comprehensive system that combines multisemiotic audiovisual texts, based on the illusion of bringing various types of images to life on the screen, and their understanding.

Regarding the issue of interpretation, which has been addressed by prominent researchers such as H.-G. Gadamer, M. Heidegger, P. Ricoeur, N. A. Vasilyev, and many others, it is important for our study to note V. Z. Demiankov's remark that humans «tend to interpret rather than analyze» [1, p. 7]. Furthermore, what is crucial for multisemiotic discourse is that «the process of interpretation contributes to the modeling of perception through the recipient's eyes, ensuring and establishing harmony between the recipient's internal attitudes and the sender's information» [1, p. 7].

Since practically any contemporary artistic work, including animated films, is saturated with intertextual references, the problem of ambiguous interpretation is multiplied when it comes to translation, as mentioned earlier.

Intertextuality as a cultural phenomenon seems to have emerged simultaneously with the formation of culture as one of the main entities of human civilization. In general, intertextuality is understood as «the common property of sets of signs, expressed in the existence of connections between them, through which texts (or their parts) can explicitly or covertly refer to each other in many diverse ways» [2, p. 21]. Intertextuality is present everywhere in our modern days. It serves as a communicative marker that allows determining the position of communicants in the archetypal opposition of «self – other» and narrower oppositions such as «educated – uneducated,» social, gender, and even age-related oppositions. The study of intertextuality began with the analysis of literary works [8] and went far beyond the confines of familiar linear verbal text when, thanks to Y.M. Lotman, many phenomena of the non-verbal world came to be called text, which is why intertextual references are not only found in texts of different structures but have essentially become mandatory. Sound (musical), visual, verbal, and other references allow for the unification of works within the framework of one culture, and if a work implies translation into other languages

or localization (as in the case of a multimodal text such as video games or animation), it unites different cultures.

Animated cinema, along with gaming, is a variety of artistic cinema. Contemporary animation is characterized by a variety of technical techniques and execution methods (rotoscoping, claymation, sand animation, hand-drawn, puppet animation, computer-assisted combined animation, flash animation, etc.), as well as the presence of a specific target audience, mainly children or an audience that involves adult viewers. One bright example of animated series that stands out in terms of its target audience is the animated series «Smeshariki» («Kikoriki») produced by the company «Riki.» As we mentioned earlier [6], the peculiarity of this animated series lies in the fact that it is impossible to unambiguously determine the age audience, although it is declared as children's content for ages 4 to 12. The abundance of intertextual references, both verbal and visual, allows viewers of different ages to uncover different cognitive layers. In a situation where children watch the cartoon together with adults who can comment on the reference, the depth of perception increases.

One distinctive feature of this animated series is that it is broadcasted in over 90 countries, translated into different languages, and translated twice into English - the British variant of English (Kikoriki) and the American variant (Gogoriki). Obviously, during translation, some intertextual references are lost, and paradoxically, the range of interpretation can both expand and narrow. Let's examine this phenomenon with examples.

#### *Episode "Kusinatra"*

Synopsis: Barash is searching for the meaning of life and, together with Kar-Karych, embarks on a mysterious journey to Kusinatra. The episode is filled with polycode intertextuality. The atmosphere of the episode resembles the cult American black-and-white allegorical film "Dead Man" (1995, directed by J. Jarmusch), supported by the audio code - the soundtrack of the episode, seemingly improvised country-rock guitar chords reminiscent of Neil Young's music, which the exceptional musician improvised and recorded after watching

this allegory. The visual sequence can be considered an intertextual reference to Andrei Tarkovsky's legendary art-house film "Stalker" - the very beginning of the episode in Barash's house at the moment of his awakening, the camera slowly gliding through the room, the leitmotif of the search underlying Tarkovsky's film, the blurry image of Kusinatra, capable of granting Barash's desires (analogous to the Room in "Stalker," which fulfills people's deepest desires), the minimalism and intimacy of the events involving only two characters - Kar-Karych and Barash, whose images in the episode can be seen as an allusion to the characters Stalker and Writer. The title of the episode, "Kusinatra," is a well-known intertext that has already turned into a meme - a famous translation error in Roger Zelazny's novel "Trumps of Doom" ("Картысудьбы" in Russian), where the translator transliterated the brand name of a kitchen appliance, Cuisinart, just as famous as "xerox" and also used in the Western world as a generic name, but transliterated it incorrectly. The main possible interpretation of this word, which is key to this episode, is "something unknown." In addition to the external intertext (references to cultural phenomena), the episode also contains internal intertext - references to other episodes of "Kikoriki," for example, a reference to one of the previous episodes - "Secret Society," in which Krosh and Yozhik invented their secret language - speaking words in reverse order. "Otherwise I might just not make it." (In the episode "Secret Society," this phrase was translated as "I'm done," which better reflects its meaning). Translating "ценок" into English seems impossible, resulting in a so-called axiological loss - the emotive evaluation of the phrase and, of course, the intertext itself is lost.

#### *Episode "The Suitcase"*

Synopsis: Krosh and Yozhik find a suitcase in Kar-Karych's house, and its contents are unknown; Kar-Karych tries to remember the origin of the suitcase and its contents. Here we observe a double intertext. The first can be interpreted by an educated Russian adult - it refers to Sergei Dovlatov's short story "The Suitcase": the title of the episode coincides, and the plot line is semantically very

close. The second variant of intertext, also aimed at an adult audience, can be seen as a reference to Quentin Tarantino's film "Pulp Fiction." Translating this context poses numerous problems. At the beginning of the episode, Kar-Karych recites Alexander Pushkin: "...Krov' brodit; chuvstva, um toskoyustesneny..." The translator (without mentioning the author) manages to handle the quote quite well, preserving the high diction of both Kar-Karych and the quoted Pushkin: "...my blood is running so fast, my feelings are alive at last..." However, the main form of translation and localization of the verbal component of this video text involves translation transformations - replacing Russian phrases that inherently require explanation and complex interpretation for a non-native speaker, conveying the general meaning of the statements, for example:

1. "Там столько снега, что без них (снегоступов) даже в ларёк за газетой не сходишь" - "There is so much snow there. Whoever named it Greenland was color-blind." The translation of the reality "снегоступы" - 'snow shoes' - is handled by the translator since ignoring this item was impossible; it is present in the visual sequence. However, the translator chose not to develop the theme further and instead used a humorous remark playing on the name of Greenland.

2. Replacement of proper nouns (country names) "...Монголия – Ангола...", which have a certain connotation for Russian speakers, with 'Transylvania - Pennsylvania', which does not have such connotations. And, conversely, replacing the proper noun "Maori tribe," the indigenous people of New Zealand, which has its own connotation in the English-speaking world but is represented in the video sequence of the cartoon as savages, with 'tribe of savages' without a direct reference to a specific people, possibly for reasons of political correctness.

3. Replacement of onomatopoeia with a similar one in another linguistic-cultural context: 'тыгыдын' - 'latata'.

4. Familiar translation transformation - using equivalent or similar idiomatic expressions: "натураимпульсивная" - 'absent-minded';

"размягчённое мудростью пожилое сердце" - 'old heart which is suffered with the winds of time'; wordplay absent in the original: "In the case, what's the case?"

5. The use of transformations omitting or changing phrases not supported by the video sequence: "музыкальное образование" - 'musical education'; "отсебя не уйдёшь" - 'can't escape from yourself'; "мама mia" - 'oh my goodness'; "вообще не помню чемодан" - 'I don't remember the suitcase at all'; "досвидания" - 'goodbye'; "нет прощенья" - 'no forgiveness'; "деньги" - 'money'; "что?" - 'what's that?'; "разноцветные" - 'multicolored'; "приучил" - 'got used to'; "товарный вагон" - 'freight car'.

An intertextual reference with a possible allusion to the film "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" (1920) is present when Kar-Karych, recalling one of the versions of how the suitcase appeared, is depicted in a corridor and then with the suitcase under a street lamp. Although the visual component supports the verbal content and does not require explanation, the translator took a different approach, explicating the situation: "I found a suitcase full of money. And I kept it for myself. Then I felt ashamed that I had appropriated someone else's. And I decided to forget about this suitcase" - "I was coming home from the theatre and I spotted a suitcase full of cash... I was exalted because I was rich..."

One of the peculiarities of the localization of this particular series ("The Suitcase") is the fact that the embedded creolized text in the video footage was translated, which is not commonly done. Specifically, the translation of the text on the posters on the wall in Kar-Karych's house. In our view, such a step is necessary to narrow down the possible range of interpretations, as these posters play a supporting role in this video text, and their translation allows for continued viewing without additional commentary.

The discursive characteristics of multisemiotic discourse, to which animated discourse belongs, are wide-ranging and extensive. The animated series «Smeshariki» which has been airing in Russia for 15 years since 2004, provides an opportunity for comprehensive study of animated discourse as an



integral component of contemporary culture. The objective richness of the multisemiotic text with intertextual references realized in various semiotic codes – visual, auditory (musical and verbal), color, kinetic, etc. – as defined by the term «multisemiotics of the text,» is represented in animated discourse in a concentrated form. This richness gives rise to numerous interpretations of the text, and the depth of interpretation directly correlates with the recipient's personal characteristics.

During the localization of the video-verbal animated text, which requires translation, there arises the problem of translating the intertext itself. In this process, some intertextual references are lost, and a paradoxical phenomenon occurs – the range of interpretation can both expand and narrow. This was demonstrated by the analysis of several episodes of the animated series «Smeshariki» translated into British English (Kikoriki).

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