

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSLATION IN THE FILM INDUSTRY

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Annotation: *This article explores the vital role of translation in the film industry, discussing how subtitling, dubbing, and localization help films cross linguistic and cultural boundaries. It highlights how effective translation fosters cultural exchange, drives commercial success, and ensures the authenticity of cinematic experiences. The article also touches on the challenges of preserving cultural nuances and the future of translation with AI and machine learning technologies.*

Keywords: *Film translation, subtitling, dubbing, localization, cultural exchange, film industry, AI in translation, global cinema, cinematic authenticity.*

The global film industry is a multi-billion-dollar enterprise that thrives on reaching diverse audiences worldwide. Translation is one of the most essential yet often underappreciated aspects of this industry. Without effective translation, many iconic films would never transcend language barriers, and global audiences would be deprived of countless cinematic experiences. This article explores translation's critical role in the film industry, examining its impact on cultural exchange, commercial success, and the preservation of cinematic authenticity.

1. The Globalization of Cinema

Film, as an art form, has always had the potential to transcend borders. In the 21st century, this potential is being realized on an unprecedented scale. Major film studios in Hollywood, Bollywood, China, and beyond now aim to reach global audiences, translating an indispensable part of the production and distribution process.

Globalization has allowed audiences to access films in languages they do not speak, thanks to subtitling, dubbing, and localization efforts. Translation enables films to be marketed in diverse regions, which significantly increases the audience base and box office revenue. For example, major franchises such as Marvel and Fast & Furious consistently rely on dubbed and subtitled versions to perform well in non-English-speaking markets like China, India, and Latin America. In 2021, China overtook North America as the world's largest film market, highlighting the necessity of high-quality translations to tap into this vast audience.

However, translating films goes beyond merely converting dialogues into different languages. It involves conveying cultural nuances, humor, and regional references that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. A literal translation could

result in loss of meaning or even misunderstandings, alienating audiences and affecting the film's reception.

2. Cultural Exchange and Bridging Differences

Films are a reflection of the culture, values, and social contexts of their origin. Translation serves as a bridge between cultures, allowing audiences to explore and appreciate the intricacies of foreign cultures through cinema. It promotes cultural exchange, fostering a sense of empathy and understanding among global viewers.

A key challenge for translators is to maintain the cultural context of a film while making it relatable to foreign audiences. For example, in the case of films like *Parasite* (2019) from South Korea or *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) from China, translation plays a pivotal role in capturing the local flavor, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references. For *Parasite*, the film's translator, Darcy Paquet, had to balance keeping the translation true to the original Korean while making it understandable to an English-speaking audience, helping the film resonate with viewers worldwide.

On the other hand, poor translations can distort the original message, leading to cultural misunderstandings. For example, a poorly translated joke might lose its humor or a serious dialogue might be rendered inappropriately lighthearted, ultimately undermining the film's intended impact. Therefore, the quality of translation is paramount in delivering the authenticity of the film's message.

3. Dubbing vs. Subtitling: A Creative and Commercial Decision

When it comes to translation in the film industry, there are two primary methods: dubbing and subtitling. The choice between the two is often influenced by cultural preferences, production budgets, and commercial considerations.

Dubbing, where the original dialogue is replaced by voice actors speaking the target language, is widely preferred in countries like Germany, Italy, and France. Dubbing allows viewers to fully immerse themselves in the visual experience without the distraction of reading text. However, it is also expensive and time-consuming, requiring skilled voice actors who can capture the tone, emotion, and timing of the original performance.

Moreover, lip-syncing can sometimes result in awkward mismatches, especially when the original and target languages differ significantly in structure and length.

Subtitling, on the other hand, involves displaying translated text at the bottom of the screen while retaining the original audio. Subtitles are a more cost-effective option and are commonly used in countries like the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and South Korea. While subtitling preserves the original actors' performances, it can detract from the visual experience, as audiences must divide their attention between reading and watching.

The decision between dubbing and subtitling is not merely a technical one; it can influence a film's reception in a foreign market. For instance, animated films or children's movies are typically dubbed, as younger audiences may struggle with subtitles. Meanwhile, films targeting adult audiences might opt for subtitling, especially if retaining the original language adds to the film's authenticity and appeal.

4. Translation as a Driver of Commercial Success

The commercial success of international films often hinges on the effectiveness of their translation. For instance, Hollywood blockbusters generate a significant portion of their revenue from overseas markets. A well-executed translation can turn a film into a global hit, while a poor one can lead to a lackluster reception.

Take the example of Disney's animated film *Frozen* (2013), which was localized in 41 different languages, from French to Arabic, making it accessible to diverse audiences across the world. The song “Let It Go,” a key component of the film's success, was translated into multiple languages, each version retaining the song's emotional depth and lyrical meaning. This localization effort helped *Frozen* gross over \$1.2 billion globally, proving that high-quality translation can significantly amplify a film's financial success.

At the same time, film distributors must be mindful of regional sensitivities when translating content. Some films may face censorship or require adjustments in certain countries. For instance, *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018), a biopic about the band Queen, had to make adjustments to its depiction of LGBTQ+ themes for the Chinese market, reflecting the delicate balance between preserving the film's essence and catering to local norms.

5. The Future of Translation in Film: AI and Machine Learning

As technology evolves, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are increasingly being explored as tools for translation in the film industry. Automated translation services like Google Translate have improved significantly in recent years, and machine-learning algorithms are being developed to assist in subtitling and dubbing processes.

However, while AI may offer speed and cost efficiency, it lacks the cultural sensitivity and creative intuition that human translators bring to the table. Translating a film is as much an art as it is a science, requiring a deep understanding of both languages and cultures involved. The human element ensures that a translation not only conveys the literal meaning but also captures the tone, emotion, and intent behind the dialogue. In the future, a hybrid approach combining human expertise with AI tools could streamline the translation process without sacrificing quality. For now, human translators remain the cornerstone of effective film translation, ensuring that movies retain their original spirit while resonating with global audiences.

In conclusion, translation plays an indispensable role in the film industry, enabling movies to reach audiences across linguistic and cultural barriers. It is not just about converting words from one language to another; it is about preserving meaning, emotion, and cultural context. Whether through subtitling, dubbing, or localization, translation is crucial to the global success of films.

As the film industry continues to expand into international markets, the importance of skilled translators will only grow, ensuring that films resonate with viewers worldwide and contribute to the rich tapestry of global cinema.

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