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The Linguistic Peculiarities of a Fairy Tale Film as a Secondary Text

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ABSTRACT

The present research focuses on the linguistic peculiarities of German fairy tales film adaptations as secondary texts. The global technological development, which resulted in the new way of information being perceived via technical means of communication and different media texts, including new types of secondary texts, such as film adaptation of literary works, explains the choice and the importance of this topic. Using the method of comparative analysis, we study the audio part of two different "Rapunzel" screen versions and one "Cinderella" screen adaptation. The analysis reveals the lexical means that change the genre and the style of fairy tales in the adaptations and correctly convert the original text of the story into a film text intended for children. The linguistic features of the source text preserved in the secondary text and providing the source material to the viewers are also specified. The results of the analysis may be used in further studying of secondary texts, their nature and structuring, and in the German stylistics courses.

Key words:

Secondary Text, Film Adaptation, Fairy Tale Film, Grimm's Fairy Tales.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century are characterized by rapid information technology development and, as a result, by the emergence of a new information space that is defined as a hypermedia space filled with different media texts. Researchers' interest in the texts with a non-verbal (extralinguistic) component grows. This process contributes to the increasing integration of linguistics and semiotics, and, according to the Russian linguist Elena Anisimova, text linguistics is now changing into linguistics of a semiotically complicated text (Anisimova 2003). A semiotically complicated or creolized text is a text of mixed type which is structured with the help of “iconic means along with verbal ones and also along with means of other semiotic codes (color, font, etc.)” (Anisimova 2003: 3, own translation).

The linguists Gennady Slyshkin and Marina Efremova suggest that a film text should be considered as a specific form of a creolized text because there are two inextricably connected semiotic systems (linguistic and nonlinguistic) presented in that kind of texts. The linguistic system usually deals with symbols, the nonlinguistic with icons and indexes (Slyshkin & Efremova 2004).

Many film scripts in the world and national cinema are based on works of literature, so the strong connection between a film text and a literary text is clearly seen. That explains why some modern Russian linguists (Pokidysheva 2007, Ukanakova 2013 among others) define the screen version as a special type of a secondary text “transposing primary texts via a particularly organized communicative system which transfers information by means of audiovisual signs and images” (Pokidysheva 2007: 3, own translation).

In linguistics, “secondary text” is understood as a text based on other texts called primary or initial. Maria Verbitskaya proposed the concept of “secondary text” in 1983 and gave it a detailed explanation in her monograph “Literary Parody as an Object of a Philological Research” (Verbitskaya 2000). Since then, this term came into general philological use.

Traditionally, only annotations and summaries were seen as prototypical secondary texts, but now the meaning of this concept is broader and includes “all texts, which are literally “built” of the source material borrowing its characters, situational context, stylistic elements etc.” (Ukanakova 2013: 142, own translation). Thus, we claim, it will be reasonable to add a screen version to the number of secondary texts.

2. RELEVANCE OF THE SUBJECT MATTER, RESEARCH GOALS AND METHOD

The subject matter of the present research is the linguistic peculiarities in German film adaptations of Grimms' fairy tales, which are regarded as secondary texts. The topic is especially relevant today because in our century of rapid information technology development, media texts and film texts in particular, are put at the forefront of the entertaining discourse and books gradually lose their former position.

Numerous surveys conducted by German sociologists demonstrate the relevance of fairy tale films and their role in children's acquaintance with folk tales. According to the German researcher of children's literature Michael Sahr (2007), it was claimed in one of the ARD TV programs that nowadays 80% of all children generally get acquainted with fairy tales through the technical means of communication.

However, some argue that a film adaptation deprives children of the opportunity to dream and to think creatively by transferring literary characters to the screens and concretizing the time and the scene. Besides, by visualizing particular scenes of cruelty, which are quite common in German fairy tales, film-makers might harm children's mentality. Too radical transformations of the plot are also often criticized. Using various linguistic means, the director can completely change the genre and the style of a literary work, e.g. turn a fairy tale into a detective story, a thriller or a comedy film.

Taking into account the above-mentioned considerations, we set **the** following research goals:

- to study how the usage of new linguistic means can change the genre and the style of a fairy tale when it comes to its screen version;
- to specify what genre and language peculiarities of a source fairy tale remain preserved in its screen version as a secondary text;
- to define what stylistic devices allow the correct transposition of a literary work into a film text intended for children.

We have chosen two different screen versions of the fairy tale "Rapunzel", and one of the fairy tale "Cinderella" as research material and studied their audio part in terms of lexical-semantic and comparative analysis.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1. Rapunzel or the magic of tears, 1988

The movie “Rapunzel oder der Zauber der Tränen” (“Rapunzel or the magic of tears”) was shot in 1988 by Ursula Schmenger. It is a combination of two fairy tales of the Grimm brothers – “Rapunzel” and “Maid Maleen”.

The atmosphere of the Middle Ages is very accurately captured in this screen version. It is a standard classic tale with a set of main fairy tale features: the lovely Prince and Princess, the King and the Queen, their magnificent palace, long ball gowns and ceremonial uniforms, a great number of servants, hunting. However, the major role in the creation of a medieval atmosphere is reached by linguistic means.

The formal vocabulary dominates in the film, e.g.

(1)

- a. ***die Gabe***
‘a gift’
- b. ***das Gemach***
‘a chamber, a bower’
- c. ***das Geschmeide***
‘a piece of jewellery’
- d. ***etw. begleichen***
‘to settle smth., to balance smth.’
- e. ***sich ziemen***
‘to beseem, to befit’
- f. ***argwöhnisch***
‘suspicious, wary’

The language is characterized by archaisms (2 a-d) *DIE DIRNE*, *DIE MAGD* (‘a lass, a maid’), *DER KNECHT* (‘a servant’), *DAS AUGENLICHT* (‘eyesight’) and historicisms (3 a-b) *DER KERKER* (‘a dungeon’), *DIE ZOFE* (‘a lady's maid, a tirewoman’); besides, some archaic linguistic structures are used. This statement can be confirmed by the following example:

(4)

- a. ***Wenn du redest, ist der Jäger des Todes!***
‘If you speak, the huntsman will be doomed to die’.

Speaking about the creation of the medieval atmosphere in this screen version of the fairy tale “Rapunzel”, it is necessary to mention some forms of address used in Germany in the Middle Ages which are present in the film. Between the 9th and the 17th century, the personal pronoun *Ihr* was used instead of the pronoun *Sie* as the respectful form of addressing parents and members of the highest society, and it was written with a capital letter as well (Börger 2015). In the following example, a servant talks to the King/ the Prince:

(5)

a. ***Eure Majestät, Eure [Königliche] Hoheit***

‘Your Majesty, Your [Royal] Highness’

or a commoner talking to the King's huntsman:

b. ***Ihr seid ein Jäger des Königs, bitte geht!***

‘You are the king’s huntsman, please go away!’

3.2. SimsalaGrimm: Rapunzel, 1999

Modern fairy tale films differ from the old ones by departing from the faithful adaptation of the original source text, as for example, the 1999 screen version of the fairy tale “Rapunzel” – “SimsalaGrimm: Rapunzel”.

“SimsalaGrimm” is a German-Austrian animated series, based on the Grimms’ fairy tales. In each episode, one Grimms’ fairy tale is told, in which we can see two magic beings who were initially absent in the original story and thought up by the authors of the animated film. These characters are the mischievous merry fellow Yoyo and the erudite Doc Croc – a philosopher and a bookworm. Getting on a magic book to the center of the fairy tale action, they help other characters, but at the same time, the traditional scenario does not change.

Because of the modern characters, this fairy tale contains informal, colloquial language and youth slang. For example, talking to the Prince, Yoyo uses such words and expressions as:

(6)

a. ***Komm, Kumpel!***

‘Off we go, bro!'

b. ***Klasse Idee!***

- ‘Cool idea!’
- c. **Was weiß ich!**
‘Search me!/I have no idea!’
 - d. **Ich hab’s!**
‘Got it!’
 - e. **Das war eine coole Vorstellung!**
‘That was a really cool performance!’

Speaking about a witch, he calls her (7) DIESER MIESE ALTE BESEN ('the old shrew'), and talking to Crok, he uses such phrases as:

- (8)
- a. **Ok, paß mal auf!**
‘Okay, now listen here!’
 - b. **Steh hier nicht so dumm rum!**
‘Don’t stand around like an idiot!’

Some traditional fairy tale characters also use colloquial expressions, which is rather unusual for them; for example, Rapunzel is frightened and so she exclaims: (9) ACH, DU LIEBE ZEIT! ('Good heavens!'), and the witch shouts at her angrily: (10) HALT DEN MUND, FRECHE GÖRE! ('Shut up, you cheeky little girl!'). That is why linguists and literary critics often criticize these animated series. The German folklorist Lutz Röhrich notes:

What the fairy tale friends will lament the most is the loss of the typical language of the Grimms, familiar to all of us right from the cradle

(Röhrich 2000:105, own translation)

However, the screenwriters use slang in a fairy tale deliberately. Brigitta Mühlenbeck, head of the children and family programs department of the broadcasting company WDR, admits in an interview to the TELEVIZION magazine:

We try to tell fairy tales so that we find the balance between the present and the transition to the indefinite time. Thus, we create an opportunity to tell fairy tales from today's perspective. (Innermann 2016: 17, own translation)

The usage of the colloquial language in fairy tale films along with historicisms, archaisms, and formal vocabulary helps to create this “indefinite time” which, being one of the main fairy tale genre characteristics, remains, thus, in its screen version (in the secondary text).

The usage of traditional fairy tale openings and closings in the film text:

(11)

- a. ***Vor langer, langer Zeit, als Wunder noch Wirklichkeit waren***
‘A great while ago, when the world was full of wonders’
- b. ***Und wenn sie nicht gestorben sind, dann leben sie noch heute***
‘And if they haven't died, they're still alive today’.

Typical fairy tale spells (12) ABRACADABRA, names of the main characters (13 a-b) RAPUNZEL, FRAU GOTEL ('Dame Gothel') help to preserve the linguistic features of the fairy tale “Rapunzel” in the analyzed screen version.

3.3. Cinderella, 2011

The fairy tale film “Aschenputtel” shot by ARD TV channel in 2011 is considered to be one of the closest versions to the source text. In this screen version, we see a mixture of several language functional styles again. On the one hand, the formal vocabulary, historicisms and archaisms transfer the viewer to the past, to a different era, e.g. (16 a-c) TALER ('a thaler', large coins used in Germanic countries during the 15th-19th centuries), KAMMERZOFE ('lady's maid'; 'a chambermaid'), MÄGDE, KNECHTE ('servants'). On the other hand, expressions such as: (17a-d) OK, NIX DA! ('No arguments!'), MAL IM ERNST ('But seriously, folks!'), SIE WIRD DIR DEN PRINZEN VOR DER NASE WEGSCHNAPPEN! ('She will snatch your Prince from under your nose!'), VERDAMMTER MIST! ('Damn!') etc. are taken from modern youth slang. These expressions are characterized by obvious colloquial coloring, and are marked as informal, slightly familiar in the Duden dictionary (Duden).

As mentioned earlier, such a combination of incongruous functional styles preserves one of the most important fairy tale genre characteristics, namely the “indefinite time”; besides, it produces a comical effect.

Means of humour and satire also play an important role in this screen version. It is worth noting that they are used in the fairy tale films not only to

entertain the viewer or to deride any vice or evil, but also “to dilute” gloomy episodes, scenes of violence which are difficult to avoid in the screen versions of German fairy tales.

Fairy tales were initially intended for adults. That explains why they contain various “adult” themes or scenes of cruelty and violence, cf.: parents leave their children in the woods, the wicked witch is burnt alive in the oven (“Hansel and Gretel”); the wolf’s belly is cut open and filled with stones (“Little Red Riding Hood”); the stepsisters of Cinderella chop off their heels and toes to put on a shoe (“Cinderella”), etc.

As media researcher Dr. Maya Götz notes “the cruelty scenes, which are quite easy to read, become more obvious in the film adaptation because of their visualization” (Götz & Innermann 2016: 27, own translation). They have an even stronger negative effect on the child’s mentality, therefore the filmmakers deliberately use humour and comedy to help children cope with their fear and believe in the happy ending.

The comical effect in the 2011 fairy tale film “Aschenputtel” was created mainly by the new image of Cinderella as a confident, brave, and sharp-tongued girl. The right choice of stylistic expressiveness means has made her remarks outspoken, witty, and sometimes even venomous. As an example, we will take several scenes from the film.

In the scene of the quarrel, Cinderella places her stepsister on a par with dirt and stench; this figure of speech, when different, sometimes even opposite things are listed together, is called zeugma:

(18)

The stepsister: Zum Glück macht dir der Gestank nichts aus, du

bist es ja gewohnt!

‘Fortunately, you do not notice this stench, you’ve
already got used to it!’

*Cinderella: Ja, ich bin so einiges gewohnt: Gestank, Schmutz,
dich ...*

‘Yes, I have got used to many things: to stench, to dirt,
and to you ...’

In the scene where Cinderella mocks her sister, we hear a phrase ERST 10 MAL. However, the semantic and logical compatibility of the words is wrong in this context. The adverb ERST, meaning ‘only, just’ is used with the cardinal number 10 which, on the contrary, indicates a great number of times. Such a stylistic element is called an alogism:

(19)

Oh Gott, ich muss sofort in den Spiegel gucken! Ich habe heute erst 10 Mal in den Spiegel geguckt!

‘My God, I urgently need to look in the mirror! Today, I’ve looked in the mirror just 10 times!’

The same stylistic element is used in the following example as well. Cinderella, imitating her sister’s voice:

(20)

Meine zarte Stimme verehre ich auch! Fast so sehr wie mein Haar!

‘I admire my gentle voice too! Almost as strongly as my hair!’

The verb VEREHREN in the expression *SEINE STIMME, SEIN HAAR VEREHREN* belongs to the formal vocabulary and is usually used in relation to people, since its major meaning is “jemanden hoch schätzen, als göttliches Wesen ansehen” (Duden), i.e. to honor or even to worship someone as an idol. The combination of this verb and an inanimate object (hair, voice) creates a comical effect and at the same time shows the stepsister’s egoism and self-love.

The viewer also likes the playful, joyful, and a little bit derisive conversation tone between the Prince and Cinderella at their first meeting in this screen version. The Prince, having seen Cinderella with four little pigs, calls them (21) *SCHWEINEHERDE* (‘herd of pigs’). In this case, a hyperbole is used to create a comical effect.

Then, he accidentally knocks Cinderella off her feet, and she shouts at him angrily:

(22)

Ihr habt doch Augen im Kopf, die könnt Ihr doch benutzen, um zu gucken!

‘Don’t you have eyes in your head? Then why don’t you use them?!’.

The comical effect is created here with the help of the verb *BENUTZEN* (‘to apply, to use’) which is used in the direct meaning. That allows us to compare *AUGEN* (‘eyes’) to a certain device or a tool.

In the analysis of the linguistic peculiarities of the fairy tale film as a secondary text, it is also necessary to consider a mechanism of repetition and rhythmization. That mechanism implies rhymed verses or songs being repeated by the characters of the particular fairy tale several times throughout the narration.

The mechanism of repetition and rhythmization was used in every analyzed screen version. At the culmination point, characters say well-known lines from the source fairy tale, so that the main structure and the linguistic peculiarities of the source text (of the fairy tale) remain preserved in the secondary text (in the screen version). This makes the viewer remember the actual source text, the original fairy tale:

(23)

Bäumchen, rüttel dich und schüttel dich, wirf Gold und Silber über mich (“Cinderella”)

‘Shake and quiver, little tree, throw gold and silver down to me’.

4. CONCLUSION

Thus, as one can see in the example of these three different screen versions of Grimm brothers’ fairy tales, completely different secondary texts can be created by various lexical and grammatical means on the basis of one literary work. For example, a classic folk tale turns into a comedy film by means of humour and satire. At the same time, the use of outdated figures of speech, formal vocabulary, historicisms and archaisms allows the creation of a special

medieval atmosphere in a fairy tale film, as in the movie “Rapunzel oder der Zauber der Tränen”.

The use of slang, colloquial expressions along with formal vocabulary and historicisms creates the so-called “indefinite time” in a fairy tale film (for example, in the animated series “Simsala Grimm”). Because of that fact, one of the main genre characteristics of a fairy tale as a source text is preserved in the secondary text (in its screen version).

Certain dialogues, well-known idioms and rhymed verses from the source text, typical fairy tale beginnings and endings, the names of the main characters help to preserve the structure of a source text in a secondary text and connect the viewers to the source material, make them reread the original.

Besides, means of stylistic expressiveness (zeugma, alogism, hyperbole, etc.) play an important role in fairy tale films. They make the language of the characters more individually specific, more interesting; that is why the personality of the characters, their relationships are shown more vividly as, for example, in the 2011 screen version of the fairy tale “Cinderella”. Moreover, those linguistic means often create a comical effect that can lead to the mitigation of unpleasant, sometimes violent plot twists and so to the correct transformation of a source text (a fairy tale) into a film text intended for children.

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