

Treatment of Realia in the Subtitling of Ekphrastic Texts

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Abstract

As far as the basic tenets and technical constraints of subtitling go, the subtitling of documentaries devoted to various types of visual arts does not differ significantly from subtitling performed with other types of audiovisual content. However, each source material has aspects that go beyond the technical framework, encompassing cultural idiosyncrasies and culture-specific references. A special place among such items belongs to realia, in the sense of words and phrases denoting concepts characteristic of one nation and foreign to another. This article narrows down the scope of its research of such phenomena to a corpus consisting of several art documentaries ranging in subject from Byzantine to Ottoman and Chinese art and translated from English and French into Croatian, examining the strategies used to deal with realia in ekphrastic texts and the overall treatment of the concepts which they denote, while at the same time providing insight into the role played by the visual experience given by subtitles as an integral part of the representational process. The paper is partially based on a talk given in February 2016 at the Audiovisual Representation conference in Rome but as the research project had been a work-in-progress, it has since been substantially revised and expanded.

Key words: realia, art documentaries, subtitling, audiovisual translation, translation strategies

Citation: Čemerin, V. (2019). Treatment of Realia in the Subtitling of Ekphrastic Texts, *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*, 2(1), 104–125.

Editor(s): N. Reviers & A. Jankowska

Received: September 9, 2018

Accepted: September 6, 2019

Published: November 30, 2019

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Introduction

Taking as our starting point Lawrence Venuti's (2010, p. 132) assertion that translation theory provides methodology for studying ekphrastic texts and their relation to their source images, thus enabling the comprehension of both the social and cultural connotations of the source material, as well as those of secondary interpretation, the main aim of this study is to explore the strategies used by translators in dealing with culturally-specific items such as realia in the adaptation and interpretation of ekphrastic source material in subtitles. The study shall focus on the professional Croatian subtitling market and examine a corpus of twelve art documentaries, using a methodological framework partially derived from the work of Jan Pedersen (2011) and Hannah Silvester (2018), as well as the contemporary notions of literary and digital ekphrasis (Brosch, 2018; Lindhé, 2013). The translation of documentaries has been an object of AVT research for a few decades, mostly focusing on domain-specific and scientific documentaries, bilingual glossaries and terminology extraction (Matamala, 2010; Hanouille; Hoste & Remael, 2015b) or the theoretical principles and tenets underlying the translation of documentaries as an individual genre (Franco, 2000; Espasa, 2004). Since translators of documentaries do not specialize in specific domains, but rather in the individual techniques of audiovisual translation, such as subtitling, voice-over or dubbing, documentary translators usually need to be both versatile and adaptable to be able to perform their duties (Hanouille et al., 2015b, p. 26). Likewise, documentary translators need to take into consideration the register of the source text (formal narration, informal interviews), textual function (purely informative, entertaining or a combination of both) and specific guidelines set by the client (translation agency, broadcasting company, independent film festival etc.) as well as eventual habits and unwritten rules present in a specific language market. All of this makes documentary translation a specific audiovisual practice (Hanouille et al., 2015b, p. 26). As Croatia is primarily a subtitling country, with dubbing used mainly for materials aimed at young children and voice-over for news segments or interviews, the author has decided to limit the scope of this study to subtitled documentaries. It may be said that art documentaries can be considered "family material" as their purpose and function often heavily lean towards informative and educative. They are indeed occasionally dubbed, or a combination of dubbing and subtitling is used (dubbing for general narration, subtitling for interviewees within the film). However, as most documentaries in the Croatian market – encompassing the whole range of broadcasters and channels available to Croatian audiences – are subtitled, we opted to use only subtitled films. As stated, the main purpose and function of art documentaries is the dissemination of information for the target audience, while at the same time being sufficiently entertaining to attract and keep the viewers' attention. In the case of documentaries focused on visual arts, those target audiences may be very wide indeed, including all age groups and genders, or conversely, they may be catering to a niche audience interested in a fairly narrow topic. The following sections will briefly define and discuss the concepts central to this study, namely ekphrasis and realia, and then provide an analysis of the manner in which realia were treated in the examined corpus of art documentaries and their role in the overall ekphrastic experience.

1. Definitions of Concepts

1.1. Ekphrasis: from ancient tradition to the digital era

While the original definition of ekphrasis referred to the evocation of visual experience in a textual frame or providing a version of an individual artwork mediated by textual interpretation, it has since been expanded and transformed to involve the description of any medium by another (Mills, 2015, p. 2). Most of the literature on the junction between translation studies and ekphrastic studies has either been focused on the concept of intertextuality and its practical application in literary translation (Venuti, 2010, p. 137) or the concept of translation overlay construed as a melding of an individual work with its own translation (Mills, 2015, p. 3). To date, relatively scant attention has been paid to the management of ekphrastic source material in subtitled audiovisual content, despite the fact that subtitling may be considered a form of translation overlay as subtitle lines are added as an integral part to an audiovisual work. From this follows that the opposition between words and images present in classic literary ekphrasis remains active in screen translation but loaded with additional implications due to its multimodal aspects, as well as influenced and shaped by the restrictions of subtitling techniques. However, certain aspects of classic ekphrasis may still be relevant in discussing modern, participatory and hybrid forms of ekphrasis as envisaged by contemporary scholars (Brosch, 2018, p. 226). In ancient rhetoric tradition, ekphrastic texts were not perceived as a transparent means of visual representation but rather as a tool for strengthening the emotional resonance of the scenes described in them, evoking appropriate moods and emotional responses through the notion of *enargeia* or vividness (Kashtan, 2011) in the readers or listeners. Their aim was to translate the visual input through words into an imaginary visual image in the mind's eye and thus unite the act of looking through visualisation, imagination and memory (Shiel, 2013, p. 84 and p. 90). Nowadays, classic concepts of literary ekphrasis as self-contained reading experiences are considered too reductive, following an interpretive shift towards cultural performance that once again returns to the ancient traditions, whereby phenomena such as ekphrasis are not deemed to be static entities but cultural agents with the power to elicit certain effects and to perform certain functions (Brosch, 2018, p. 226–227). The emphasis is placed on the imaginative enhancement and the emotional impact which an artwork may exert upon the reader or viewer, using simultaneously the power of the still image and that of dynamic imaginative visualization as attention-grabbing strategies (Brosch, 2018, p. 237). Cecilia Lindhé's highly influential concept of digital ekphrasis (2013) utilizes the notion of *enargeia* as a stylistic effect that appeals to the senses of the listener to accentuate the process of visualization itself, rather than its subject matter. For her, images are meant to set in motion a variety of imaginative, emotional and rational reactions, thus making ekphrasis a verbal representation of the entire digital experience, not the artwork as a single point of focus. In the practical sense, this leads the recipient of a digital and multimedial artwork to be simultaneously engaged in an activity of reading, viewing and listening while experiencing an emotional reaction to ekphrasis as part of this multisensory event (Jansson, 2018 p. 299).

This notion of emotional involvement with the whole experience of perceiving and interacting with an audiovisual or digital work may serve as one of the foundations for examining the role of subtitles within a subtitled film. For could it not be said that the experience of watching any film is an affective and emotional one, enhanced by the multimodal character of the film? The introduction of subtitles to a film would then further affect the emotional response of the viewer, adding an extra layer of meaning and a supplementary point of visual focus on screen. Of course, since every emotional experience – as indeed any imaginative visualization of a mental image – is essentially subjective, this would mean that no two viewers will perceive the subtitled documentary or the artwork it depicts in the exact same way. However, the same may be argued for the use of literary ekphrasis in both its ancient rhetoric and classic literary sense. Likewise, a researcher may mitigate the hazard of sliding too far towards personal subjectivity, which could adversely impact the overall analysis of subtitled films, by combining the qualitative analysis of the emotional response described by their respondents with any cohesive model created to analyse audiovisual content. This paper will rely on Hannah Silvester’s model in this regard, due to its emphasis on multimodality and the notion of semiotic cohesion (Silvester, 2018, p. 80), which is achieved when all semiotic channels function together to merge into a meaningful whole. The idea of a subtitled film as a meaningful and cohesive whole, involving the film’s verbal and multimodal aspects and the process of imaginative visualization occurring in the viewer’s mind, provides a fertile foundation for studying audiovisual content. This paper intends to argue that in the cases of audiovisual content specifically dealing with visual art, it may be complemented by the concept of ekphrasis as an emotional and imaginative device, enabling the viewer to both create an imagined visual of an artwork and simultaneously immerse themselves into it through several semiotic channels. According to Cazden, Cope, Fairclough & Gee, multimodality comprises linguistic meaning, visual meaning, audio meaning, gestural meaning and spatial meaning (1996, p. 19). In examining subtitled films, all of these layers ought to be considered in the appraisal if we are to frame subtitled content as a meaningful whole. Silvester claims the study of subtitles without considering the impact of sound and images on their meaning to be “unreasonable” (Silvester, 2018, p. 74), since the music can affect the mood of a film scene (Silvester, 2018, p. 79) and sound effects may offer supplementary information not contained in the dialogue. It is not difficult to accept this notion and apply it to the examination of art documentaries, in which background music often serves to underpin the narration or fill in narrative gaps. Silvester’s model likewise takes into account the technical considerations and constraints of subtitling: time, space and synchronisation, as well as the general cultural context or all external factors that may affect the film’s translation and/or reception. It is also cognizant of the fact that the working conditions of translators may have impact on the translations they produce (following Abdallah, 2012) and that the adherence to norms and conventions is an implicit part of every subtitling commission. However, her model also presupposes the possibility of involving the actual subtitler in the evaluation procedure, which may not always be possible, as acknowledged by the author herself (Silvester, 2018, p. 75–77). While the norms and conventions used in a specific language market may be available to researchers through codes of good subtitling practices or client style guides; assessing actual working conditions present at the creation of an individual subtitled

film may be rather difficult. Not only might the subtitler be unavailable for discussion or even unable to remember the exact film, they might also be liable to non-disclosure agreements and unwilling to discuss their work conditions. Or the market itself might be so fluid and loosely organized so as to make the working conditions and personal experiences of individual translators highly variable. Having said that, the present study shall incorporate several elements of Silvester's model in the overall assessment of the topic at hand. Since the primary focus of this study lies not only in the ekphrastic experience of subtitled art documentaries, but also in the role played by realia within this experience, the following chapter will briefly outline the defining characteristics of realia and their assumed position within the ekphrastic experience.

1.2. Realia: culture-specific elements in the narrative flow

Due to their informative and educative nature, source texts focusing on the conveyance of visual art from various historical periods and geographical locations are bound to be both culturally specific and teeming with expressions referred to as realia. Florin (1993, p. 123) defines realia as objects and concepts characteristic to the way of life, culture, social and historical development of one nation and foreign to another. This primary definition can then be expanded upon by adding that such items are extralinguistic, rather than intralinguistic (Leppihalme, 2011, p. 126) and cover a rather large field of culturally-specific terms or concepts. Translation researchers have come up with numerous sub-classifications of those items, grouping them into several categories. For the purposes of this article, a categorization into four major types provided by Fernandez Guerra (2012, p. 4) has been used, classifying *realia* into:

1. geographic and ethnographic terms
2. words and expressions referring to folklore, tradition and mythology
3. names of everyday objects, actions and events
4. social and historical terms.

This type of categorization has been chosen in order to cover a broad selection of such items in translated films that have been examined during the research stage in the preparation of this article. While there are several terms denoting quite similar concepts, such as realia, culturally-specific items, culture-bound elements and culturally loaded elements, this paper shall use the term realia to encompass all of them in order to achieve textual cohesion and homogeneity. While realia belong to the visual-verbal layer of meaning, compelling the analyst studying their use in subtitles to focus primarily on the verbal aspect, their presence may also be examined through other semiotic channels, whether auditive (as their pronunciation should be heard by the viewer and thus merge with the visual of the written word) or spatial (as their use in subtitles may be particularly emphasised by using italics or bold typography to draw the viewer's gaze towards that part of the subtitle).

The primary importance of realia lies in the fact that they firmly ground the text in its local and temporal surroundings (Leppihalme, 2011, p. 126), leading us to Venuti's central argument that the key aspect of any interpretant, whether formal or thematic, is its relation to cultural traditions and social situations of the source material and of the second-order work that processed it. This can be translation in its capacity for de-contextualization and re-contextualization, traversing two or more languages and their innate structural differences, or it may be ekphrasis in its ability to transcend the boundaries between media in a single language. And yet, both translation and ekphrasis share a common limitation: they are dependent on the interpretants selected by the translator or narrator, their linguistic, stylistic or ideological choices (Venuti, 2010, p. 140). Any translation must thus be assessed in its immediate interpretative context, including both the source context – the one from which the source text originates – and the one for which the target text is adapted. Translations are created for specific audiences, taking into consideration their habits, needs and interests, just as documentary media is created to cater to the needs and interests of specific target audiences in terms of subject matter, the ways in which the subject is approached and treated, linguistic choices and style. What does this mean for translated and subtitled audiovisual ekphrastic texts? Could subtitles enhance or diminish the viewers' experience of a particular work of art? Umberto Eco (2004, p. 203) remarked that literary ekphrasis nowadays serves as an instrument which tries to draw attention more to the image it tries to evoke in the mind's eye, rather than drawing attention to itself as a verbal medium. In subtitling, there is no evocation of a painting or a statue in the mind's eye since the visual is present. What is evoked is the feeling or mood with regard to it, thus shaping the audience's perceptions of a given work of art. This once again returns us to the ancient rhetoric notion of ekphrasis as an emotional and imaginative device, whose purpose is to meld the imagined visual with the emotional response it causes and thus create an affective impact. We are reminded of contemporary functionalist approaches to ekphrasis, such as Brosch's (2013), whereby the still image and the dynamic imaginative visualization merge their power into a unified whole: in seeing a video, we *see* the artwork shown in it, but we also *feel* the overall sense of the artwork through the interaction of the image, the subtitled text, the auditive input and our own affective reaction to it. Unlike videogames or virtual reality environments to which the concept of digital ekphrasis is usually applied (Kashtan 2011; Lindhé 2013), subtitled films are multisensory but not truly interactive. The viewer is not required to physically and practically react in response to the semiotic input they receive. With subtitled films, the viewers are necessarily involved only passively, yet they ask for full cognitive engagement and concentration, thus providing an explicit multimodal experience but not a physically active one.

It may be possible to claim that – at least for some – these multimodal facets and complex sensory input provide a new dimension of perceiving art, not reducing the overall experience. Certainly, as mentioned above, for some viewers the subtitle lines on the screen may disrupt the creative flow of the source material and thus seem a hindrance, an unwelcome visual obstruction blocking a part of the screen and the artwork shown on it. However – and presuming the high quality of the translator's work – if we decide to consider an audiovisual translational literary work in itself

and thus a piece of literary art in its own right, despite the nature of a subtitled text as a secondary work with respect to the original source text, the translator then performs an ekphrasis of an ekphrasis, in a broad sense, condensing and paraphrasing the original narrative exposition of artwork pieces into smaller dense units of the target text and reflecting the original visual input through a double linguistic lens. This view may gather some support in the opinion of Peter Wagner (1996, p. 14) on the division between poetical and critical ekphrasis:

We should drop, once and for all, the tacit assumption that the verbal representation of an image must be literary to qualify as ekphrasis—in our age of the arbitrary sign it has become extremely difficult to distinguish between literary and critical text. If ekphrasis is the verbal representation of visual representation, a definition most experts now seem to accept, the first part of that definition can only mean: all verbal commentary/writing (poems, critical assessments, art historical accounts) on images. All such writing is essentially ekphrastic: the difference between the critical and the literary versions is one of degree, not one of mode or kind.

From this would follow that the narration in art documentaries can also be deemed ekphrastic writing, whether characterized by a high register and poetic language or being a strict and up-to-a-point description of the artwork shown on screen. The idea of well-made subtitles having artistic value has occasionally been revisited by translation scholars, see for instance Kabara (2015, p. 166–167 and p. 177), who applied Christiane Nord's concept of authorship to argue that subtitles could make the source text grow by transferring the poeticness of the original (understood as the stylistic subtlety and nuance of the original text) through the act of interpretation and restructuring of the original source language, thus prompting the viewers of the target text to engage with the source text and make inferences to interpret it in new and meaningful ways. In this process, the source text is condensed into subtitles, but the denotative meaning and the poeticness are retained and the viewers are encouraged to access and apply their background knowledge resources that include both the target culture and source culture in order to make those meaningful inferences (Kabara, 2015, p. 177).

Of course, translation, including screen translation, remains a second-order work inasmuch as its creator works on an original source text created by another author to transform, rewrite and re-create it into a new textual unit, even if we acknowledge the new elements introduced into the final work and its existence as a separate textual unit, de-contextualized and re-contextualized into a new cultural, socio-political and ideological setting. In spite of this fact, the degree to which a subtitled text may be considered a complete copy of the original, taking into consideration all of the paraphrasing and reshaping effort involved in its creation, remains somewhat fluid.

That being said, just as ekphrastic texts created by an individual author with a specific purpose and design in mind can take a life of their own and shape the understanding of the artwork even in ways not intended by their author, so can translations, moving not merely through different media, but likewise across languages, cultures and social strata, reaffirming, changing or reinterpreting their

audiences' understanding of the artwork. Since realia are items of particular significance for the source culture, it may be surmised that their translation using various strategies plays an important role within this process, enabling the target audience to fully comprehend the source material. Since the narrow objective of this study is to examine the way professional Croatian subtitlers deal with realia in ekphrastic documentaries, the following chapter shall describe the research hypotheses and the methodological framework used to gather and analyse the study data.

2. Methodology

The data has been gathered from a corpus of twelve art documentaries, ten in English and two in French and their Croatian subtitled versions. Only professionally made subtitles from national and satellite TV channels were used, meaning the subtitle films created for the national broadcasting corporation Hrvatska Radiotelevizija (HRT) and the commercial TV channels such as the Croatian branch of the RTL Television and the Viasat History channel. All films examined include either the names of their translators and reviewers or the universal signature of the translation provider company. While the unsigned films may indicate that the work has been completed by novices or translators with less professional experience, it may be worth noting that the company which brands its subtitles using only the company signature (Mediatranslations) is the second-largest AVT employer after the national TV broadcaster in Croatia and the only one which has an in-house revision team, while all others rely on subtitled films being reviewed externally by freelance contractors. The analysis of the corpus involved two stages, the first being devoted to the investigation of translation strategies used to deal with realia, which was mainly verbal-oriented, and the second examining the relationship between realia and ekphrasis according to the multimodal aspects of Hannah Silvester's model, with a special emphasis on the auditive dimension.

The translation strategies used to deal with realia were examined in accordance with a model specifically created for subtitles (Pedersen, 2005, 2011) and are divided into two main broad categories, source-language oriented and target-language oriented (or foreignizing and domesticating type strategies), with a more specific sub-division within each category:

Table 1.

Translation strategies used to deal with realia

Source Language Oriented	Target Language Oriented
Retention	Generalisation
Specification (explicitation, addition)	Substitution (cultural substitution and paraphrase)
Direct translation (calque and shifted)	Omission
Official equivalent	

The source language-oriented category encompasses strategies such as *retention* or direct transfer of a term, meaning that source realia are kept intact and unchanged, and then transferred into the target text, but are frequently marked to distinguish them from the rest of the text using italics or any other type of typography. The strategy of *specification* is divided into two sub-strategies: *explicitation*, in the sense of expanding the SL text by providing additional explanatory information or spelling out implicit meanings of abbreviations and acronyms; and *addition*, where the material that is added to the text is latent in the culturally-specific item with regard to its sense or connotations. The source language-oriented category is finally rounded off by including *direct translations*, both of the *calque* and *shifted* variety. Calque translation is the result of stringent literal translation, while shifted direct translation entails the translators making optional shifts on the ST realia that makes the realia more unobtrusive, that is, shifted translation is a more precise definition of literal translation (Pedersen, 2005, p. 5; 2011, p. 83). The end result is often identical when it comes to calque and shifted direct translation, and nothing is added nor subtracted from the source (Pedersen, 2011, p. 83). This means that neologisms are occasionally a result of the use of such strategies.

The target language-oriented category includes various replacement strategies such as *generalisation* or replacing realia with something rather vague and general, such as a superordinate term (i. e. a *fast food restaurant* for *Burger King*), *cultural substitution* in the sense of replacing *realia* with equally culturally loaded elements from the target culture and *paraphrase*, or the replacement of realia with a context-appropriate paraphrase. The final strategy that fits into the TL oriented category is *omission*, where realia are not replaced by anything and are simply ignored. There is also an additional strategy which fits neither the source nor the target-oriented category, this being the *official equivalent* that has already been established and codified in the target language and culture, usually by an official authority.

Thematically, the documentaries selected cover a wide array of topics, geographical locations and types of artwork, including medieval, Renaissance and modern western art, Greco-Roman antiquity, Byzantine art, Tang dynasty China and medieval Tibet, as well as the Ottoman Turkish art. Painting, mosaics, sculpture and architecture are all represented, as well as Tibetan mandalas,

Chinese bas-reliefs and Ottoman calligraphy. This non-uniform batch has been selected in order to showcase the widest possible angle in dealing with realia and test the hypothesis that the techniques offering the greatest level of foreignization will largely be used in target subtitles, since they both provide the “flavour” of the source material and serve as a basis for learning about a specific culture and artistic tradition, bearing in mind the educational and entertainment aspects of the documentaries. Three hypotheses were envisaged during the study design stage:

1. Subtitlers will largely favour foreignizing strategies in order to retain as much of source culture as possible.
2. The strategy of omission will not be widely used since it entails the removal of potentially important information, which would be in contradiction to the informative and educative purposes of the subtitled documentaries.
3. The strategy of addition will have a significant presence due to educative purpose of the subtitled documentaries and the potential need to further clarify certain concepts.

3. Results and discussion

A total of 170 individual examples of realia have been manually counted in the corpus, in accordance with the division by Fernandez Guerra (2012, p. 4) and encompassing geographic and ethnographic terms, terms for local traditions, religious and folkloristic items, names of everyday objects and foodstuffs or dishes, and social and historical terms. Of those 170 items, 49 were retained in the original and marked with italics, while 49 were retained in the original and left unmarked (those mostly involve geographic locations, names of cities, towns and rivers and similar, which are customarily kept in their original form in the Croatian cultural and literary tradition, unless an official equivalent has been ingrained in the collective cultural memory, such as the names *Venecija* for the city of Venice, *Katalonija* for Catalunya or *Beč* for Vienna).

When it comes to official equivalents, in 64 instances realia were Croatized and translated using this strategy, largely involving the names of artistic styles such as fauvism, cubism or naturalism, historical movements such as Byzantine iconoclasm or painting techniques such as still life (*mrtva priroda*). This leaves us with only 8 items translated using other techniques, such as addition.

It may be said that the data obtained in the study partially support the hypotheses posited in the study design stage: foreignization is very much in use – sometimes even unnecessarily so, with Italian Catholic churches such as San Giovanni or San Vitale in Ravenna, both of which are quite familiar to Croatian audiences and have respective Croatian names, being left in their Italian varieties. The reason for this may lie in the translators’ ineptitude or lack of knowledge, but a more likely explanation would be the desire to retain the flavour and feeling of the source material. However, it ought to be noted that there are several limitations to the study, primarily the small size of the corpus which may mean that the findings are driven by the corpus itself. A survey of a larger topical corpus

may yield a somewhat different outcome in terms of strategies used, so the data should be interpreted with caution even though they seem somewhat uniform. Likewise, several of the source texts were translated and proofread by the same pairs of subtitlers and proofreaders, so one might be wary of the possibility that the findings reflect the style and habits of individual translators, at least to some extent. The author tried to temper this by including a variety of Croatian translations in the corpus and spreading the corpus over several broadcasting corporations and TV channels, with the aim of obtaining a certain level of diversity. Taking into account that the Croatian audiovisual market is not overly large and that the corpus includes translations created by the three largest AVT providers (HRT who have their own in-house translation service, Mediatranslations who are contractors for RTL Media, and SDI Media who translate for Viasat), the uniformity of the findings still merits further discussion and can serve as a basis for drawing several conclusions regarding the overall aims of the study. Due to spatial limitations of the article, each of the results shall be illustrated by a few select examples.

Official equivalents are by far the most frequent, codified by regulatory bodies or terms deeply ingrained in the collective cultural consciousness. The use of paraphrase is rare, due to the source material. Cultural substitution is not used at all, except only for items that are already a part of the Croatian culture (e.g. names of individual fish species painted on still life paintings). However, despite the occasional retention of a term or name that is usually Croatized per convention, items that are well-known to the Croatian audiences or which are a part of general world culture (e. g. the temple of Pantheon in Rome, or personal names of Roman emperors, ancient Greek philosophers or Roman Catholic saints) are largely Croatized. Likewise, concepts from time periods and cultures which have had a great influence on the local Croatian culture and language are Croatized, such as the Ottoman Turkish concepts like janissaries, minbar or mihrab or the Venetian church of San Marco, simply because the Croatian equivalents exist due to shared historical and cultural influences. The dominions of the Venetian Republic included the Croatian provinces of Istria and Dalmatia, the Ottoman Empire spread all the way to Slavonia so linguistic calques and cultural items found their way into contemporary Croatian language and culture. The retention of such items in their original forms would seem confusing to the audience. It is a reasonable presupposition that subtitlers from other geographical locations and cultures may find those items new, unusual and worthy of utilizing other types of strategies, more foreignizing ones, while domesticating those items that are close to their native culture. Furthermore, since such realia are so deeply ingrained in the local cultural concepts and mental imagery, they fit effortlessly into the subtitle text and complement the already present cultural meaning. In art documentaries, this transfer of cultural meaning is often supported by other multimodal aspects. The music accompanying each scene is often selected to fit relevant historical and cultural periods, such as Gregorian chants or polyphonic motets being used to evoke Western medieval and Renaissance tradition and thus strengthen the informative character of the film by simultaneously imbuing the viewer with the knowledge of several contemporaneous cultural artefacts. Seen within this process, realia retained in the original and marked with italics or rendered

using an official equivalent would serve to further cement the sense of historical and cultural time and place in the viewer's mind.

Conversely, the aural dimension might also be used to prompt a different type of emotional response. A discussion of the Bayeux tapestry might be accompanied by the sounds of a battle, the clashing of metal weapons and the neighing of horses. Or J. M. W. Turner's Venetian landscape paintings might be accompanied by the soft sound of swishing seawater, evoking the feeling of a soft summer sunset over the lagoons. In the Croatian subtitling tradition, the effects of music and other non-spoken sounds on subtitles are limited insofar as they are not rendered in the form of descriptions onscreen. It is customary to translate only the speech and text that is visually present onscreen, such as written signs. However, in other subtitling traditions – and especially when it comes to the subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing – the written descriptions of sounds and musical effects may provide a further board to fuse the various layers of meaning together. Sturken & Cartwright (2001) assert that the capacity of images to affect the viewer depends on the cultural meanings they evoke, as well as the social, political and cultural contexts in which they are viewed. In compliance with this notion, the layers of meaning present in an ekphrastic scene of an art documentary, together with the dramatic and narrative effects produced by it and interpreted by the viewer, would depend on the entire multimodal experience. All of the stimuli (verbal narration, music and aural effects, written subtitles and the visual imagery) combine together to create the general impression of an ekphrastic scene for the viewer. The following few examples shall illustrate the usage of the official equivalents in the corpus examined in this study.

Examples:

(1)

English subtitle: The importance of these guilds changed with the period.

Croatian subtitle: Važnost tih cehova mijenjala se s vremenom.

(Back translation: The importance of these guilds changed with the times.)

(Paris, A Capital Tale 2, 07:04)

The scene follows an indoor medieval market – specifically the one built by King Philip Augustus for the drapers' and weavers' guilds of medieval Paris – with extras in medieval garb performing the mundane tasks of everyday life: walking among the produce stalls, cooking or buying vegetables or cutting pork meat for their customers. It is meant to represent a snapshot of daily life microhistory for the citizens and guild members of medieval Paris, reinforced by the sights and sounds one might expect in such a location and time period: the cackling of geese as they waddle among people's feet, the heard-yet-indiscernible conversations among the buyers and sellers. This is overlaid by the narrator describing the codification of trades and the importance of guilds for medieval city life, as an introduction to the Saint Jacques Tower, the only remaining part of the butchers' guilds' church

of Saint James (Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie). The realia related to the concept of a guild (or *ceh* in Croatian) couldn't have been rendered in any other way since the same concept and organisation had been a part of everyday life for the citizens of medieval Croatian towns. Moreover, the visual of a stereotypical medieval town scene, underlined by the clothing of the people and the food items (pig carcasses, geese and leafy greens) would have been easily transposable to a Croatian setting. Hence no particular typographic emphasis would have been necessary to address the concept of a guild or to familiarise the Croatian viewers with it.

(2)

English subtitle: A significant part of which was used for the basilica of San Marco, the symbol of Venetian power.

Croatian subtitle: Velik dio uporabljen je za baziliku Svetog Marka, simbol Venecije.

(Back translation: A large portion was used for the basilica of Saint Mark, a symbol of Venice.)

(Monuments Revealed: Hagia Sophia, 42:30)

The image onscreen shows the interior of the Hagia Sophia, slowly giving way to a watercolour drawing of the basilica of Saint Mark. The flute music is aimed to evoke medieval secular polyphony. The subtitles leave out the phrase "Venetian power", instead using simply "Venice", but this omission may be due to the limited number of characters per second, not to any contentious decision of the subtitler. However, for a viewer conversant in English, this omission may be glaring and may adversely impact the ekphrastic experience.

(3)

English subtitle: There was the addition of the minbar, the place from which the imam would give the sermon.

Croatian subtitle: Dodali su minbar, mjesto gdje je imam držao propovijed.

(Back translation: A minbar was added, the place from which the imam would give the sermon.)

(Monuments Revealed: Hagia Sophia, 52:33)

The camera in this and the following scene follows the narrator as she walks around the interior of the Hagia Sophia, briefly focusing on each mentioned object, including the minbar and the mihrab, which shows the sacred direction to Mecca. Both objects are retained in the original and unmarked, since they are explained by the narrator in the source text. The subtitler decided not to use the italics, perhaps believing the explanations to be sufficient. However, while some of the Ottoman Turkish cultural concepts are quite well-known among the Croatian audiences, this may not be the case with objects of religious significance. The lack of emphasis via the italics does not necessarily impact the ekphrastic experience, since the objects referred to are clearly shown onscreen and discussed by the narrator, but it does represent a conscious choice by the subtitler.

The strategy of retention is relatively often used in the examined corpus, with the term in question being transferred either with or without italics. With terms in the Chinese language, either the Hànyǔ Pīnyīn or Wade-Giles Romanisation systems are used, usually following the Romanisation used in the source text. Occasionally a term is retained even when the concept in question has actually entered the Croatian language as a loanword (such as *brioche*, extant in Croatian as *brioš* or the name of Buddha, traditionally Croatized into Buda). Cultural gaps certainly exist, but since the emphasis is on the cultural and not necessarily linguistic transfer, spreading information about the source text and individual items described, the primary focus is on the retention of distinctive cultural and artistic experience of the original culture. Individual realia are frequently marked, and the attention specifically drawn to them using italics in general type subtitles. However, if there is a change in narration, which is in Croatia typically and conventionally marked by the whole subtitle being in italics, then the realia are marked apart by being written in roman type. In one instance, the translator opted to use the Italian name of a specific geographic location (the Venetian Grand Canal) and mark it in italics despite the fact that the original narration used the French name for the same place. This might again be explained by the Italian name simply being more familiar to the Croatian audiences, since Canal Grande is usually not Croatized in the general tradition.

Examples:

(4)

English subtitle: The Buddha said everything is impermanent.

Croatian: Buddha je rekao da je sve prolazno.

(Back translation: Buddha said that everything is transitory.)

(*Lost Treasures of Tibet*, 0:12)

The visual features a close-up of a Buddhist monk's fingers, patiently and methodically taking coloured sand out of a round metal box and pouring it along pre-drawn chalk lines to build a mandala. His face is deeply focused and calm and the scene is accompanied by a mixture of quiet flute music and his equally soft and quiet voice. A mandala is a symbol of impermanence and the transitory nature of the world, painstakingly made of colourful sand only to be scattered later; a delicate artwork requiring hours of patient and dedicated work. The scene is meant to evoke the combination of deep calm, unbridled focus and impermanence. The viewer's gaze is fixed on the fingertips mixing and releasing the coloured green, red and blue grains of sand onto the chalk lines and triangular forms. The subtitle is divided into two lines, even though it perhaps could have been retained as a single line as it contains very little text. However, this again may not have been a conscious choice by the subtitler, but a choice dependent upon the number of characters per line allowed by the client specifications. Buddha's name could have been easily used in the Croatian form since it is quite familiar to the Croatian audiences, but the subtitler might have opted to keep it intact in order to evoke the feeling of "foreignness" with regard to Tibetan Buddhism. The scene is immediately

expanded in the next few frames, where we see a number of children in traditional orange and yellow Buddhist monk robes intently watching the artist at work, and other monks working on the mandala. Buddha's name is further retained in the original form in the following subtitles, whose narration expounds on his teachings and their ability to prepare the adherents to face the impermanence. Although they bear a certain similarity to the Roman Catholic medieval concept of *memento mori* with its own emphasis on intransience and the interminable passage of time and worldly affairs, the Tibetan Buddhist cultural and religious notions may be considered sufficiently foreign to merit the use of a foreignizing strategy in order to maintain their specific flavour for the audience.

(5)

French subtitle: Whistler fuit le premier artiste important à s'aventurer hors du Grand Canal.

Croatian subtitle: Whistler je prvi umjetnik koji se otisnuo izvan *Canala Grande*.

(Back translation: Whistler is the first artist who ventured outside the Grand Canal.)

(*Turner, Monet, Whistler*, 46:57)

The entire screen is occupied by J. M. Whistler's etchings of the First and Second Venetian Set. The yellow and white paper is filled with the images of sailing ships, *palazzos* along the small canals and pastel tones evoking the evenings and nights over the lagoons. The scene is rounded off by simple and elegant violin music and a narrator whose voice is subdued and reverent, almost as if to reflect the gentle and soft quality of Whistler's misty twilights on warm water and the tenderness of his lines. The emotion evoked by the nocturne is one of softness, radiance and harmony. The white letters and pale grey lines of the subtitles almost merge into the etchings, virtually giving rise to the illusion that they are a part of the drawing. For the viewers of the documentary, they *are* a part of the overall visual experience, being infused with the rest of the visual input into a single image on the screen. Despite the fact that the combination of white letters on a pale grey surface is the standard for Croatian subtitlers, used to enhance readability (see Croatian Association of Audiovisual Translators (CAAT) guidelines for subtitling, 2019, p. 4), one may speculate that some art forms might be additionally enhanced and supplemented by interventionist subtitling techniques, such as the fansubbers' use of different colours, graphics or even onscreen commentary. Couldn't one imagine the ekphrastic experience of Andy Warhol's or Damian Hirst's work augmented by such interventions? And yet, some viewers might see such additions by the subtitler as unnecessary, disruptive or overly aggressive. To return to the example at hand: the use of italics and the Italian name of the Canal Grande might have been a deliberate attempt to exert a degree of control over a location very familiar to the Croatian audiences. To them, the Italian name is almost a household name, so the use of anything else might have been unusual. As such, the subtitles reflect and complement the visual and imaginative experience – since they describe an etching which in turn describes a Venetian lagoon – bypassing the French narration in favour of a local cultural tradition.

(6)

English subtitle: This material, which we call a pizza, is a glass paste.

Croatian subtitle: Ovaj materijal, zvan *pizza*, jest staklena pasta.

(Back translation: This material, called pizza, is a glass paste.)

(*Monuments Revealed: Hagia Sophia*, 26:08)

(7)

English subtitle: Depending on their needs, the artisans would break this coloured glass

Croatian subtitle: Po potrebi, obrtnici bi razbili ovo obojano staklo

English subtitle: into small cubes of different dimensions called tesserae.

Croatian subtitle: u kockice različitih dimenzija zvane “tessere”.

(Back translation: Depending on need, the artisans would break this coloured glass into small cubes of different dimensions called tesserae.)

(*Monuments Revealed: Hagia Sophia*, 26:20–22)

The visual over these scenes involves the Byzantine mosaics in the Ravennese basilica of San Vitale and a modern mosaicists' workshop. As the subtitles follow the unseen narrator, they are mostly in italics, with the realia marked in regular typeface and using quotation marks to distinguish them from the rest of the subtitle. This is in line with the accepted Croatian subtitling tradition, but – perhaps unintentionally – creates a rather interesting and agreeable visual effect. The typographic changes from regular typeface to italics follow the golden and blue tesserae as they are placed and fitted into the mould, thus visually evoking the placement and composition of those small cubes into a single large image. The ekphrastic experience of fitting several items into a single whole is further emphasised by the aural dimension: the mosaicist explains her work in Italian, voiced-over by the English narrator of the documentary, but not so loud as to make the Italian difficult to hear. If we consider the Croatian subtitles as the third verbal layer within the scene, the whole ekphrastic experience of the scene is fused together from several verbal components and several visual components, creating an imaginative multimodal mosaic for the viewers.

Addition was rarely used to deal with realia in the examined corpus, with additional information inserted to clarify individual terms and concepts which may be unfamiliar to some viewers, for example the concepts of *pax romana* or *Ancien Régime*. This conforms to the educative purpose of the source material and helps in disseminating information on the original source context. Likewise, since specific terms and concepts were often additionally explained in the source text, such as the Parisian Court des Comptes or Court of the Accounts, those items were retained in the original and the additional explanation translated into Croatian (i. e. Court des Comptes or Revizorski sud).

Examples:

(8)

English subtitle: The Place des Innocents was built on top of one of Paris' oldest cemeteries.

Croatian subtitle: Trg Place des Innocents izgrađen je povrh jednog od najstarijih pariških groblja.
(Back translation: The square Place des Innocents was built atop one of the oldest Paris cemeteries.)

(Paris, A Capital Tale 2, 04:47)

The scene is visually and aurally attractive, following the narrator's description of medieval people's attitudes to death and graveyards as places of daily activities not strictly separated from the world of the living, as modern healthcare standards and socio-cultural concepts of death impose upon the contemporary society. The visual is a colourful drawing of the Cemetery des Innocents, not as a place of quiet mourning and contemplation as one may well imagine it to be, but rather as a bustling place teeming with life. It is surrounded by shops and stalls, there are washerwomen washing some clothes, soldiers are leisurely strolling along a path, children are running around at play, while at the same time a funeral is being conducted by a party of priests and monks. The visual slowly blends the drawing with the filmed image of the contemporary square, taking as its central point of focus the depiction of a fountain that stood in the same location during the reign of King Philip Augustus, then to symbolically and actually replace it with the image of the still-extant Fontaine des Innocents which has occupied the same site since 1549. The subtitler opted to add the descriptor *trg* (square) before the place name, possibly to enhance the informative experience – for the square and its fountain occupy the site of the cemetery and express the continuities present in the life of a city. People die, streets change, but the city keeps living and growing above and over the remains of bygone eras. It is also possible that the subtitler simply did not want to start the subtitle using a foreign word. However, the addition fits well with the rest of the subtitle and does not detract from the overall impression. It may be said that this type of addition enables the subtitles to grow in the sense advocated by Kabara (2015, p. 177), keeping the denotative meaning of the original intact and making the viewers engage with the source text through several layers of meaning.

(9)

English subtitle: The name Hagia Sophia comes from the Greek for divine wisdom.

Croatian subtitle: Ime Aja Sofija (Hagia Sophia) na grčkom znači "božanska mudrost".
(Back translation: The name Aya Sofya (Hagia Sophia) means divine wisdom in Greek.)

(Monuments Revealed: Hagia Sophia, 01:22)

Here the Croatized Turkish name was added to the Greek original and the original retained in brackets, possibly because it is a more familiar form in Croatian. The whole subtitle is marked in italics

since it is spoken by an unseen narrator. The screen shows the interior of the Hagia Sophia, the camera panning from the golden Byzantine mosaics and the interior view of the imposing dome to the Islamic calligraphic roundels. The narrator's voiceover mixes with the dramatic male chorus which underpins the rich images of the mosaics and a single feminine voice, almost like a lamentation, as the camera surveys the interior. The entire ekphrastic experience reflects the enormity of the artwork that is the Hagia Sophia: both the architectural grandeur of the building and the weight of the centuries and empires that have shaped its existence. The subtitles supplement the educative purpose of the source text and utilize the strategy of addition to provide further information to the viewers. Some of the viewers may be unfamiliar with the fact that the Turkish name is a calque of the original Greek name, so the subtitler filled this knowledge gap by using both forms.

It ought to be said that educational documentaries – and indeed documentaries in general – possess a special characteristic which distinguishes them from other types of audiovisual content: a relatively slow narration that frequently accompanies the source text and enables the transfer of large chunks of it. This somewhat reduces the need for omission. This is apparent in the films examined, and the strategy of omission is completely absent in the corpus.

4. Conclusions

This study focused on the interplay between ekphrastic source material and its translation in a multimodal environment. Having examined the corpus, it may be said that items such as realia are seamlessly incorporated into the flow of the textual narrative, while retaining a sufficient sense of “foreignness” to colour the translations. Realia complement the context of the source material, enabling the evocation of a specific historical and cultural mental image and a particular feeling with regard to the original artwork in the viewer-reader's imaginarium. The emphasis placed upon them by using different typography to distinguish them from the rest of the text provides an additional visual stimulant, drawing the viewers' attention to those items and the concepts they denote. This in turn may serve to complement the viewers' experience, combined with the sensory overload stemming from the engagement of several channels of information transfer and fulfilling the informative and educative purpose of the source material: items that are particularly visually emphasised may be remembered after the viewing experience has ended. The subtitlers could have chosen to describe the concepts denoted by individual realia rather than opting for official equivalents and original forms, but this would have diminished the purpose of the source texts, which was to evoke specific historical periods, cultural milieus and artworks pertaining to them, as well as prompting an appropriate emotional response from the viewers.

Since the viewer's gaze has to be drawn to the subtitles, the subtitles have to blend in with the rest of the whole in an unobtrusive way. This is reflected in all aspects that comprise a finished subtitle: use and choice of vocabulary, efficient management of temporal and spatial constraints, selection and implementation of stylistic choices, as well as translation accuracy and the appropriate use of

translation strategies. While the spoken narrative in art documentaries serves to underpin and interpret individual artistic pieces, reflecting the choices and intentions of its original creators, its written remaking in the subtitle format – quite literally an interpretation of an interpretation – serves the needs of its own secondary audiences and involves another layer of interpretants through the work of its translator as interpreter. With the viewers being at the same time readers, the experience of watching a subtitled film is at the same time visual, auditive and imaginative, engaging viewers' attention on several different sensory and intellectual levels. It may be additionally said, with regard to the source material, that subtitling in its essence necessarily remains a certain level of paraphrase, reshaping the original textual and/or spoken input into a new textual form, omitting parts of, condensing the original source text or incorporating new information into the target text. Despite this, the verbal layer of interpretation of the source text is only a single layer, not the defining one. Language and image are realised through different sensory channels, image and text are both shown simultaneously on the screen, and in most cases, they are accompanied by sound as a third multimodal layer at play. Subtitles need not be seen as a hindrance, but rather examined as a further transformative aspect of the translation process; their existence helping to achieve semiotic cohesion for the secondary audiences. The final subtitled product may then be perceived as an integral whole, providing a specific ekphrastic experience to its viewers.

There are several further points to be made in concluding this study. It would certainly benefit from being conducted on a larger scale and from utilizing any of the research methods used in audience reception studies to examine the viewers' perception and response to the films of the corpus, as a potential avenue to gauge the emotional impact of the ekphrastic experience. Likewise, it may be claimed that the conventionalized forms and strategies used by the subtitlers who translated the films in our corpus might at least partially stem from the expectations of their audience, which might be used to a specific manner of cultural and textual transfer in subtitling. We ought to mention a study on the emerging expectancy norms in the Croatian subtitling market, which came to the conclusion that Croatian audiences are rather intolerant of translators intervening in the source text and departing from it in any way that can be interpreted as a lack of faithfulness, favouring source-oriented translation strategies and forming their expectations about the translation based on their knowledge of the original (Marčetić, 2016, p. 61). This notion might have had an impact on the subtitlers' ultimate choices regarding the use of particular subtitling strategies. Furthermore, individual AV providers have their own specifications and style guides, making subtitlers' choices subordinate to their requirements, in addition to the general constraints of subtitling. All of these considerations might influence both the subtitling process and the final product, thus affecting the ekphrastic experience caused by the art documentary. However, rather than being a concern, these issues might serve to highlight the ways in which the source text becomes restructured into the target text through several layers and agents of interpretation.

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