Subtitling Wordplay and Idioms: A case study of subtitling Brooklyn Nine-Nine into Croatian

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Abstract

Subtitling is the process of translating spoken dialogue into written text on a screen. Subtitling has restrictions of time and space, which is why there is an astounding number of subtitling guidelines. Different types of subtitles use different guidelines. Some of the types are subtitles whose purpose is to translate and bring content to a broader audience (called simply 'subtitles'), closed captions (CC), and SDH or Subtitles for the deaf or hard-of-hearing. The differences between the three types are in their role and in the way they are displayed. The role of subtitling is to translate spoken dialogue from the source language into written text on a screen in the target language. Subtitles are displayed at the bottom of the screen in white letters with shadowing. The role of closed captions is to transcribe the dialogue into a written text and describe non-visual noises, sound effects, music, and everything else in a scene. They are displayed at the bottom of the screen in white letters on a black band, and they can be turned on and off at will. SDH are a combination of both; their role is to translate and describe non-visual noises, sound effects, music, and everything else in a scene. They are displayed at the bottom of the screen in white letters with shadowing.

The topic of this paper is subtitling idioms and wordplay in the American TV series *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*. It is a police comedy show set in the 99th precinct of the New York City Police Department in Brooklyn, following Detective Jake Peralta and his co-workers attempting to fight crime between their everyday banter. This television series has numerous examples of idioms, all types of wordplay and phraseological units. Unfortunately, a lot of them work only in English, making it a challenge to translate. In addition, each character in this series has a different type of personality, which the translation also needs to portray – Captain Holt is emotionless and always speaks in perfect grammar, Amy is uptight, Jake and Gina are childish, Rosa is scary, and Charles and Terry are mellow. Out of fifteen idioms and wordplay instances, only four had a Croatian translation available on open-subtitles.org, done by amateur subtitlers. However, before the analysis, subtitles, idioms, wordplay and phraseological units are defined and divided into categories.

Keywords: subtitling, closed captions, SDH, subtitler, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, idioms, wordplay, phraseological unit

Sažetak

Titlovanje je proces prevođenja govora u pisani tekst na ekranu. Postoji zapanjujući broj smjernica za titlovanje zato što su podnaslovi ograničeni vremenom i prostorom. Različite vrste podnaslova imaju različite smjernice. Vrste podnaslova su sljedeće: oni čija je svrha prevesti i približiti sadržaj široj publici (klasični podnaslovi), zatvoreni podnaslovi (CC) i SDH iliti podnaslovi za gluhe i nagluhe. Razlike između tih triju vrsta je njihova uloga i način prikaza. Uloga podnaslova je prevođenje govora na izvornom jeziku u pisani tekst na ekranu u ciljnom jeziku. Prikazani su bijelim slovima sa sjenom na dnu zaslona. Uloga zatvorenih podnaslova (CC) je zapisati govor u obliku teksta i opisati zvukove, zvučne efekte, glazbu i sve ostalo u sceni. Prikazani su bijelim slovima na crnoj traci na dnu zaslona, a mogu se uključiti i isključiti po želji. SDH je kombinacija prvih dvaju tipova, a uloga im je prevesti dijalog i opisati zvukove, zvučne efekte, glazbu i sve ostalo što je dio scene. Prikazani su bijelim slovima sa sjenom na dnu zaslona.

Tema ovog rada je titlovanje idioma i igara riječi u američkoj televizijskoj seriji *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*. Riječ je o policijskoj humorističnoj seriji smještenoj u 99.-om policijskom okrugu grada New Yorka u Brooklynu. Serija prati detektiva Jakea Peraltu i njegove kolege i njihove pokušaje borbe protiv kriminala, kao i njihove svakodnevne pošalice. Ova televizijska serija sadrži brojne primjere idioma, svih vrsta igara riječi i frazeoloških jedinica. Nažalost, mnogi od njih funkcioniraju isključivo na engleskom jeziku, tako da prevođenje predstavlja izazov. Osim toga, likovi imaju različite osobnosti koje moraju biti prikazane u prijevodu – kapetan Holt nema emocije i uvijek govori gramatički savršeno; Amy je napeta; Jake i Gina su djetinjasti; Rosa je jeziva, a Charles i Terry su nježni. Od petnaest primjera idioma i igara riječi, samo četiri su imala dostupan hrvatski prijevod na mrežnoj stranici *open-subtitles.org*, koji su napisali amaterski prevoditelji podnaslova. Međutim, prije same analize, podnaslovi, idiomi, igre riječi te frazeološke jedinice definirani su i podijeljeni u kategorije.

Ključne riječi: *titlovanje, podnaslovi, SDH, prevoditelj podnaslova, Brooklyn Nine-Nine, idiomi, igre riječi, frazeološka jedinica*

Contents

Introduction

This paper deals with the theoretical background of subtitling, idioms, wordplay, and phraseological units, and a translation analysis. Before comparing, analysing and translating idioms and wordplay, one must go through definitions, division and "tips" to have a perfect understanding of what subtitling is.

The first chapter is about subtitling and subtitlers, providing their definition and general information about how subtitles are supposed to look. *Subtitling* is a complex process that requires following certain phases and detailed work. The introduction thoroughly explains concepts like *spotting, simulation,* and others. Other forms of subtitling have developed since translation is not its only purpose. Two of those forms are closed captions and Subtitles for the deaf or hard-of-hearing (SDH). It is necessary to know the history of subtitling to understand how it operates. That is why this paper presents the history of subtitles – from the very first instance of subtitles, also known as *intertitles,* through dubbing as a form of translating, and finally, to contemporary subtitles. Notwithstanding the positive effects, subtitling has its drawbacks. Nowadays, subtitles are used for reasons other than not speaking the language of the content or having hearing disabilities. With the advance of television content and video platforms, ordinary people can upload videos and appear on television, resulting in reduced articulation. Although the demand for subtitles and closed captions increases every day, the number of professional subtitlers is insufficient, leading to amateur subtitlers and automatic captions. Unprofessional subtitling leads to poor quality of subtitles, closed captions and SDH. Bearing that in mind, a subtitler must follow subtitling guidelines. Several prominent television companies have their guidelines that are predominantly similar. These guidelines impart technical specifications, details about lines and transcription, timing, usage of characters and typefaces like italics.

Everybody uses idioms both in writing and everyday language, whether aware of it or not. However, idioms differ in each language, making them difficult to translate, especially culturally-based idioms. Kovàcs (2016: 88) communicates the classification of idioms by Chitra Fernando in his work *Idioms and Idiomaticity* (1984, n.p.). The three sub-classes are pure, literal and semi-idioms. Baker (1992:71-77) mentions many factors that affect the translation of idioms. Some factors are whether an idiom has a similar meaning available in the target language, if a specific lexical item constituting the idiom is manipulated elsewhere in the source text and the appropriateness of using idiomatic language in the target language. Consequently, she offers strategies for the translation of idioms based on the context. The strategies are:

1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form
2. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form
3. Translation by paraphrase
4. Translation by omission.

Wordplay is "the clever and witty use of words and meaning." (Literary Terms[1]). The most prominent type or function of wordplay is a pun, often used for humour. Pun differs by the interpretation of its meaning, making it homophonic, homographic, compound and recursive (MasterClass, 2021[2]). According to several sources as Mark Nichol from *Daily Writing Tips* (2012), Richard Nordquist from *ThoughtCo.* (2019) and *Literary Terms,* other frequent functions wordplay are double entendre, spelling wordplay, and portmanteau, surprisingly used in everyday language.

The final section of the theoretical part is about phraseological units. "By definition, a phraseological unit is a lexicalized word-group which has syntactic and semantic stability and optionally an intensifying function in the text." (Gläser, 1984:124). In *The Translation Aspect of Phraseological Units in English and German,* Rosemarie Gläser (1984) distinguishes between three types of equivalence when comparing phraseological units in the source and target language – complete, partial or zero equivalence.

The analytical part gives examples of idioms, phraseological units and wordplay in seasons one to four of the TV series *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* and their translations from English to Croatian, along with a commentary.

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[1] The definition was acquired from https://literaryterms.net/wordplay/

[2] The classification of a pun was acquired from the following website: https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-a-pun-learn-about-the-different-types-of-puns-in-literature-and-tips-on-how-to-write-a-great-pun#what-is-a-pun

1. Introduction to subtitling

Subtitling has several definitions. The most common definition to come across informs us that subtitling is one of two types of audiovisual translation, the second one being dubbing. Another often found definition is that it is the process of translating spoken dialogue into written text on a screen. This type of translation, aka subtitling, is restricted. It has to be within a specific time and space frame. It does not depend solely on the textual context but also the visual and audio context. The person that 'subtitles' is called a *subtitler.*

As with most things, there are specific guidelines/rules a subtitler must follow when subtitling. The average reading speed is used as a basis. Subtitles are most often restricted to the maximum of two lines of text. These lines usually cannot be more than 70 characters long altogether, i.e., 35 characters per line. Traditionally, a subtitle must not be on the screen for less than a second and not longer than six seconds. Its most common placement is at the bottom of the screen. However, sometimes it is necessary to move them to the top of the screen, e.g., when the credits are still rolling in, when there is an important scene at the bottom of the screen, or if the background is too light, among other reasons. However, some countries place subtitles elsewhere; for instance, in Japan, it is common for the subtitles to be placed vertically on the right side of the screen.

According to the Mondo Agit agency (2021), one should follow the following phases to have a smooth-sailing subtitling process:

1. *Spotting:* "Identifying the entrance and exit times of the subtitles synchronised with the audio, calculating the minimum and maximum duration times and considering the changes in camera shot and scene." (Mondo Agit Agency, 2021) It means that subtitles have to be in sync with the audio and scene changes have to be considered. Many aspects can affect the subtitle: the speaker talks fast, the sentence consists of one word lasting less than a second, shots change rapidly. Due to these constraints, special subtitling software must be used.

2. The second phase is *translation* or *adaptation:* "Translating from the source language, localizing and adapting it while accommodating the characters permitted according to the criteria" (O'Donovan, 2018) Another critical thing to be careful with is not to get carried away when translating subtitles and translate everything literally, but instead find an equivalent of the expression in the target language.

3. The next phase is *simulation*: "Representation of the translated subtitles with the image and the audio to check that they meet all of the criteria and that they can be read in a natural way.'' (Mondo Agit Agency, 2021) After spotting, translation and correction, the film must be reviewed in a simulation session: a screening with the subtitles on the video screen just as they will appear on the final product. Modifications of text and timing can be made during the simulation. " (O'Donovan, 2018) Fitting the translation in a maximum of 35 to 45 characters per line is constraining and can make it hard to keep the translation natural and grammatically correct, which is why simulation is a necessary step to check the flow of subtitles.

4. The final phase is *correction,* which is checking whether there are errors in translation, grammar, style, structure and synchronisation: "Sentence structure, comprehension and overall flow of dialogue. The text must be natural, flowing with the same punctuation, spelling rules, and language conventions. The subtitles must be split so that the viewers can easily understand them. Above all, they must not distract the viewer. Some of the fundamental principle criteria are punctuation, line breaks, hyphens, ellipsis and italics." (O'Donovan, 2018)

Further criteria mentioned by the Mondo Agit agency (2021) is that a phrase, noun and verb, or noun and adjective must not be interrupted when a part of a sentence is transferred to the second line. In addition, the transfer has to sound and look natural. When two or more persons are conversing, a subtitler should use a hyphen to indicate a change between speakers, or enclose their names in brackets. Italics are used when the speaker is not in the shot, when a different language than the source language is used, or for music.

2. Subtitle translation

According to BeTranslated (2021, n.p.), "Subtitle translation is a popular form of audiovisual translation where the spoken content of a video is translated and appears as text, usually at the bottom of the screen, simultaneously with the audio." The act of speech is in focus because visual effects and verbal intentions are more critical than lexical elements. Moreover, "subtitling has to manage without well-known literary and dramatic devices such as stage direction, author's remarks, footnotes, etc."

Subtitle translations, at times, can be more harmful than helping. Unfortunately, subtitles have to be in the mandated position, which can sometimes divert attention from what is happening on the screen. They can also be unhelpful when the translation is incorrect. Incorrect subtitle translation can happen on all types of video content. Here are some examples of incorrect English to Croatian subtitle translations:

- In the American television series *Friends*, season four episode 12, *The One with the Embryos,* whilst playing trivia, one of the mentioned categories was "pet peeves": "The category is Fears and Pet Peeves." On RTL 2, they translated it "Kategorija je: Strahovi i nevoljenje životinja", which worked because the answer to the question "What is Monica's biggest pet peeve?" was "Animals dressed as humans.". However, the real meaning of pet peeve can fit here just as easily "Što Monica najviše mrzi?" or "Što je Monici najiritantije?".

- In the 2021 movie *Free Guy,* a character told the guy "You are so hot." Referring to his looks. A translator for *CineStar Cinemas* translated it to "Tako si vruć." This translation would make sense if the character had a fever or was on fire, but she talked about his physical appearance in this instance. Upon further research, it looks like it was translated on *Google Translate* because it gives the exact translation, word for word.

Subtitlers cannot translate every word of the dialogue because of the difficulties of fitting the translation into the time frame and character limit. If the translation is too long, there is no target language equivalent, or if the sentence is said quickly but is unimportant for the rest of the content, a subtitler can omit parts of the dialogue.

2.5. Different types of subtitles

Subtitling is used not only for translating and localising the content; it is also used as a means of helping those with hearing disabilities. For example, it can be used to describe the dialogue and background noises. Some people call this type of subtitles closed captions or CC. However, not all subtitles for people with hearing disabilities are closed captions; some are SDH or *Subtitles for the deaf or hard-of-hearing.* Therefore, it is necessary to define each of these types to understand the difference between these terms.

The main differences are explained in the following section:

Subtitles translate the dialogue where the audio is in a different language than the one in the subtitles.

> "Subtitles represent a text derived from either a transcript or screenplay of the dialogue or commentary in films, television programs, video games, and the like, usually displayed at the bottom of the screen. Often, translated subtitles are used when the original audio is in a different language than the viewer's mother language." (Amberscript, 2019)
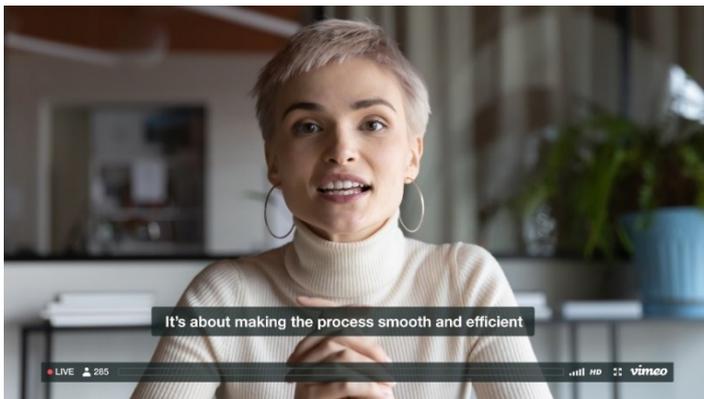

Picture 1: an example of subtitles[3]

Closed captions describe background/non-visual noises and sound effects besides written dialogue and translation. Examples of background/non-visual noises: [doors creaking], [breathes heavily]—examples of sound effects: [explosion], [sirens]. Unlike subtitles, closed captions are generally in the source language of the audio. The difference between subtitles and closed captions

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[3] The photo was taken from the following website: https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/jul/21/subtitles-tv-hearing-no-context-twitter-captions

are in their display - closed captions have white letters on a black band, whereas subtitles have white letters with shadowing for readability.

Closed captions instead not only provide the dialogue in written form but also supplement information about background noises, soundtracks, and other noises that are part of the scene. Closed captions are mostly written in the language that is set for the video. For instance, if you have Netflix and turn on subtitles, what you see is a good example of closed captions. (Amberscript, 2019)

Picture 2: an example of closed captions (cc)

Subtitles for the deaf or hard-of-hearing (SDH) are a combination of subtitles and closed captions. The principal difference is appearance and placement. Even though SDH provide the same addition as closed captions, (background noises, sound effect), appearance-wise they look like translation subtitles, without the black band. Its placement is also in the centre part of the bottom of the screen, which can sometimes overlap some scene

SDH captions are subtitles which combine the information of both captions and subtitles. While normal subtitles assume the viewer can hear the audio but doesn't know the spoken language, SDH assumes that the viewer cannot hear the audio (like with captions). In this case, SDH is intended to emulate closed captions on media that does not support closed captions, such as digital connections like HDMI. SDH can also be translated into foreign languages to make content accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing individuals who understand other languages." (Amberscript, 2019)

Picture 3: an example of SDH subtitles[4]

2.5. History of subtitles

The core beginnings of subtitles were not subtitles that everybody knows and loves today. The very first films were silent, so in order to fulfil the silence and void, filmmakers inserted text. Initially, the text was used as a form of narration and called *intertitles*. It was placed in between scenes. The first movie that had intertitles was *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Edwin Stanton Porter in 1903.

Picture 4: Intertitle from the 1903 movie *Uncle Tom's Cabin by Edwin S. Porter*[5]

As illustrated in Picture 4, intertitles were brief texts written on paper and inserted in between scenes. They were an easy task for translators, considering they had to translate what was written on paper. Two systems were used to translate intertitles: the original titles were removed, translated, filmed and then inserted back into the film, or a speaker would simultaneously interpret them.

> "The technique invented in 1909, i.e., manual projection of slides with printed texts directly onto the screen, but very soon, methods of copying photographed titles on to the film copy itself came into use. A frame containing the title was kept in position while the film negative and the positive print strip were fed forward and exposed." (Ivarsson, 2004)

Problems arose in the 1920s when sound recordings came to life. When introduced, naturally, the audience loved it. For that reason alone, it was clear that intertitles were unnecessary. That is

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[4] The photo was taken from the following website: https://www.amberscript.com/en/blog/sdh-closed-captions-subtitles-for-digital-accessibility/
[5] The photo was taken from the following website: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEodLn65LuQ

when *dubbing* came to the scene because they needed a way of marketing films to audiences that do not speak the source language. Dubbing is recording dialogue or any sound and adding it to the previously recorded videos. However, it was costly because targeted countries had to record all dialogues and soundtracks and insert them into the original film, so filmmakers created subtitles.

> Due to the popular use of the term in newspapers, intertitles were renamed to subtitles in 1909. The first method was previously placing subtitles onto the moving image. However, seldom were there movies that could apply this method. Some of the movies which have had this were *Porter's College Chums* in 1907, *Judex* in 1916, and *Mireille* in 1922. The first attested showing of a sound film with subtitles was when The Jazz Singer (originally released in the US in October 1927) opened in Paris, on January 26, 1929, with subtitles in French. Later that year, Italy followed suit, and on August 17, 1929, another Al Jolson film, The Singing Fool, opened in Copenhagen, fitted with Danish subtitles. (Gottlieb, 2002: 216)
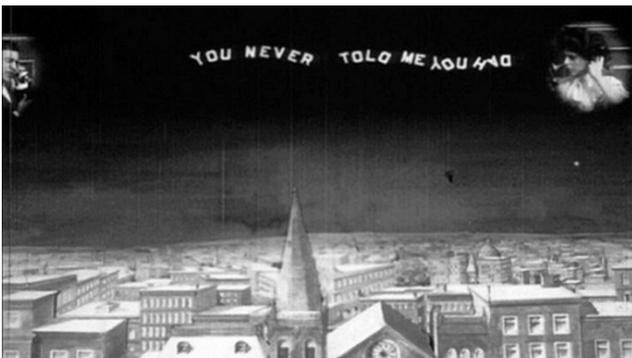
Picture 5: subtitles in *Porter's College Chums* (1907)[6]

Despite previously mentioned methods in films, M.N. Topp created a device for subtitling, introducing the first modern subtitles in 1909. The device displayed titles for moving pictures that were not intertitles that were already on the film strip. Instead, the projectionist would use a *sciopticon* to show the subtitles on the screen below the intertitles. A sciopticon is "a portable magic lantern designed for displaying photographs." (Lexico).

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[6] The photo was taken from the following website: https://mubi.com/films/college-chums

Picture 6: sciopticon[7]

However, that method was only experimentation.

> In 1930 a Norwegian inventor, Leif Eriksen, took out a patent for a method of stamping titles directly on to the images on the film strip, first moistening the emulsion layer to soften it. The titles were typeset, printed on paper and photographed to produce very small letterpress type plates for each subtitle. Later, in 1935, a Hungarian inventor, O. Turchányi, registered a patent for a method whereby the plates were heated to a sufficiently high temperature to melt away the emulsion on the film without the need for a softening bath. (Ivarsson, 2004)

Even though acceptable at the time, these methods were not perfect, and letters were sometimes unreadable. According to an article from The New York Times written by Thomas Crampton in 1995, Denis Auboyer, a French filmmaker, loved foreign movies, so he and his company, Laser Vidéo Titres, developed a laser process where they burned subtitles onto film strips. These subtitles were more accessible to position, edit, and read. Film director Roman Polanski was the first to try Auboyer's method and love it: "You can shorten them, correct them, move them on the film to make one line into two." Nevertheless, their big break was when they subtitled Clint Eastwood's film *Bird* for the 1988 Cannes film festival. However, this method had its flaws as it would sometimes burn the film strip.

Nonetheless, that was how they learned that subtitles did not wash out on white backgrounds. ''It is like if you have a cigarette and a piece of white paper, you make a hole in the paper with the cigarette and around it there is a black circle. This is what we have around the subtitles, so you can see them even when the background is white'' (Crampton, 1995: n.p.) The first step was to count the number of frames per scene. Then, the film was dipped into a protective paraffin bath, after which

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[7] The photo was taken from the following website: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/164170348896163358/

the subtitles were impressed into each frame. After that, they bleached unprotected parts of the film, which were the impressed parts. The United Kingdom introduced closed captioning regulations for those with hearing disabilities in the 1990s, making that video content accessible to everyone. Since then, background noises, sound effects, music and sometimes context have been included when subtitling.

2.5. Modernisation of subtitles

The modernisation of society has led to the modernisation of subtitling. Nowadays, subtitling is done on computers, on software explicitly designed for subtitling. According to Gayane Sargsyan (2020), the top five subtitle software are Movavi Video Suite, Subtitle Edit, Subtitle Workshop, and Open Subtitle Editor. At present a large number of people all over the globe use subtitles. People can watch video content with subtitles on any platform, not only in movie theatres. They can watch content with subtitles on television, streaming services like Netflix and Hulu, video platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, and many others. Furthermore, people use subtitles for educational purposes as well. For example, they use them to learn a new language or teach someone how to read. However, the immense need for subtitles has also caused problems. Automated subtitling results from the impossibility of captioning such large amounts of video content. However, the basis of subtitling quality of automated subtitling is a voice recognition software which cannot be perfect considering that people do not always speak clearly, and some noises are not perfectly audible, resulting in quality reduction. Additionally, some streaming services allow subtitling to be done by non-professional people, leading to unprofessional subtitling becoming more acceptable, as long as everyone can understand the premise.

Much research has been conducted to determine whether subtitling had more of a positive or negative impact. The following information was taken from an essay, *The History of Subtitles in Film,* by an unknown author. Firstly, the positive effects. Subtitles can help with learning a foreign language by watching a video or film and perceiving it visually and auditory, which allows the viewer to have multi-semiotic reception. People can learn a foreign language by listening, reading and through visual images. "Simultaneous presentation of soundtrack and written text improves recognition memory for spoken words and can aid novel word learning, as assessed by explicit and implicit memory tests (Bird and Williams, 2002: 509). "Memory and learning are closely related." (Caimi, 2006) Fifteen university students volunteered to attend a series of experimental class modules on intralingual subtitled videos. They viewed intralingual subtitled videos, after which they took tests

on lexical, semantic and visual recognition memory. The results were positive only when the subtitle quality was good and adapted according to the plot, speech speed, scenes and images.

> The use of imagery and text as an elaborative study task is examined to determine its effects on tests that are adapted to an explicit recognition memory perspective. The tests are based on word-stem completion, dialogue completion, paraphrasing completion, questions on context, colour/object association, true/false questions, old/new questions, yes/no questions and summary completion. (Caimi, 2006)

Now the adverse effects. According to several researchers, foreign subtitles help foreign speech perception, whereas subtitles in the source languages harm it. "Native-language subtitles appear to create lexical interference, but foreign-language subtitles assist speech learning by indicating which words (and hence sounds) are being spoken." (McQueen, Mitterer, Holger, 2009) Subtitles in the source language can harm the perception of foreign language speech because they perceive it using phonics and lexical of their native language, thus creating a wrong perception of the foreign language.

> Imagine an American listener, fluent in Mexican Spanish, watching *El Laberinto del fauno* (Pan's Labyrinth, 3). She may have considerable difficulty understanding the European Spanish if she is unfamiliar with that language variety. How might she be able to cope better? We argue here that subtitles can help. Critically, the subtitles should be in Spanish, not English. This is because subtitles in the language of the film indicate which words are being spoken, and so can boost speech learning about foreign speech sounds. (McQueen, Mitterer, Holger, 2009)

In addition, subtitles do not and cannot display everything because of the time limit. That is why subtitles are an unreliable aid in understanding what is going on.

Another adverse effect, rare but still existing, was a computer virus spread via subtitles. BitDefender PressCenter tracked down a program used for spying shaped as a DIVX film subtitle:

> Details inside the virus body may indicate that the author is a Romanian fan of underground music. It tricks users into executing the backdoor, using the name of the movie *Kill Bill*. The ZIP file was specially crafted, so most antivirus products will not identify the file inside as executable. The backdoor sends network and internet

passwords, as well as statistical system information by email, to the virus author (BitDefender PressCenter, 2003)

2.5. Subtitling guidelines

Although subtitling may seem simple – translate what is heard and you are done – it is, in fact, not. Several aspects go into subtitling, including transcribing, synchronising and then translating sequences. Several big television companies like BBC or Channel 4 have their own guidelines that the subtitlers must follow, but there are also general guidelines that everyone must follow. The following are essential specifications listed by *Capital Captions* (n.d.:n.p.)*:* Technical specifications: the standard font is Arial, size 47 for high-resolution content and 32 for standard definition content. Forty-seven characters maximum per line (this varies between companies' specifications), subtitle displayed for a second at minimum, and 7 seconds maximum.

Line and transcription: subtitles must be within a defined text area with a maximum of two lines per subtitle. When splitting the lines, one should avoid one-word lines and keep the lines at an approximately similar length. Subtitle lines should match the dialogue as much as they can while not overlapping across scene changes.

Timing and line breaks: subtitles must be in sync with the beginning and the end of the dialogue. Line breaks should follow the rhythm of speech for easier reading. Maximum words per minute for adult content should be 250 and 180 for youth content.

Brackets and characters usage: the language that differs from the source language should be stated within square brackets. For example, [Croatian]. When the speaker needs to be identified, their name should be in capital letters with a colon, mainly used in closed captions (Picture 6). Musical notes should be at the beginning, and the end of a line, and everything should be in italics when writing song lyrics (Picture 7). To sum up, these are all the symbols and when to use them: '-' when there is a character change during a dialogue, '[]' for voice-overs, commentary and noises, '♪' for music, '()' for additional indications.

Picture 7: Speaker identification[8]

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[8] The photo was taken from the following website: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-42105-2_13
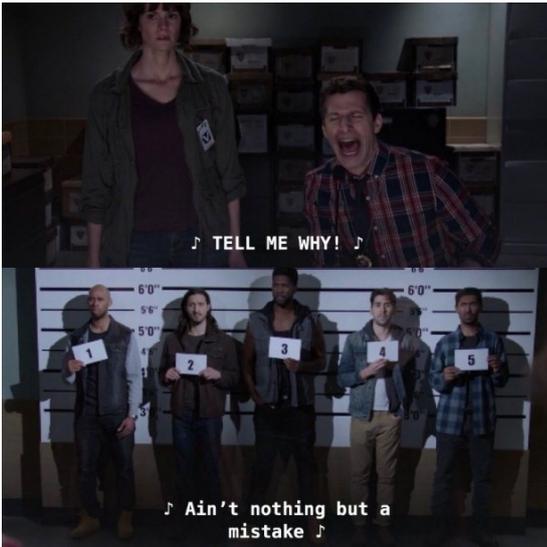
Picture 8: Song lyrics' subtitling[9]

Italics should be used for dialogue coming from devices like radio, television, computer, telephone, and others; when the speaker is off-screen, either out-of-scene or a narrator; and when there is a need to emphasise something to convey meaning.

When there is a well-known foreign word, it should be transcribed with the correct spelling and punctuation, for example, Bon appétit! Likewise, numbers from one to ten should be written in full, whereas numbers above ten should be written as digits.

Some other specifications are: all sequences should begin with capital letters. When words or their parts are censored, put ****, ----, or f**k/f—k, depending on how much of the audio is censored (Picture 9).

Picture 9: censored subtitles[10]

The most challenging part of subtitling is synchronising. According to Jean-Marc from *Checksub* (2021:n.p.)*, the following is the best method to efficiently do it: First, divide transcription according to the sentences, then cut them one by one according to the sequences. Sequences have to be defined at the exact moment the speaker starts speaking. Words can be omitted if necessary. Check the result several times. It is important to remember not to translate literally; a subtitler must be creative regarding puns and cultural references.

The aesthetic of subtitles is also essential. Subtitles should be centred at the bottom of the screen, unless there is a need for moving. Intense colours such as red and green should be avoided. The optimal appearance of the subtitle is white with a black band. The size is optimised according to the type of screen.

2.5. Common mistakes

When watching content, whether it be a film in a movie theatre, a show on Netflix, or a video on YouTube, errors in the subtitle might make this activity less enjoyable. According to several sources like Translation Light (2020:n.p.) and Stillman Translations (n.d.:n.p.), these are the most common mistakes in subtitling:

Literal translation. Each language differs, making it impossible to have the same word order and same metaphors/idioms. Even though sometimes literal translation can make sense contextually, most times it results in gibberish. There are English idioms that can be translated to Croatian literally, like "a picture is worth a thousand words" – "slika govori tisuću riječi", but if we take another idiom, for instance "every cloud has a silver lining" and translate it into "svaki oblak ima srebrnu podstavu" – it will not make sense. The correct translation would be "u svakom zlu neko dobro" or "poslije kiše dolazi sunce." A professional translator will find an idiom that has the same (or at least similar) meaning.

Unnatural line breaks. Lines should follow a natural way of speaking. Splitting the text at random places makes it difficult to follow the lines, hence losing effortless comprehension.

Punctuation. Punctuation marks are essential for the viewer to understand characters' expressions.

Illegible texts. Subtitles have to be the correct size and correct colour so the viewers can understand them. Subtitlers should avoid white letters on light backgrounds and black letters on dark backgrounds. It does not matter if the subtitles are perfectly translated and synchronised if they are not visible.Automatic translation/machine translation. Even though there is a large number of automatic translation software, it will never replace human translation. That is because the software does not understand context, idioms, humour, or emotions. Instead, it gives boring, robotic, unreliable translations.

Characters' style. Each character in a video, film or show has its personality, so one has to give each character a different style of speech based on their on-screen style. It puts variety and removes dullness and monotony from translations.

Wrong timing. Wrong timing is the most common mistake in subtitling. If the timing of the subtitle is not right, it is useless. Viewers do not want to read the subtitle before it is conveyed, nor after; therefore, the results should be checked several times.

3. Idioms – What are they?

Idioms are an essential part of any language, used both in written and spoken form. Idioms are not to be taken literally; one has to learn their meaning and usage. Idioms consist of several words but they function as a unit. There are many definitions of idioms. "An idiom is a phrase or expression that typically presents a figurative, non-literal meaning attached to the phrase; but some phrases become figurative idioms while retaining the literal meaning of the phrase. Categorised as formulaic language, an idiom's figurative meaning is different from the literal meaning." (McArthur, 1992:497). People use idioms in their writing and everyday conversations for several reasons:

1. They want to communicate complex ideas in a simplified manner. For instance, it is easier to say "kill two birds with one stone" than to explain how two tasks can be done simultaneously.

2. Some writers include idioms, so their readers or audience start using their imagination. They are also culture and language-specific, so they can be used to help establish someone's background.

3. Using idioms can insert humour into any topic or situation.

Richards and Schmidt (2002:246) define *idioms* as expressions that function as a single unit whose meaning cannot be worked out from its separate parts. Nonetheless, some believe that all idioms began with phrases having literal meaning and later on, as time progresses, are used figuratively. In addition, they have a cultural background, so knowing the language's idioms also gives insight into the country's past. An example of this provided by the MasterClass (2021:n.p.) is "to bite the bullet". Its origin goes back to when wounded soldiers bit down bullets to avoid screaming in the warzone. However, it is essential to remember that idioms are unique for every language, meaning they cannot be translated literally. According to Fernando (1996:3) idioms can be characterised by three features: compositeness, institutionalisation and semantic opacity. Compositeness refers to idioms' nature, having more than one word, also known as multiword expressions. Institutionalisation entails idioms that serve a specific purpose. Semantic opacity entails that their meaning is not a sum of their essential parts. Another way he described idioms is by grouping them into three sub-classes:

1. Pure idioms are multiword expressions that are not literal and cannot be understood by adding up the meanings of the words that make up the phrase, in other words, semantic opacity. To explain it plainly, analysing each word does not reveal the meaning. "It is raining cats and dogs" is an instance of a pure idiom. Its meaning does not become apparent when analysing the words separately – cats and dogs linked with rain do not elaborate whether it means that it is, for instance,

barely or heavily raining, or if it means that cats and dogs are abundant. This idiom means that it is raining heavily. Croatian equivalent to this idiom would be "lije k'o iz kabla."

2. Semi-idioms: they have at least one literal and one non-literal element. In 1984, A.V. Kunin explained in his *English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary* that semi-idioms have literal and transferred meanings. The literal meaning is professional or terminological, and the second meaning is transferred. Nikulina (2020:n.p.) provided the following instance for semi-idioms and its explanation: *Dark horse* – this transpired to be the most well-known idiom. It is "a person or thing whose true character or worth is unknown but may be better than is thought." (Longman, 1992) This refers to racehorses whose abilities to win races are unknown.

3. Literal idioms: one does not need to know the background of the idiom to understand it. Examples of literal idioms are "my heart is beating very fast"or "I love you from the bottom of my heart." They are easy to understand because they are almost literal. Some other literal idioms are *to feel numb,* and *to play with fire.*

3.1. Translating idioms

Translators often face difficulties and blockage when translating idioms. Baker (1992:71-77) lists factors affecting the translation of idioms. Some factors are whether an idiom has a similar meaning available in the target language, a specific lexical item constituting the idiom is manipulated elsewhere in the source text and the appropriateness of using idiomatic language in the target language. Subsequently, she advises strategies for context-based translation of idioms: using an idiom of similar meaning and form, using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, translation by paraphrase, and translation by omission.

3.1.1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form

The recommendation is to find an idiom in the target language with the nearest meaning and lexical items to the idiom in the source language. "This strategy involves using an idiom in the target language which conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source-language idiom and, in addition, consists of equivalent lexical items. This kind of match can only occasionally be achieved." (Baker, 1992: 72)

ENG: Better late than never.

CRO: Bolje ikad nego nikad.

The exemplified expressions convey the same meaning: it is better to fulfil a task later than planned than not to have done it at all. These expressions are nearly identical in both languages structurally and lexically, and are both well-known.

3.1.2. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form

Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form entails finding an idiom in the target language with a meaning nearest to the source language composed of different lexical items.

ENG: It was a piece of cake!

CRO: Bio je to mačji kašalj!

Though these idioms contrast when translating words separately, they hold an equal meaning: something done quickly and with ease. Additionally, both idioms are brief and widely known.

3.1.3. Translation by paraphrase

"This is by far the most common way of translating idioms when a match cannot be found in the target language or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the target text because of differences in stylistic preferences of the source and target languages." (Baker, 1992:75)

ENG: Hold your horses!

CRO: Uspori; Pričekaj;

The Croatian language does not have an idiom equal or similar to the English idiom '*Hold your horses'* therefore, the best translation is by paraphrasing it to its meaning '*to slow down'.*

3.1.4. Translation by omission

Omission is allowed when there is no close equivalent, when it is impossible to paraphrase an idiom or if it does not fit stylistically. "This strategy may sound rather drastic, but in fact it does no harm to omit translating a word or expression in some contexts. If the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital enough to the development of the text to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations, translators can and often do simply omit translating the word or expression in question" (Baker, 1992:40).

ENG: -You know, Pam, in Spain, they often don't even start eating until midnight.[11]

-When in Rome. -

CRO: ?

The whole idiom is '*When in Rome, do as the Romans do.',* meaning "When visiting another place, you should follow the customs of the people in that place." (Cambridge Dictionary: n.p.) After searching for a Croatian translation, an old, forgotten idiom has come up: "Na čijim kolima se voziš, onoga i pjesmu pjevaj." Although it has the same meaning, it is an archaic idiom unfamiliar to many people. Omitting the translation of the idiom *'When in Rome"* would not harm the context because characters ignore it in the scene and move past it.

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[11] The instance was acquired from a scene from a tv series "*The Office",* season four, episode nine.

4. Wordplay

In *Wordplay and Translation: Special Issue of The Translator, volume 2* (1996: 128), Dirk Delabastita suggests the following definition of *wordplay:* "Wordplay is the general name for the various textual phenomena in which structural features of the language(s) used are exploited in order to bring about a communicatively significant confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures with more or less similar forms and more or less different meanings." A brief definition of wordplay provided by *Literary Terms* is "the clever and witty use of words and meaning." It is a literary technique used for amusement by using ambiguity of words and their meanings. Wordplay practices techniques that help the author achieve their purpose or *literary devices* such as spelling, rhyme, slang, assonance, et cetera. Another essential aspect of wordplay is semantics because it has no meaning without it. Unfortunately, an exact typology of wordplay does not exist because they vary from author to author. The following types are the ones that all the authors included.

4.1. Puns

Puns are the most popular form of wordplay, which is why they are first on this list. They are a subtype of wordplay that uses one-word or compound puns with more than one meaning and humorous purposes. "The conflating of homonyms and near-homonyms to produce a humorous effect (in speech and writing)." (McArthur, 1992:854) The five types of puns are homophonic, homographic, compound, and recursive, according to *MasterClass* (2021: n.p.) and J. Gunner from *Your* Dictionary(n.d.:n.p).

1. Homophonic puns use homonyms. *Homonyms* are words sounding the same but having a different meaning. "A bicycle cannot stand on its own because it is *two-tired.*" This pun uses the exact pronunciation of the noun tyre and the verb tire. A tyre is "a rubber covering, typically inflated or surrounding an inflated inner tube, placed around a wheel to form a soft contact with the road." (Oxford Languages) Tire means to "feel or cause to feel in need of rest or sleep." (Oxford Languages)

2. Homographic puns use *homographs*, words spelt the same, but having different meanings. For example, "Math class is full of drama. There are so many *problems* to work out." This pun uses the word *problem* as the punchline: one sense of the word is "a matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful that needs to be dealt with and overcome" (Lexico), while the other sense is "an inquiry starting from given conditions to investigate or demonstrate a fact, result, or law." (Lexico)

   The first meaning concerns the word *drama,* and the second is regarding the words *math class.*

3. Compound puns contain two or more puns in one sentence. For example, "Do not scam in the jungle, *cheetahs* are always *spotted*." There are two puns in this sentence. The first one is that the word *cheetah* sounds similar to the word cheater, and the second one that *spotted* sounds as in noticed, and spotted, as in full of spots, sounds the same.

4. Recursive puns are those that require background knowledge in order to understand it. A great example provided by *MasterClass* is "May the fourth be with you." Background knowledge necessary for this pun is to know that *Star Wars* often use the phrase "May the force be with you." and that May the fourth is the official *Star Wars* Day. Word *May* is a homographic pun – it means to ask or give permission, and it is also the fifth month of the year. Word *fourth* is a homophonic pun because words *fourth* and *force* sound similar.

4.2. Double entendre

Double entendre is a way of wording that can double interpret a word or phrase. The first meaning is usually apparent, whereas the second meaning has a hidden message not everyone gets at first. Most times the second meaning is something inappropriate that cannot be said directly.

In "The baker has excellent buns!" the word *buns* is the double entendre with the, obvious meaning, a round piece of bread, and the hidden and inappropriate meaning being buttocks.

4.3. Spelling

Spelling is also an excellent tool used to make wordplay. For instance, Chris P. Bacon is a famous pig whose name sounds like *crispy bacon* when read.

4.4. Portmanteau

A portmanteau word is combining two already existing words without changing the meaning into a new word. *Brunch* is a portmanteau, a blend of breakfast and lunch, thus making a new word for a meal between breakfast and lunch.

Portmanteau's origin is particularly unusual. Its first introduction was in Lewis Caroll's book *Through the Looking-Glass* in 1871. Character Humpty Dumpty explained the meaning of words *slithy* and *mimsy,* both new words made up from two existing words blended. "You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word." (Lewis, 127) The original meaning of portmanteau at that time was a suitcase that could open into two equal sections.

According to Poem Analysis (2021), "A portmanteau is a literary device. It occurs when the writer joins two or more words together to create a new word. Such a portmanteau word refers to a single concept that may not have had a word to define it previously. The new word also shares the same meaning as the original words, so when combined, the two words come together in a new way." It

can also get mixed up with compounds, but the difference is that compounds consist of two words in total, whereas portmanteau consists of parts of the words. Famous examples of portmanteau are:

1. Anklet – ankle + bracelet
2. Brexit – Britain + exit
3. Bromance – brother + romance
4. Frappuccino – frappe + cappuccino
5. Motel – motorway + hotel
6. Romcom – romance + comedy

4.5. Wordplay in television

According to Dirk Delabastita (1997:209) wordplay on television can refer to text-internal entities or text-external entities concerning the frame of reference. Text-internal entities are everything shown on the screen, whereas text-external entities are the knowledge possessed before viewing the programme.

Delabastita says that television is an example of a communication that simultaneously employs two or more discourse channels, also known as polysemiotic communication. Four elements that share it are written text, picture, dialogue and sound effects. Wordplay can be conveyed through dialogue, non-verbal communication, on-screen text, or displays. He concludes that wordplay in subtitles can be with or without humorous effect, adapted to the local setting to maintain the humorous effect, replaced, unrendered, or in a different textual position.

5. Translation of Phraseological units

According to Gläser (1984:124)), a phraseological unit (PU) is a lexicalised word group with syntactic and semantic stability, and optionally an intensifying function in the text. They are idioms because their meaning does not become more evident when looking individually at parts of a phraseological unit. It is a unit one cannot make up in the heat of a moment. Instances are *to grease somebody's palm,* meaning to bribe somebody, and *before you can say Jack Robinson* meaning to do something rapidly. There are other instances, but the point is that one can use uncomplicated words in their place.

Gläser references the Prague School (1984:124) for its use of the *model of centre and periphery* to look at PU's internal hierarchy. They comprise of the centre, which has a nominative function (words describing objects, actions, qualities, phenomena, and other), the transition area that is part of a sentence (parts of proverbs, quotations, irreversible binominals and stereotyped comparisons), the periphery (set expressions that can be sentences – proverbs, slogans, quotations).

Phraseological units are complex to translate and it is sometimes hard to find their equivalents in another language. "In the translation process the linguistic unit of the source language does not always coincide with that of the target language." (Gläser, 1984:125) For that reason, Rosemarie Gläser distinguishes three types of lexical equivalence according to the Soviet linguist L. Burchudarow in 1979.; complete, partial and zero equivalence in the target language.

1. Complete equivalence "shows correspondence in their constituent structure and complex meaning; they are not idiomatized."(Gläser, 1984:126) It means phraseological units are the same in the source and target language.

   The Lost Generation – izgubljena generacija

   To commit a crime – počiniti zločin

   Once and for all – jednom za svagda

2. Partial equivalence "applies to English idioms with no idiomatic counterparts in German, but a compound or a simple word that seldom has an emotive meaning and may be situated on a different stylistic level." (Gläser, 1984:127) It is the most common equivalence type because rarely do source and target languages have exact phrase equivalents.

   White lie – bezazlena laž (lie=laž)

   Jack of all trades – Katica za sve (both using names, all=sve)

3. Zero equivalence:

   "Is comparatively rare, but in no way does it question the translatability of a sentence. Even if there is no approximate expression in the target language, in the last resort, a

paraphrase of the denotational meaning of the idiom of the source language is possible, although its pragmatic meaning may not be represented adequately in the target language." (Gläser, 1984:130)

It does not mean that one should omit the phrase; the best choice is to paraphrase it. Zero equivalence could be a result of the phrase's cultural background. When translating idioms from English to Croatian, zero equivalence is very common.

Break a leg – another way of wishing good luck to someone; Croatian does not have an idiom for wishing someone good luck.

Call it a day – to stop working on something; Croatian does not have such an idiom.

"Semantically speaking, zero equivalence does not mean a gap in the notional or conceptual system of a language, but a different ordering of reality in linguistic items. The target language is able to express every state of affair by exploiting all linguistic means inside the sentence and beyond its boundaries.'" (Gläser, 1984:120)

The three types of equivalence refer to isolated examples taken from dictionaries, whereas context matters in daily communication and translation practice.

6. Brooklyn Nine-Nine

Brooklyn Nine-Nine is an American police comedy show that first aired on *Fox Broadcasting Company* and later continued airing on *NBC.* The show premiered on September 17, 2013, and ended after eight seasons on September 16, 2021. Dan Goor and Michael Schur are the creators of the show. It is a single-camera comedy that won many awards, like the *Golden Globe Award for best television series, Golden Globe Award for Best Television Series, Golden Globe Award for Best Actor*, *GLAAD Media Award* for their portrayal of LGBTQIA+ people, and many more. In addition, the show is famous for its clever wordplay, which will be the focus of this paper.

6.1. The storyline

The show is set in the 99th precinct (hence the titular nine-nine) of Brooklyn's New York City Police Department. The show follows Detective Jake Peralta and his colleagues in their attempts to fight crime in New York. His colleagues are Detective Amy Santiago, his biggest competitor, his best friend Detective Charles Boyle, mysterious and intimidating Detective Rosa Diaz, his superior offices Sergeant Terry Jeffords, worthless Detectives Hitchcock and Scully, his new robotic Captain Raymond Holt and his overly-sarcastic and narcissistic assistant Gina Linetti. Supporting characters that had several appearances throughout the show were Jake's enemy-turned best friend Doug Judy, Captain Holt's husband, Kevin Cozner, their psycho colleague Detective Adran Pimento, and squad's rival Keith Pembroke, aka *The Vulture*.

Picture 10: The cast of Brooklyn Nine-Nine[12]

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7. Analysis – Translating idioms and wordplay in Brooklyn Nine-Nine

The following examples are taken from seasons one to four of *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*. The official Croatian subtitles for this show do not exist, but unofficial translations uploaded by anonymous non-professionals can be found on prijevodi-online.org, so they will be included, analysed and compared. Unfortunately, not all episodes have translations, so only those that do have will be analysed and translated. For each example, all necessary subtitle lines will be provided so that the context is clear. The English closed captions have been obtained from Netflix.

7.1. Season 1

- Episode 1: Pilot

Two instances were taken from episode one.

1.

<div align="center">

He likes putting away bad guys

and he loves solving puzzles.

The only puzzle he hasn't solved

is how to grow up.

Voli zatvarati negativce

i voli rješavati zagonetke.

Jedina zagonetka koju nije riješio,

je kako odrasti.

</div>

The following is an example of wordplay in a subtitle where the last line is significant in order for it to make sense. The provided translation is excellent, the meaning is clear, it works structurally and stylistically.

2.

JAKE: All right,
listen up, everybody.

Better contact Captain Holt,

let him know
we got a ten-tie situation.

HOLT: Speaking of ties,
where's yours, Meep Morp?

Slušajte, trebalo bi kontaktirati kapetana
Holta. Neka zna da smo upali u kravate.

Kad smo kod kravata, gdje je tvoja,
Mip Morp?

The above is an example of a homographic pun, where two words, *tie,* are spelt the same but have different meanings. *A Ten-tie situation* is a situation that is now unpredictable, and a tie is a material worn around the collar, usually as part of professional attire. Ten-tie situation does not have a Croatian equivalent, and a tie translates as *kravata.* The subtitler tried to keep the pun alive even in Croatian, but it does not make sense. This whole part does not work grammatically, stylistically, nor structurally. There is a line break between the words *Captain* and *Holt* which should be in the same line. The break is presumably because of the characters per line (CPL) limit, though it could be avoided by different wording. *Meep Morp* is Captain Holt's nickname for Jake, based on the robotic sounds Jake used to describe him. Translating it *mip morp* does not work because this refers to a soundtrack from a cartoon *Steven Universe* called *Meep Morps.* This part can be translated better, so here is another solution:

JAKE: U redu, slušajte me.

Kapetan Holt treba znati

da imamo neurednu situaciju.

HOLT: Govoreći o neurednom,

gdje ti je kravata, Meep Morp?

The solution is to use a word that paraphrases this zero-equivalence phrase – *neuredan* is not an exact translation of *ten-tie situation;* an exact paraphrasing for this would be *nepredvidljiv*, which does not fit the wordplay whatsoever, but *neuredan* is listed as a synonym so it can be used to fit convey the idea. It is also important to note that Jake's character does not have perfect grammar, so occasional mistakes should be included.

- Episode 2: The Tagger

HOLT: I assume you have a plan
to catch this gentleman.

JAKE: Did you just say "genital-man"?

Pretpostavljam da
imate plan kako uhvatiti tog genijalca.

Jeste li Vi to rekli "genitalca"?

The background is essential for this pun – in this episode, a perp is drawing male genitalia on police cars. The play is on *gentleman* and *genital — gentle* and *genital* sound the same, making this a homophonic pun. The subtitler used the similarity of words *genijalac* and *genitalija*. The translation works perfectly, the context is the same, and it is a pun in Croatian.

- Episode 6: Halloween

Trying to "split," huh?

Don't worry, I'm sure you'll

Get out on "a peel".

Što, ne uspijevaš očistiti?

Bez brige, siguran sam da

Nećeš dugo o-guliti.

This instance contains several units. Firstly, *split* is a homographic pun – one meaning is to leave a place suddenly, and the other refers to *banana split,* a dessert. This wordplay makes sense only with visual context, as provided in Picture 11. *A peel* is a homophonic pun – *peel* refers to a banana peel, and the wordplay is that it sounds like *appeal,* which is an application to a higher court for a decision to be reversed. The translation the subtitler provided does not make any sense in this context. Perhaps the word *očistiti* is supposed to be used as a synonym for *breakaway* or *'šmugnuti',* but it does not connect with the wordplay. Second, *o-guliti* is contextually correct, but grammatically it could be worded differently and still work. The following is a possible solution:

JAKE: Jel' bi sad volio u "Split", a?

Bez brige,
sigurno nećeš dugo "guliti".

In this solution, *split* is a play on *banana split* and the *city Split,* implying that he would like to go to the city Split instead of being arrested. *Guliti* is similar to what the subtitler provided, although fitting grammatically. *Guliti* is a Croatian colloquial term for spending time in jail. It also means to peel, which works perfectly.

Picture 11: a visual context for the banana pun[13]

- Episode 9: Sal's pizza

-It was like taking candy

from a baby.

-Why are you giving candy

to a baby in the first place?

Don't give candy to a baby!

They can't brush their teeth!

That is an instance of a literal idiom. Although the words do not make sense separately, logically, taking candy from a baby is easy; this idiom means something done easily. A Croatian equivalent would be ''Bez pol' muke'' or ''Mačji kašalj.''. However, to keep the sequence, a literal translation works because of the previously mentioned logic, so this is the translation:

-To je kao da otmeš slatkiš dojenčetu.

-Zašto uopće daješ slatkiš dojenčetu?

Nemoj im davati slatkiše!

Oni ne znaju oprati zube!

7.2. Season 2

- Episode 3: The Jimmy Jab Games

GINA: on your Mark,

Get set, Wahlberg!

This episode does not have a Croatian translation, so there will be no comparison, only a suggested solution. The following is a spelling wordplay. The usual expression is "On your mark, get set, go!", but the wordplay is in the word *mark* – it is both a name and a competitor's starting point in a race.

PriprEmma, pozor,

Watson!

This translation is an instance of a partial equivalence to the source language. The ending of the word *priprema – ema* is a name that gives the same form of wordplay. Both source and target language mean the same and contain a wordplay with a celebrity name.

- Episode 4: Halloween II

Four instances were taken from episode one.

1.

I'll leave you guys
with this.

One-duhl plus one-duhl
equals…

Tootles!

This subtitle is a homophonic pun on the word *tootles,* and the fact that *too-* sounds like *two,* making it a homophonic pun. Duhl is a non-existent word, so translating this is a challenge. Partial equivalence is the best solution. Two equivalents come to mind for this – *bokić* and *pa pa.* Both are colloquial greetings meant to be cute and funny, just like *tootles.*

Napuštam vas sa sljedećim:

U Vatikanu živi tko?
Pa pa!

or

Napuštam vas sa sljedećim:

Pokraj stomaka se nalazi?
Bokić!

Even though it varies from the source language, Gina's point was to answer with a cute farewell.

2.

Now, Hammer, it's time.

It's hammer time.

This episode also does not have a Croatian subtitle. The context of this subtitle is that Jake gave Terry the nickname "The Hammer,", so he played with the lyrics of a famous song *U can't touch this* by *MC Hammer,* which contains the famous lyrics ''It's hammer time!'' This phrase does not translate easily, so the solution would be to either to omit the part where Jake says, ''It's hammer time.'' or to explain it in brackets. Another issue is that the target language translation of ''The Hammer'' is not as strong as the source language. A more potent nickname in Croatian would be *Pila* or *Stijena*. One of the rare instances where the best solution would be to omit the wordplay because forcing an equivalent would confuse the audience.

3.

(Jake)

Fingers has grabbed

the package.

I didn't mean for that

to sound so dirty.

Fingers is a thief's nickname because he has ''quick fingers''. Here, Jake is saying that the thief called Fingers has stolen something. That is an excellent example of a double entendre where one sentence can have an obvious meaning and a second, inappropriate meaning.

Prst je primio paket.

Ovo nije trebalo zvučati prljavo.

A few inappropriate words came up when looking up synonyms for the word *prst*, so using complete equivalence here works perfectly. Likewise, the word *primio* means to receive something, but it can also be inappropriate, so these two paired together work great.

4.

<div align="center">You have a "baditude".</div>

<div align="center">That's a bad attitude.</div>

That is another perfect example of wordplay, this time for a portmanteau. *Baditute* is a combination of the words *bad* and *attitude.* Since this is a made-up word, the translation should also combine two words to make a new, non-existing word.

<div align="center">Imaš "lonašanje".</div>

<div align="center">To je loše ponašanje.</div>

There were several ways to go about this portmanteau, but the final choice boils down to the flow of the sounds. They both have 'o' as the second sound, making a better flow. This translation is not ideal, but it is the best one to use without losing the meaning.

- Episode 5: The Mole

<div align="center">Hey, I'm about to sit down
with internal affairs.</div>

<div align="center">I figure that I will
charm them</div>

<div align="center">with a couple of quips
about my own "internal affairs."</div>

The following is an example of wordplay in a subtitle using double entendre. For example, words *internal affairs* in the first part mean '' a division of a law enforcement agency that investigates incidents and plausible suspicions of lawbreaking and professional misconduct attributed to officers on the force. '' (Definitions) and in the second sentence are a play on the word *internal,* meaning ''inner'', therefore insinuating that he will talk to them about his digestion.

Idem na razgovor s unutrašnjim poslovima.

Vjerojatno ću ih osvojiti s dosjetkama

o svojim "unutrašnjim poslovima".

This translation was not complex considering that Croatian words internal affairs are also based on something being "inner."

- Episode 8: USPIS

We shall call them
"The Fellowship of the Key."

The following is an example of a recursive pun, where background knowledge is vital in understanding the wordplay. Background knowledge necessary for this pun is that in the movie *Lord of the Rings,* the characters searching for the ring are called *The Fellowship of the Ring.* Here the word *ring* is substituted for *key* because several perps are searching for a key. Translation of this wordplay is simple since it is only a substitution.

Zvat ćemo ih
"Ključna družina."

As mentioned previously, the word *prstenova* substitutes for *ključna*. However, words *ključ* and *družina* have to be in concordance, hence the *ključna.* Now*,* the Croatian translation can be viewed in two ways: *key* meaning ''a small piece of shaped metal with incisions cut to fit the wards of a particular lock, which is inserted into a lock and turned to open or close it.''(Lexico) and ''of crucial importance'', which makes it a wordplay in Croatian.

7.3. Season 3

- Episode 3: Boyle's Hunch

<div align="center">

JAKE: (…) a tarantula.

I call him Jake Jr.,

AKA Spidey Klum,

AKA Mrs. Doubtspider,

AKA Joe Spiden,

AKA Tarantula Basset,

AKA Spi-dermot Mulrooney.

CHARLES: AKA Tarantulina Jolie

</div>

The basis of these wordplays is on spelling. Many of these work in several languages because *tarantula* is a word of Latin origin, meaning that it is the same in many languages. Since this is a play on famous people's names, those paired with *tarantula* can stay identical. The complexity is for those paired with *spider* because the Croatian word is nowhere near – *pauk.*

<div align="center">

(…) tarantula.

Zovem ju Jake mlađi,

iliti Arachnidah,

iliti Pauk Walker,

iliti Jake Pauk,

iliti Tarantula Basset,

iliti Paukina Herrera.

Charles: Iliti Tarantulina Jolie.

</div>

Following is an explanation for each translation that does not have *tarantula* as a base. Arachnidah is a wordplay of *aráchnē*, a spider in Latin, and Senidah, a famous Balkan singer. Pauk Walker and Jake Pauk are both a combination of *pauk* and *Paul* (first name and last name). Paukina Herrera is a combination of *pauk* and a fashion designer *Carolina Herrera.*

7.4. Season 4

- Episode 9: The Overmining

Two instances were taken from episode nine.

1.

Yeah, ''Bullets over

Broadway'' was on TV.

And I came down with a big ol'

Dianne Wiest infection.

Like ''yeast.''

Another fun wordplay on spelling. The last name Wiest sounds similar to yeast. However, a Croatian equivalent does not exist, so this translation needs to be done by paraphrasing or finding a different pun with the last name Wiest, which is the best solution.

Film ''Meci iznad Broadwaya''

bio je na TV-u,

pa me uhvatila Dianne Wiesterija.

Kužiš, kao histerija.

Here, Wiest also sounds like the beginning of the word *histerija* (/wiːst/, /hiːst/), used for this wordplay to work. The character is obsessed with Dianne Wiest, which works in Croatian, still in the same context.

2.

<div style="text-align: center;">

Are you still mad at me

for saying "snaccident"?

</div>

That is another example of a portmanteau. The word *snaccident* is a combination of the words *snack* and *accident.* Croatian translations for *snack* and *accident* do not have letters that work together efficiently and have an obvious meaning. A solution for this would be to use a different portmanteau since this one is not contextually related to the rest of the episode.

<div style="text-align: center;">

Još uvijek se ljutite

jer sam rekao "stipenzija"?

</div>

The solution is a combination of the words *stipendija* and *penzija.* It does not have the same meaning whatsoever, but the main point is that the character annoyed the Captain by using a portmanteau once before.

The analysis of wordplay and idioms is complex, especially when trying to make sense and give a similar meaning to a phrase whose literal translation does not make sense in Croatian.

Fifteen examples were analysed and translated in the analytical part, and here is a summary:

Puns:

Homophonic: *genitalman, a peel, tootles.*

Homographic: *split*

Recursive pun: *Fellowship of the Key*

- Spelling wordplay: *Mark Wahlberg, Spidey Klum, Mrs Doubtspider, Joe Spiden, Tarantula Basset, Spi-dermot Mulrooney, Tarantulina Jolie. Wiest infection*

- Double entendre: F*ingers has grabbed the package, Internal affairs.*

- Portmanteau: *baditude, snaccident*

- Idioms: *taking candy from a baby*

Brooklyn Nine-Nine is a show that has idioms and wordplay in each episode, making it not feasible to analyse them all. However, the ones we have analysed here are perfect examples of the classification of idioms, wordplay and types of equivalence in the source and target language.

8. Conclusion

This paper gives an overview of subtitles, subtitling guidelines and subtitling wordplay and idioms. It highlights the importance of structural and stylistic figures in subtitling and shows that there are more aspects to it than just translating and synchronising. Knowing the guidelines and technicalities allows us to improve the quality of our translating and subtitling.

A subtitler has to go through each strategy when translating a wordplay or an idiom before deciding that the only solution is to omit. First one looks for idioms with similar meanings and forms. If there are none, they must check for a similar meaning but a different form. If the target language does not have a similar idiom, one should paraphrase. Omitting is a strategy one employs only if all else fails.

Choosing to translate a show full of wordplay like *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* was both easy and challenging. Finding examples was the easy part, but translating them was challenging. It was tough not having anything to use for comparison in most cases, but it helped me think out of the box and see the process of finding an equivalent. Out of all the instances, the most challenging one to translate was ''It's hammer time!'' so I decided to omit it. Out of the ones I did translate, it took me the longest to find a good portmanteau. Nonetheless, it makes me proud that I managed to think of exciting solutions by myself.

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