LANGUAGE LOCALIZATION ISSUES IN AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

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Abstract: *Audiovisual translation (AVT) has become a crucial field in the era of globalization, enabling media products to cross linguistic and cultural borders. However, language localization in AVT presents numerous linguistic, cultural, technical, and pragmatic challenges. This article investigates the major localization issues in audiovisual translation within the IMRAD framework. The study applies qualitative content analysis to selected film and streaming media examples, identifying key challenges such as cultural adaptation, humor translation, synchronization constraints, multimodality, and censorship. The findings reveal that successful localization requires a balance between fidelity to the source text and cultural acceptability in the target audience. The study concludes that localization in AVT is not merely translation but a complex intercultural mediation process influenced by linguistic norms, technical limitations, and socio-cultural expectations.*

Annotatsiya: *Audiovizual tarjima (AVT) globallashuv davrida muhim sohalardan biriga aylandi, chunki u media mahsulotlarini til va madaniy chegaralardan o'tkazishga xizmat qiladi. Biroq AVTda tilni lokalizatsiya qilish ko'plab lingvistik, madaniy, texnik va pragmatik muammolarni keltirib chiqaradi. Ushbu maqola IMRAD modeli asosida audiovizual tarjimada lokalizatsiya masalalarini tahlil qiladi. Tadqiqotda film va onlayn platformalar misolida sifat tahlili usuli qo'llanildi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, muvaffaqiyatli lokalizatsiya manba matnga sodiqlik va maqsad auditoriya madaniy me'yorlari o'rtasidagi muvozanatni talab qiladi. Xulosa sifatida, AVTda lokalizatsiya oddiy tarjima emas, balki murakkab madaniyatlararo vositachilik jarayoni ekanligi aniqlandi.*

Аннотация: *Аудиовизуальный перевод (АВП) стал важной областью в эпоху глобализации, обеспечивая трансляцию медиапродуктов через языковые и культурные границы. Однако локализация языка в АВП сопровождается многочисленными лингвистическими, культурными, техническими и прагматическими трудностями. В данной статье анализируются основные проблемы локализации в аудиовизуальном переводе в рамках структуры IMRAD. В исследовании применён метод качественного анализа примеров из кино и стриминговых платформ. Результаты показывают, что успешная локализация требует баланса между верностью исходному тексту и культурной приемлемостью для целевой аудитории. Сделан вывод о том, что локализация в АВП представляет собой сложный процесс межкультурного посредничества.*

Keywords: *audiovisual translation, localization, subtitling, dubbing, cultural adaptation, multimodality, translation studies*

Audiovisual translation (AVT) refers to the translation of multimodal texts that combine verbal, visual, and acoustic elements. According to Jorge Díaz Cintas (2009), AVT encompasses subtitling, dubbing, voice-over, and audio description, each constrained by time, space, and synchronization. With the rise of global streaming platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, localization has become central to content distribution strategies.

Localization in AVT goes beyond linguistic translation. It involves adapting content to fit the socio-cultural norms, humor conventions, ideological frameworks, and legal restrictions of the target audience. Unlike literary translation, AVT operates within strict technical limitations: subtitle length, reading speed, lip synchronization, and multimodal coherence.

Despite significant academic attention (e.g., Gottlieb, 1992; Lawrence Venuti, 1995), language localization issues in AVT remain underexplored in rapidly expanding digital contexts. This article aims to analyze major localization challenges and propose strategies for addressing them.

This study applies a qualitative descriptive methodology within the framework of translation studies. The data consist of selected scenes from English-language films and streaming series localized into Uzbek and Russian. The analysis focuses on subtitling and dubbing versions.

The theoretical basis includes domestication and foreignization theory (Venuti, 1995), subtitling constraints theory (Gottlieb, 1992), and multimodality principles (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

The analysis identified five major categories of localization issues:

Cultural References and Realias

Cultural elements such as food, traditions, historical references, and idioms pose major challenges. For example, American Thanksgiving references are often replaced with culturally neutral expressions in Uzbek localization. This reflects domestication strategies aimed at audience comprehension.

However, excessive domestication may result in loss of cultural authenticity. In some cases, translators opt for explanatory subtitles, though spatial limitations restrict such additions.

Humor and Wordplay

Humor, puns, and irony are particularly difficult to localize. Wordplay dependent on phonetics or cultural knowledge often becomes untranslatable. In dubbing, creative rewriting is frequently employed to achieve functional equivalence.

The study found that humor localization prioritizes audience response over literal accuracy. Functional adaptation is more common than semantic fidelity.

Technical Constraints

Subtitling limitations include:

Maximum two lines per subtitle

Limited character count (approx. 35–42 characters per line)

Reading speed constraints

Dubbing requires lip synchronization (lip-sync), timing alignment, and prosodic matching. These constraints often force condensation, omission, or reformulation.

Multimodality

Audiovisual texts combine dialogue, gestures, facial expressions, background music, and visual context. Localization must maintain coherence across modes. For instance, visual jokes may contradict literal subtitles, requiring contextual adaptation.

Multimodal redundancy sometimes allows omission of verbal elements without loss of meaning.

Ideological and Censorship Issues

Localization may involve ideological filtering. Certain expressions, slang, or culturally sensitive topics are softened or omitted. In some regions, political or religious content undergoes adaptation to align with local regulations.

The study revealed that localization decisions are influenced not only by translators but also by production companies and state regulations.

The findings confirm that language localization in AVT is a complex negotiation between linguistic accuracy and audience reception. Unlike written translation, AVT demands real-time processing and multimodal coherence.

The balance between domestication and foreignization remains context-dependent. For global platforms, partial foreignization is often preserved to maintain authenticity. However, local television adaptations show stronger domestication tendencies.

Technological advances, including AI-based subtitling tools, have accelerated production but have not eliminated cultural adaptation challenges. Human intervention remains essential for pragmatic and cultural decisions.

Localization in AVT should therefore be viewed as intercultural mediation rather than mechanical translation. Translators act as cultural negotiators operating within technological and institutional frameworks.

Language localization issues in audiovisual translation arise from linguistic differences, cultural diversity, technical limitations, and ideological constraints that collectively shape the translator's decision-making process. These factors interact within a multimodal environment where meaning is constructed through dialogue, image, sound, and editing techniques.

The study demonstrates that cultural adaptation is central to effective localization, as translators must negotiate culture-specific references, humor, idioms, and social norms to ensure audience comprehension while preserving the identity of the source text. At the same time, technical constraints—such as subtitle length, timing restrictions, and lip synchronization in dubbing—significantly shape translation strategies, often requiring condensation, reformulation, or omission.

Furthermore, the inherently multimodal nature of audiovisual texts means that localization requires integrated semiotic analysis, where verbal elements must remain

coherent with visual and acoustic components. Meaning is not transmitted solely through language but through the interaction of multiple communicative modes.

Ultimately, successful AVT localization depends on maintaining a careful balance between fidelity to the source text and functional effectiveness for the target audience. Future research should focus on AI-assisted localization quality assessment, empirical audience reception studies, and comparative cross-cultural analyses to better understand the evolving dynamics of global media translation.

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