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Exploring the Links between Comics Translation and AVT

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1. Introduction

For a very young but gradually developing subfield of Translation Studies, such as the translation of comics, it seems only natural to look to other research areas within the discipline for inspiration and research methodologies. This is also one of the aims of the present article, which will attempt to point to a fruitful link or, to phrase it differently, to build an intradisciplinary bridge, between comics translation and the branch of Audiovisual Translation (AVT) focusing on the study of subtitling.

A noteworthy earlier attempt to build such an intradisciplinary bridge in the context of translating comics was made by Federico Zanettin, who compares this type of translation to the process of localization, demonstrating that it is not only a variety of linguistic but also graphic transformations that may occur in the context of rendering comics in a different cultural milieu ("The Translation of Comics" 200-219). Such transformations may concern the size, layout and colours of comic panels or the size of speech balloons, they may involve erasing or redrawing images, altering book covers and formats or the reading direction, all of which may differ significantly in the case, for example, of a standard comic book published in the USA, France or Japan. By situating comics translation within the localization framework, and presenting it as part of a larger process of preparing a comic book product for its 'consumption' by a new target culture readership, Zanettin points to a fruitful link between these two, seemingly disparate, research areas.

This article is an attempt to point to another fruitful connection, this time between comics translation and subtitling. Subtitling, which is characterized by textual reduction, influenced by spatial constraints and dependent on the interaction between the verbal and visual modes, shares, despite a number of obvious differences, some similarities with the translation of comics. In order to demonstrate the potential usefulness of employing subtitling techniques (which will be further elaborated on at the end of Section 2) for the analysis of comics translation, we will investigate the translations of *Calvin and Hobbes*, created by the American cartoonist Bill Watterson, and published in Poland in the closing decade of the 20th century.

2. An Intradisciplinary Link

Comics may be defined as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud 9). McCloud also points to the major difference between comics and animated audiovisual productions, which is that "animation is sequential in time but not spatially juxtaposed" (7). While each film frame appears on the very same space, i.e. on the screen, in comics each frame, or panel, will necessarily occupy a different space. Or, as it is phrased by

McCloud, "space does for comics what time does for film" (7). Commenting on the spatio-temporal characteristics of comics and films, Zanettin also observes that "[a]nimated cartoons (like all films) differ from 'comics' in that comics are based on ellipsis, so that the time of narration is independent from that of seeing/reading, while in motion pictures (including cartoons) time and vision coincide" (*Comics in Translation* 11). The reader of a comic strip is not limited by time, as are viewers reading subtitles, and can go back to the same dialogue indefinitely. The time allotted for the presentation of a subtitle on the screen, on the other hand, is strictly limited by the duration of the original dialogue. Time and space are thus the major factors behind the differences between comics and films.

Despite these general differences, a number of similarities may also be pointed out with regard to the composition of both translated comics and subtitles. The latter is a type of audiovisual translation that consists in "presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards, and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off)" (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 8). Dialogue is key in both subtitled films and translated comics. It is nevertheless transcribed and communicated in writing in clearly specified areas, that is typically at the bottom of the screen in audiovisual productions, and usually in speech balloons in the case of comics. In both cases text is subject to spatial constraints, such as the limited number of characters that may appear in one or two lines at the bottom of the screen (depending on the context a maximum of between 32 and 41 characters per line; Díaz-Cintas and Remael 9) or the size of speech balloons and the choice of lettering in the case of comics. Both films and comics are multimodal texts based on the interplay between the verbal and the visual,[1] and in this relationship, the visual typically plays the dominant role. Furthermore, a common feature of subtitling is textual reduction. According to Gottlieb, "a full transcription/translation of the spoken discourse in films and television is seldom desirable" (247) and, as pointed out by Díaz-Cintas and Remael, "subtitling can never be a complete and detailed rendering. And neither should it, for that matter" (145). Examples of textual reduction may also be found in translated comics, in which it is not uncommon to encounter instances of reformulation, condensation and omission that result in greater textual conciseness (see Grun and Dollerup or Borodo, "The Sorceress"). Such reduction may be conditioned by the existence of spatial constraints in comics and spatio-temporal constraints in subtitling. It may also be determined by the multimodal nature and intersemiotic redundancy in films and comics, allowing viewers/readers to infer meaning from the visual or the audiovisual channel.

In this context Gottlieb, commenting on the composition of an audiovisual production, distinguishes as many as four different communicative channels through which meanings are communicated to the viewer (245):

(1) the verbal auditory channel, which includes dialogue, but also potentially background voices and lyrics

[1] See Kaindl or Borodo, "Multimodality," on comics translation and multimodality and Taylor or Chuang on multimodality and subtitling.

(2) the non-verbal auditory channel, that is music, some natural sounds and sound effects
(3) the verbal visual channel, which includes various instances of written text visible on the screen
(4) the non-verbal visual channel, which relates to picture composition and the flow of images

In a subtitled film, the verbal visual channel, normally of marginal importance in an audiovisual production, takes over the crucial task of expressing the meanings from the verbal auditory channel, with the viewer having access to both these channels simultaneously. In the case of comics, the reader naturally has access to only two channels, which are the verbal visual channel with various instances of written text, and the non-verbal visual channel that relates to the flow of images in the form of comic panels. In translated comics the situation does not change in the least. The reader continues to have access to the same two channels, that is to channels (3) and (4) in Gottlieb's classification.

However, although the above is technically correct, in comics, including translated comics, the situation appears to be slightly more complex. The verbal visual channel (3) is in fact multifaceted, entirely taking over the roles of the verbal auditory channel (1) and the non-verbal auditory channel (2) in an audiovisual production. In fact, in comics the verbal visual channel (3) may be broken down into at least four different subcategories, encompassing:

(a) dialogues appearing in speech balloons
(b) commentaries and narrative passages appearing as part of or above/below comic panels
(c) instances of written text in the form of names of shops, newspaper titles, signposts, etc.
(d) a variety of onomatopoeic expressions (thump, whizz, zzz… etc.).

Of these four, subtypes (a) and (b) imitate the verbal auditory channel (1) and subtype (d) imitates the non-verbal auditory channel (2). Thus the multifaceted verbal visual channel (3) does for comics what the three channels (1), (2) and (3) from Gottlieb's categorization typically do for an audiovisual production.

Subtitling techniques may be grouped into a number of categories depending on the type of reformulation, condensation and omission that is involved. According to Díaz-Cintas and Remael, the subtitler can decide upon partial or total textual reduction, leaving out what is not relevant for understanding the original message or reformulating what is relevant but in a more concise manner (146). They further list such types of procedures as condensation and reformulation at word level, which may involve using shorter synonyms or near-synonyms, changing word classes or using simple rather than compound tenses, among others (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 151-154). Then, condensation and reformulation at clause/sentence level relate to such techniques as changing the mode of a sentence, e.g. from negative to affirmative, in order to reduce its length, turning compound sentences into simple ones or making use of pronouns to replace nouns or nouns phrases (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 154-161). Furthermore, the subtitler can resort to omissions. These may include omissions at word level of question-tags, phatic

words, hesitations, false starters or modifiers, mainly adjectives and adverbs (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 163-166). Omissions at clause/sentence level, on the other hand, may involve eliminating repetitions or even entire sentences, especially if they carry less semantic content or overlap semantically with some other part of dialogue (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 166-171). Before applying these categories to the analysis of the dialogue from the Polish translation of *Calvin and Hobbes*, however, let us briefly characterize the comics in focus as well as provide contextual information on its publication.

3. *Calvin and Hobbes* Comic Strips

Calvin and Hobbes comic strips were created by the American cartoonist Bill Watterson, who is the sole author of both text and drawings. The strips started to appear in American newspapers in 1985 to soon become a success and a revelation. Intelligent and humorous, they masterfully combine the perspective of a delightfully imaginative child protagonist and that of a rational and sensible adult. The strips were compiled in a number of book editions, although new cartoon strips ceased to be created by the author in 1995. It might also be noted that throughout his life Watterson resisted the proposals to commercialize his comic strips and thus, in contrast to many other comic characters that came into existence on the printed page, *Calvin and Hobbes* has never been made into a film or merchandized on a large scale in the form of toys or gadgets.

With regard to the main themes and characters, the comic strips centre around Calvin, a mischievous, imaginative little boy and tiger Hobbes, an anthropomorphic character from Calvin's perspective, but merely a stuffed toy from the perspective of adult characters appearing in the strips. Watterson thus masterfully grasps the nature of the discrepancies between a young child and an adult with regard to their perception of the world. Hobbes, characterized by a more realistic and reasonable attitude than Calvin, is the boy's inseparable companion, with whom the boy engages in various antics and follies but also in more sophisticated conversations of existential nature. The names of the main protagonists are, by the way, references to the "thinkers" John Calvin (the Protestant theologian) and Thomas Hobbes (the political philosopher). Other characters appearing in the comics include the boy's parents, Susie Derkins, a girl from his neighborhood, and more occasionally, Calvin's teacher, his babysitter and a school bully.

The series about the boy and his tiger has been translated into numerous world languages, both in the form of comic strips appearing in daily newspapers as well as in various book formats. In some countries, the names of the main characters were modified, into *Steen og Stoffer* in Danish, *Tommy og Tigern* in Norwegian or *Kázmér és Huba* in Hungarian, to name a few. In Poland, *Calvin and Hobbes* first appeared in the mid-1990s in comic strips published in daily newspapers (with the tiger Hobbes reportedly bearing such names as *Hops* and *Mrożek*[2]) as well as in ten subsequent issues of a comics magazine entitled *Kelvin & Celsjusz*, which was translated by Agnieszka Malicka and published by the now non-existent Pol-Nordica Publishing House between June 1994 and April 1995. Each issue of the magazine, presumably directed at a heterogeneous audience consisting of children, teenagers and adults, featured several short stories about *Calvin and Hobbes*, which were published in full colour on 42 pages alongside stories

[2] After the Polish writer and dramatist, Sławomir Mrożek (1930-2013).

by other cartoonists. In the magazine in question, the original names of the two main protagonists were replaced with *Kelvin* and *Celsjusz*. The names may be viewed as humorous references to the Swedish astronomer Anders Celsius and the British scientist William Thomson, Baron Kelvin, the inventors of the temperature scales which today bear their names. In 2004, *Calvin and Hobbes* reappeared in Poland under a much more accurate title and in a new translation by a well-known Polish translator Piotr W. Cholewa. Published by the Egmont Polska Publishing House, the comic strips came out in a 128 pages-long, black-and-white collection, closely resembling the original album from 1988 on which the translation was based.

4. Analysis

Below, we will deal with the Polish translation of *Calvin and Hobbes* published in a comics magazine in 1994. Unlike the original strips, the strips included in the magazine were published in full colour in a graphically modified layout and they were sometimes graphically transformed. Some of them were enlarged, slightly redrawn in terms of the depiction of characters and speech balloons, and also one new picture was added in the translation. This is also a less precise and more concise translation than the new, 2004 Polish version and the textual conciseness of the 1994 translation might have been conditioned by several different factors. For example, although this hypothesis is not universally applicable, first translations of foreign works are sometimes culturally assimilated and less accurate than the re-translations that follow.[3] The 1994 version uses a hand-written and slightly larger font than the 2004 Polish translation, which makes use of a computerized font. It is thus possible that the first Polish translator had to use fewer words and letters to express the same meanings from the original version. In general, the translator of the 1994 version is more prone to textual reduction, formulating the same passages in a more succinct manner, characteristic of the practice of subtitling. The textual reduction observable in the translated text also raises the question about some noticeable patterns underlying the choices made by the translator. Such patterns, as will be confirmed through the following examples, are related to partial mitigation of the instances of impoliteness observable in the original dialogue as well as to the modification of cultural references that may have been regarded as too foreign and incongruent with Polish realities.

With regard to the method of presentation of the passages examined below, the Polish translations of the words uttered by Calvin and Hobbes are followed by the present author's back-translations into English. The punctuation appearing in the texts under analysis has been retained, but while the translated speech balloons contain exclusively capital letters, we will use both lowercase and uppercase letters below for reasons of clarity and readability. In total, 17 subsequent comic panels will be analyzed below that form a coherent storyline and present a humorous dialogue between Calvin and Hobbes.

4.1. Hey, Hobbes, you got a letter

The storyline presented in the panels under analysis is as follows: Hobbes, the tiger, receives an enigmatic letter, which is brought to him by Calvin at the beginning of the story. The boy is more than curious about the content of the correspondence, yet Hobbes is reluctant to disclose it to Calvin, reading it excessively slowly and teasing his interlocutor. As a result, the boy loses

[3] See Bensimon or Gambier for a discussion of "the retranslation hypothesis".

his temper several times in the course of the conversation until it is finally revealed that the letter was sent by Susie Derkins, a girl who is Calvin's age and who is inviting Hobbes to her birthday party. All the comic panels examined below appear on pages 73 and 74 of the original 1988 album by Watterson whereas the translated panels appear on pages 4 and 5 of the Polish comic magazine published in 1994. The story opens with the following exchange initiated by Calvin:

ORIGINAL (Watterson 73)
Calvin: Hey, Hobbes, you got a letter.
Hobbes: A letter? For me? **Wow. I never get letters!**

TRANSLATION (*Kelvin & Celsjusz* 4)
Calvin: Hej, Celsjuszu, dostałeś list
[Hey, Celsius, you got a letter]
Hobbes: List? Do mnie?!
[A letter? For me?!]

Apart from the replacement of the original name of Hobbes with the Polish-sounding *Celsjusz*, the translation is characterized by the omission of the exclamatory phrase *Wow* as well as the entire sentence that follows, "I never get letters!," which are both highlighted in the citation above. In terms of the number of letters, the expressions omitted from this line constitute as much as 60% of the English text appearing in the original speech balloon. With regard to the loss in meaning observable in the Polish translation, it does not seem to be significant, however. The original passage "For me? Wow. I never get letters!" was considerably condensed in Polish, but the reaction of surprise and unusualness of the situation are nevertheless very clearly expressed in the translated strip. The original meaning is communicated on the verbal plane by the expression *Do mnie?!* [For me?!], which is, notably, not only followed by the question mark, as in the original, but additionally strengthened by the exclamation mark. The reaction is also partly communicated by the visual mode, depicting the surprised Hobbes gazing at the letter with a joyful smile.

Figure 1a. The 1988 original version of *Calvin and Hobbes*

Figure 1b. The 1994 Polish translation of *Calvin and Hobbes*

In the next panel, Hobbes, who is now holding the letter in his paws, continues the conversation in the following words:

ORIGINAL (Watterson 73)
Hobbes: What fun! A letter for me! **I wonder** who sent it? **I wonder** what it says? **What could this possibly be?**

TRANSLATION (*Kelvin & Celsjusz* 4)
Hobbes: Ale fajnie! List do mnie! Od kogo? Co pisze? O rany, to niemożliwe!
[How cool! A letter for me! From whom? What does s/he say? Gee, it's impossible]

In this case, the translator resorts to condensation at sentence level, rendering the complex sentences from the original, "I wonder who sent it?" and "I wonder what is says?," with the syntactically reduced *Od kogo?* [From whom?] and *Co pisze?* [What does s/he write?] respectively. The meaning loss is slight, if any, as the sense of the original sentences is simply expressed with fewer words in a more concise manner. The same is true about the omission of the sentence "What could this possibly be?". Although entirely removed from the translation, and replaced with *O rany, to niemożliwe!* [Gee, it's impossible], in essence it does not add any new information and mainly repeats the message from the two preceding sentences. This reduction was easy, it can be noted, because the passage in question is characterized by a high degree of intrasemiotic redundancy.

In the next comic panel, the following sentence is uttered in the imperative mode by the increasingly impatient Calvin:

ORIGINAL (Watterson 73)
Calvin: Open it and find out, **you lunatic**!
Hobbes: Don't get huffy. I want to savor this.

TRANSLATION (*Kelvin & Celsjusz* 4)
Calvin: Otwórz, to się dowiesz!

[Open it and you'll find out!]
Hobbes: Spoko. Daj mi się pocieszyć
[Cool it. Let me enjoy this]

This time, the most noteworthy modification concerns the omission at word level of *you lunatic*. In terms of pragmatics, the omission of Calvin's humorous and mildly disrespectful reference to his addressee results in a more polite utterance in the Polish translation and may be perceived as an instance of partial mitigation of the original form of address. This, by the way, is not an isolated example but part of a tendency observable in the Polish translation. One may wonder about the motivation behind the translator's decisions. It is possible, for example, that the translator wanted to highlight the friendly nature of the relationship between the two protagonists rather than the quarrelsome aspects of it. The decision might have been also motivated by the fact that at least part of the intended Polish readership consisted of younger readers for whom this mildly aggressive form of address could have potentially sounded jarring. In a more general sense, this could also mean that in the mid-1990s the Polish language "controlled" by the Polish adult was more conservative than that used by American adults. It seems that the next examples illustrating this tendency confirm the more conservative mode in Polish.

To sum up, it can be noted that several condensation techniques were used in the above translations of the original speech balloons. They include omission at sentence level, condensation at sentence level and omission at word level, all of which are also frequently employed in the process of subtitling. All these transformations result in a greater textual conciseness of the translated text.

Figure 2. The 1994 Polish translation of *Calvin and Hobbes*

4.2. It looks like an invitation

After the initial exchange, analyzed above, the dialogue between the delighted Hobbes and the increasingly impatient and disgruntled Calvin proceeds as follows:

ORIGINAL (Watterson 73)
Calvin: **Well? Well?** What'd you get?

Hobbes: It looks like an invitation.
Calvin: An invitation? Who'd invite you anywhere?
Hobbes: A lot of people, **that's who**, **buster**.

TRANSLATION (*Kelvin & Celsjusz* 4)
Calvin: No i co? Co to jest?
[And so? What is it?]
Hobbes: Wygląda jak zaproszenie
[It looks like an invitation]
Calvin: Zaproszenie? A któż to ciebie zaprasza?
[An invitation? And who is inviting you?]
Hobbes: Oh, jest wielu takich ty niedowiarku
[Oh, there are a lot of such (people), you doubter]

Several modifications are noticeable in the above Polish translation of the original panels. These transformations include the omission of the repetition from the opening line, "Well? Well?," and syntactic condensation at sentence level involving the deletion of the emphatic expression "that's who" in the closing line of the above exchange. Another noteworthy transformation concerns the translator's handling of the word *buster*, an informal and mildly disrespectful phrase, which was rendered as *niedowiarku* [doubter] in the Polish translation. It may again be perceived as an instance of partial mitigation of the original form of address, which is, as was noted before, a noticeable pattern underlying the choices made by the Polish translator.

Even more evident modifications are observable in the following lines, which directly follow the previous exchange between Calvin and Hobbes:

ORIGINAL (Watterson 73)
Calvin: There's obviously been some mistake. Nobody invites a tiger anywhere. **You can't get the insurance**.
Hobbes: **Well somebody is inviting me somewhere**. I got an invitation.

TRANSLATION (*Kelvin & Celsjusz* 4)
Calvin: To musi być pomyłka. Przecież nikt nie zaprasza tygrysa
[This must be a mistake. After all, nobody invites a tiger]
Hobbes: A jednak! Dostałem zaproszenie!
[And yet! I got an invitation!]

This time, more substantial departures from the original text include the omission at sentence level of the entire "You can't get the insurance," which results in the loss of meaning as well as the loss of humour. While the original suggests that no insurance company would ever cover an event to which a tiger is invited, with "You can't get the insurance" explaining the preceding "Nobody invites a tiger anywhere," this meaning cannot be inferred from the translation. One might wonder about the reasons behind this omission. It is possible that this solution might work better not only in terms of space but also with regard to its congruence with Polish realities (does anyone think as much about insurance in Poland as in US culture with its litigious liability

culture?). The joke might simply not work as well in Polish. The above passage is also characterized by condensation at sentence level of "Well somebody is inviting me somewhere". Expressed in a more concise manner as *A jednak!* [And yet!], this translation does not result in a significant meaning loss, however. It rather seems to be expressing a comparable meaning, which may be deduced from the context of the conversation.

Figure 3a. The 1988 original version of *Calvin and Hobbes*

Figure 3b. The 1994 Polish translation of *Calvin and Hobbes*

As Calvin tries to discover the content of the enigmatic letter, he gradually becomes increasingly impatient and exclaims to Hobbes:

ORIGINAL (Watterson 73)
Calvin: Who? What's it say?? Read it already!!
Hobbes: Probably some big state dinner. **I hope I can find my cummerbund**.

TRANSLATION (*Kelvin & Celsjusz* 4)
Calvin: Kto? Co? Co on bredzi? Przeczytaj natychmiast!!!

[Who? What? What is he blathering? Read it right away!!!]
Hobbes: Prawdopodobnie chodzi o wystawny obiad
[It's probably about some lavish dinner]

The above passage is once again characterized by the use of a technique employed in the context of subtitling, that is the omission at sentence level of "I hope I can find my cummerbund," which follows the semantically more significant "(It is) probably some big state dinner". A possible reason behind this omission could be the potential difficulty of communicating to Polish readers the culture-bound item *cummerbund*, denoting a broad sash worn at the waist as part of formal dress, with a tuxedo, for example. It may also be hypothesized that some of the above instances of omission and condensation were conditioned by spatial constraints, such as the space available in speech balloons for the translated text, which appears in a slightly larger font than in the original text.

4.3. Aargghh! Oooohh! Mpf! Ggh!

As the conversation between Calvin and Hobbes, ostentatiously prolonging the moment of revealing the content of the correspondence, proceeds, the boy finds it increasingly difficult to restrain his emotions:

ORIGINAL (Watterson 73)
Calvin: **So what does the invitation say**, you **dumb** hairball?
Hobbes: **Call me names, will you?** I'll read it when I'm good and ready.

TRANSLATION (*Kelvin & Celsjusz* 5)
Calvin: Czytaj wreszcie ty kudłaczu
[Read it already you hairball]
Hobbes: Czy możesz mówić do mnie po imieniu? Przeczytam, kiedy będę gotów.
[Can you call me by my name? I'll read it when I'm ready.]

In this case, especially the first line of the Polish translation is characterized by textual reduction. It results from sentence condensation and reformulation of "So what does the invitation say," the replacement of the word "invitation" with the pronoun "it", as well as omission at word level of the qualifier "dumb," which techniques are frequently used in the subtitling process. With regard to the number of characters appearing in the first line above, the Polish translation is approximately 50% shorter than the text in the original speech balloon.

A noteworthy aspect of the translation is again the mitigation of the potentially offensive tone of the exchange between the two interlocutors. Thus, while the original text opens with "So what does the invitation say, you dumb hairball?," followed by "Call me names, will you?," the Polish translation begins with [Read it already you hairball,] followed by [Can you call me by my name?]. The meaning has been changed considerably here, as "Call me names" and "Can you call me by my name" are not similar in any way. While the former refers to the action of speaking abusively to an interlocutor, the former simply denotes addressing a person by his or her name. Whereas the original English lines are both humorously teasing and provocative, the two Polish lines may be viewed as a more polite manner of carrying a conversation, devoid of the original

unceremonious and mildly abusive content. On the one hand, it is possible that the translator misunderstood the original intent of "Call me names". On the other hand, this modification could have been intentional, as it would not be the first time the translator has resorted to the mitigation of the more brusque tone of the original conversation, as if to emphasize the friendly nature of the relationship between the boy and the tiger rather than the quarrelsome aspects of it.

Figure 4a. The 1988 original version of *Calvin and Hobbes*

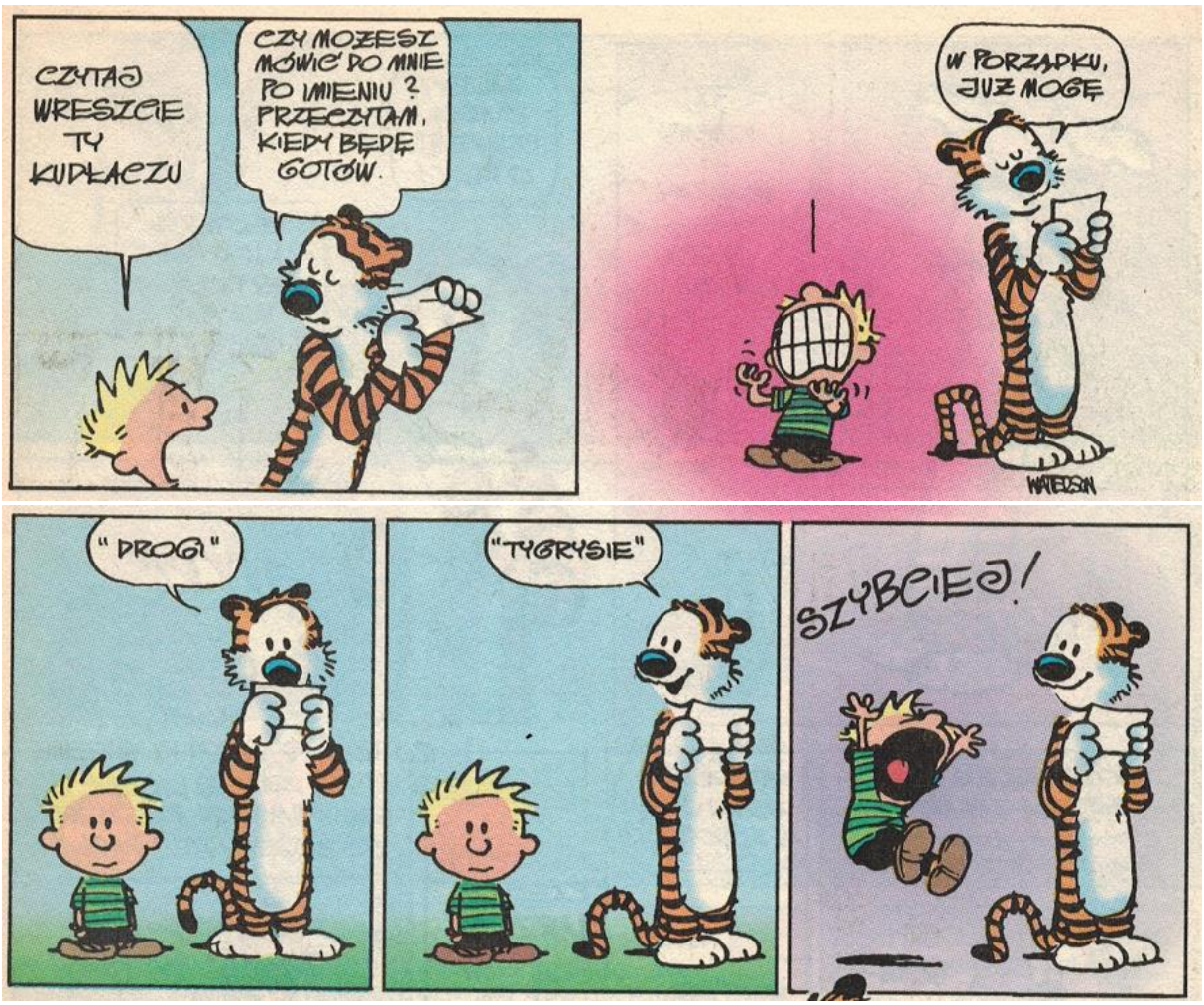

Figure 4b. The 1994 Polish translation of *Calvin and Hobbes*

Finding it increasingly difficult to restrain his emotions, Calvin finally reacts as follows to Hobbes' behavior:

ORIGINAL (Watterson 73)
Calvin: **Aargghh! Oooohh! Mpf! Ggh! Rrgghghmfmpf!**
Hobbes: OK, now I'm ready. ..**Ahem**..
Hobbes: "Dear"
Hobbes: "Hobbes"
Calvin: Faster!

TRANSLATION (*Kelvin & Celsjusz* 5)
Calvin: [OMISSION]
Hobbes: W porządku, już mogę
[Okay, now I can]
Hobbes: "Drogi"
["Dear"]
Hobbes: "Tygrysie"
["Tiger"]
Calvin: Szybciej!
[Faster!]

Significant graphic modifications are observable in the panels under discussion, and while this tendency was noticeable in previous examples, the panels in Figures 4a and 4b appear to be the most striking illustration of it. Firstly, the opening two panels in Figure 4b were enlarged horizontally. Secondly, the last two original panels from Figure 4a were replaced with as many as three panels in the Polish translation. The new panel, which is absent from the original, is panel four from Figure 4b. Interestingly, on closer examination, this additional panel turns out to be the combination of the original panels three and four from Figure 4a. This becomes evident when one examines the identical depiction of Calvin in panel three in Figure 4a and in panel four from Figure 4b. The figure of Hobbes in panel four of Figure 4b, on the other hand, is the same as that in panel four of Figure 4a. Finally, Hobbes's smile in the last panel of Figure 4b was redrawn, when compared with the final panel of Figure 4a, possibly to avoid too much overlap of panel four from the translation with its adjacent panels.

The most significant textual modification in the passage above is obviously the omission of the line composed of the exclamations "Aargghh! Oooohh! Mpf! Ggh! Rrgghghmfmpf!". It is not entirely clear why this particular decision was made, although it is also possible that the omission is related to the multimodal nature of comics. The strong emotions expressed on a linguistic plane with the exclamations "Aargghh! Oooohh! Mpf! Ggh! Rrgghghmfmpf!" are also obviously communicated by the visual mode, presenting Calvin on the verge of an outburst of anger. Moreover, in the original, black-and-white, American comic strip the exclamations in focus do not appear in a speech balloon, but are suspended above Calvin's head, thus being probably more prone to omission. A less substantial textual modification, which may be associated with subtitling, is the condensation of the phatic word *Ahem* from the second line of the above exchange.

4.4. No, it doesn't say anything about you

Figure 5. The 1994 Polish translation of *Calvin and Hobbes*

Towards the end of the dialogue under analysis, Hobbes does eventually reveal the content of the mysterious letter to Calvin, who then speculates about the reason why he has not received such an invitation as well. The opening panel in this exchange, which is presented in Figure 5 and at the beginning of Figure 6a, was again graphically modified. It was considerably broadened and partly redrawn to include the top of Calvin's head, which is missing from the original panel. This is the final part of the conversation I will focus on:

> ORIGINAL (Watterson 74)
> Hobbes: Well, well! It's an invitation to Susie **Derkins'** birthday party. How nice.
> Calvin: **Susie** invited you? What about me? Does it say me too?
> Hobbes: **No, it doesn't say anything about you**.
>
> TRANSLATION (*Kelvin & Celsjusz* 5)
> Hobbes: No, no! Zuzia zaprasza mnie na urodzinowe party. Jak miło
> [Well, well! Zuzia is inviting me to a birthday party. How nice]
> Calvin: Ciebie zaprasza? A ja? Jest coś o mnie?
> [Inviting you? And me? Is there something about me?]
> Hobbes: Ani słowa.
> [Not a word.]

First of all, it is worth noting that the translator decided to domesticate the name of *Susie Derkins*, the sender of the letter, using the Polish equivalent *Zuzia* instead, and entirely omitted her surname from the translated text. Then, condensation at sentence level is noticeable in the final line, "No, it doesn't say anything about you," which was rendered, far more sparingly, as *Ani słowa* [Not a word]. Although considerably condensed, the Polish translation is not in fact characterized by loss of meaning, as the elliptical [Not a word] allows the reader to easily infer the original meaning due to the preceding question, "Is there something about me?". As in the case of an effective subtitle, the passage from the speech balloon does not depart from the original in terms of meaning, but rather aims at textual conciseness that does not impinge on the overall comprehension of the original text. Finally, the elliptic form *Ciebie zaprasza?* [Inviting you?] from the translation, an equivalent of "Susie invited you?," seems to be more efficient in

carrying the character's frustration, compared to the original version, which is more factual and neutral in terms of form.

Figure 6a. The 1988 original version of *Calvin and Hobbes*

Figure 6b. The 1994 Polish translation of *Calvin and Hobbes*

Further on, when disappointed Calvin begins to speculate about the reason behind not receiving the same letter, Hobbes eventually discovers the explanation on the back of the invitation.

ORIGINAL (Watterson 74)
Calvin: She must have mailed me invitation separately. **She probably wanted to insure it so she'll know it didn't get lost.** Sometimes those take longer.
Calvin: I'll have to sign for it and all. **I'm sure she's taking no chances with mine.**
Hobbes: Oh wait. **On the back** it says "You can bring that stupid kid **you hang around with**, if you must."

TRANSLATION (*Kelvin & Celsjusz* 5)
Calvin: Musiała wysłać oddzielnie, poleconym, to trwa dłużej
[She must have sent (it) separately, in a registered (letter), this takes longer]
Calvin: Muszę się upomnieć. Co to za party beze mnie
[I have to ask for it. What kind of party is that without me]

> Hobbes: Czekaj, coś tu jest – "Jeżeli musisz weź ze sobą tego głupiego dzieciaka"…
> [Wait, there is something here – "If you have to, bring that stupid kid with you"…]

The above example is the most interesting in terms of textual reduction in the first three sentences uttered by Calvin: "She must have mailed me invitation separately"; "She probably wanted to insure it so she'll know it didn't get lost"; "Sometimes those take longer". With regard to the number of characters, this lengthy passage was condensed by more than 60% into *Musiała wysłać oddzielnie, poleconym, to trwa dłużej* [She must have sent (it) separately, in a registered (letter), this takes longer]. This example can again be compared to an effective subtitle. In particular, the term *poleconym* [in a registered (letter)] effectively encapsulates most of the meaning of the original sentence, "She probably wanted to insure it so she'll know it didn't get lost," while omitting less relevant information. In this case, as many as thirteen words from the original text were in fact replaced with only one in the translation.

A noteworthy example is also observable in the next line of the 1994 Polish version. In this line, Calvin's reference to the letter from Susie, "I'm sure she's taking no chances with mine," was replaced with an entirely new sentence, *Co to za party beze mnie* [What kind of party is that without me]. This is a substantial departure from the original, in which the semantic content was entirely removed and new meanings, autonomously created by the translator, were inserted, possibly as a sort of compensation to convey the frustration of the character.

Two further modifications, this time strictly related to textual reduction, appear in the final line of the above exchange. In this final line, the Polish translator decided to replace the expression "on the back" with the pronoun *tu* [here]. The translator also made use of syntactic condensation, omitting the post-modifying relative clause "you hang around with" from the original sentence "You can bring that stupid kid you hang around with, if you must". It may be hypothesized that this change might have been primarily conditioned by spatial constraints, as the translated text seems to fill almost the entire speech balloon and it would be difficult to squeeze more text in it. Both these instances of condensation and reformulation at sentence level are associated with the practice of subtitling.

5. Conclusion

As demonstrated above, there exist some similarities between subtitled audiovisual productions and translated comics. Both are subject to spatial constraints and are often characterized by intersemiotic as well as intrasemiotic redundancy, allowing readers/viewers to infer meaning from the visual channel and from the adjacent text. Using a framework originally intended for analyzing subtitles can thus be helpful in demonstrating what translation techniques are sometimes employed in the context of comics translation. In the Polish version of *Calvin and Hobbes* in focus, for example, the translator made use of a broad range of reductive techniques typical of subtitling, ranging from reformulation and condensation to omission at word, clause and sentence level. In some of the examined speech balloons, the loss of meaning was evident, while in other examples, it was minimal. In these cases, the translator managed to retain the same or at least very similar meanings in a more succinct manner, just like a professional subtitler. The passages analyzed above seem to be representative of the strategy observable in the 1994 Polish

translation of *Calvin and Hobbes* but such reductive textual techniques may potentially be found in other translations of comics as well. Establishing this, however, would require further research into translations of diverse comics titles.

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