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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Subtitles as an offshoot of literary minimalism

Titulky jako odnož literárního minimalismu

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma Titulky jako odnož literárního minimalismu pod vedením vedoucího práce vypracoval samostatně za použití v práci uvedených pramenů a literatury. Dále prohlašuji, že tato práce nebyla využita k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

Praha, 29. března 2017

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podpis

Chtěl bych velmi poděkovat vedoucímu práce, Mgr. Jakubu Ženíškovi, za ochotu a zejména cenné připomínky a postřehy ohledně titulkování i minimalismu a poskytnutí několika z užitých zdrojů; překladatelům uživatelských titulků analyzovaných v praktické části; a respondentům internetového výzkumu za jejich nejen slovní vyjádření k jednotlivým zadáním.

ANOTACE: Na filmové titulky lze nazírat jako na postmoderní literární sub-žánr, jehož hlavním organizačním principem je minimalismus, přesněji řečeno průsečík jeho funkčních i estetických hledisek. Předpoklad, že titulkářská praxe využívá minimalistické principy, lze přičítat dvěma základním faktorům: 1) doba zobrazení titulku je esenciálním měřítkem užívaným překladatelskými společnostmi; stručnost je totiž nezbytnou jejich kvalitou, který ovlivňuje, zda divák bude schopen přečíst a pochopit jednotlivé repliky, 2) v typické filmové scéně jsou diegetické informace obsažené v titulcích kontinuálně doplňovány obrazovým i zvukovým mimetickým kontextem filmu. Tyto prvky evidentně vzbuzují potřebu minimalisticky ekonomického užití jazyka, jehož sémantika je doplněna mimetickým kontextem filmu.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA: titulky, minimalismus, překlad, estetika, funkčnost, jazyk, audiovizuální médium, umění, literatura, teorie ledovce, film, seriál, mimetický kontext, diegetický kontext, mizanscéna

ANNOTATION: Film subtitles can be seen as a postmodern literary subgenre whose main organizing principle is minimalism, typically generated by both the functional and the aesthetic criteria. The assumption that film subtitling industry operates on a minimalistic premise can be ascribed to two basic factors: 1) the duration of a subtitle is an ubiquitous criterion used by subtitling companies, brevity is therefore an essential quality that determines whether the viewer will manage to read and understand the entire message, 2) in a typical movie sequence, the diegetic information provided by a film subtitle is complemented by the mimetic information of the visual and auditory material that the scene emanates. The combined effect of these elements is clearly conducive to a minimalistic preference for economical language whose full semantics is supplemented by the mimetic context of the film.

KEYWORDS: subtitles: subtitles, minimalism, translation, aesthetics, functionality, language, audio-visual medium, art, literature, the iceberg theory, movie, TV show, mimetic context, diegetic context, mis-an-scène

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1. Introduction

“The present letter is a very long one, because I had no leisure to make it shorter.”

Blaise Pascal, 1657

Mainly due to its interdisciplinary utilization, “minimalism” remains an abstract term and abounds with many definitions. Generally speaking, it designates an approach employing simplicity and austerity; it is elliptical in style, economical in means, reductive in form, and governed by the crucial policy of “less being more.” Minimalism gets rid of anything redundant and superfluous and as such, it appears in diversified plethora of instances.

Though the manifestations of minimalism are not always necessarily explicit or willingly intended, they are frequently a natural part of everyday life. In such cases, the minimalistic way simply happens to be the most plausible or suitable solution at the moment, due to some limitations such as a lack of space. Thus, we witness the most extreme – and yet, interestingly, also the most familiar and ordinary – demonstrations of the functional usage of minimalistic tenets in average objects like a newspaper headline, a telegram, or the symbols on a computer keyboard or a TV remote.

At the same time there is the other end of the spectrum, which the American authors R. Nicodemus and J. F. Millburn describe as the “art of letting go,” namely the alleged efficiency of minimalism in their books, podcasts and *TedX* lectures. This concept attracts those who search for an alternative way of life rather than the burgeoning consumerism of the Western world; they happily and voluntarily repudiate anything excessive in their lives. This idea of a simple life employing the minimalistic principles stretches back through history to Ancient Greece, as testified by the philosopher Diogenes and the barrel that served him as a home.

However, a more common proof of the impingements of minimalism and its impact on human life is its growth through the diverse spheres of fashion, gastronomy, arts, architecture and design. The contrast between the functional usage mentioned above and this artistic minimalism is striking and blatant. The former is forced by situational conditions, while the latter is facultative and sophisticatedly follows some sort of aesthetic goal. However, there are many manifestations in which both of these may intertwine. A TV commercial has to juxtapose several different images during the run of its limited screening time - by doing so, it

makes an effort to appeal to all of the viewer's senses and persuade him to crave the goods it advertises. Accordingly, a short newspaper comic or a cartoon strives to make the reader think or laugh through very few picture panels. Even the enormously successful products of the American technological company Apple Inc. are an example of the elaborate intersection of both functional and aesthetic minimalism.

One corresponding issue closely connected to these matters is the art of translation, in particular translating audio-visual media. The assumption that the film subtitling industry operates on a minimalistic premise can be ascribed to the fact that the duration of a subtitle is a criterion stated and numerically defined by subtitling companies. Brevity is therefore an essential quality that determines whether the viewer will manage to read and understand the message of the translated utterance. In a typical movie sequence, the diegetic information provided by a film subtitle is complemented by the mimetic information of the visual and auditory material that the scene emanates. As a result, the film subtitles are clearly conducive to a minimalistic preference for economical language. This thesis shall shortly introduce the evolution of minimalism in art, with an emphasis in literature, thus establishing that the context of minimalist art is crucial in understanding how it is applied to the practice of translating audio-visual media.

2. Theoretical part

2.1 The growth of artistic minimalism

To position minimalism within the context of art, the following definition taken from the book *Minimalism: Origins* by Peter Strickland (7) may be deemed suitable for the purpose of this thesis:

“Minimalism is a movement, primarily in post-war America, towards an art - visual, musical, literary, or otherwise – that makes its statement with limited, if not the fewest possible, resources.”

It is problematic to appoint the exact moment of the birth of minimalism in the sense of its inception as an artistic tendency, since even the very coinage of the term is attributed to a vast number of different authors.

Strickland’s definition shall be used as a backing for the structure of this chapter.

2.1.1 Minimalism in visual arts

Albeit minimalism as an artistic tendency is mainly connected with the 1960s (the period of its public emergence and also the greatest spread), its principles may be observed in some fore-dated works as well. Presumably the oldest use of the term is dated to 1929, when it was used to describe a painting of John Graham, along with a cogitation about the significance of the findings of minimalism, its potential and the contributions it may bring to the world of art (Obendorf, 20). There is a parallel to other major artistic movements of the 20th century, such as cubism, surrealism or structuralism - the origins of minimalism can be traced to the realm of the graphic arts, namely painting (Obendorf 13).

In art, minimalism makes itself felt through the usage of a diminutive number of used materials and pictured elements. Some painters like Frank Stella or Ad Reinhardt, who have created their most famous works during the 1960s, also do their best to reduce the recipients’ participation on the artwork to the absolute minimum – which hitherto was an unprecedented approach (Obendorf, 24). Keeping in mind this “what you see is what you see” policy and the thorough refusal of any contextual determination, the minimalists aim to eliminate all the

potential associations so that the recipients' concentration on the physical painting itself could not have been interspersed (Obendorf, 30). However, the essence of minimalism lies chiefly within the simplicity of the form, not the association reduction. There is a case in point: a similar approach was conveyed by the abstract expressionist Jackson Pollock, who considered the Rorschach-test-like perceptions of miscellaneous shapes in his artworks an unnecessary burden. Hence, he intuitively found a way to evade this by making the patterns of his works more and more complicated (Horký, "Vědci potvrdili, že tajemství Rorschachových skvrn objevil už Jackson Pollock"). Thus, Pollock's art certainly cannot be considered minimalistic.

Picture no. 2: Frank Stella – *Harran II* (1967)



Picture no. 1: Jackson Pollock – *Convergence* (1952)



Once the possibilities of minimalistic painting were understood as depleted, the principles quickly deepened and expanded through the medium of sculpture. Once the third dimension got added, minimalism bred symmetrical, geometrical statues (Obendorf, 32).

Picture no. 3: Donald Judd
- a minimalist sculpture
example



The aesthetics of minimalistic paintings seem to attract consumers even nowadays. This impression may be illustrated by the success of Russian-American abstract expressionist Mark Rothko and his *Orange, red, yellow* painting, consisting of three colourful stripes. The painting was sold for 86,882,500 USD in 2012 and so it has become the most expensive artwork ever sold via a public auction (Vogel, “Record Sales for a Rothko and Other Art at Christie’s”).

Picture no. 4: Mark Rothko –
Orange, Red, Yellow (1961)



2.1.2 Minimalism in music

Minimalistic music is nowadays mostly known from scorings of movie soundtracks (Strickland, 1). It reclines upon repetitive, limited patterns, as heard for instance in the piano works of Phillip Glass, Steve Reich or Terry Riley (Obendorf, 40). This music, also known amongst the musicians as “phase-shifting” (Strickland, 38) supposedly goes on over just one chord, or even just one pitch. None of the performers stands out, nor they receive more attention from the listeners than the others (Strickland, 246).

Interestingly, minimalistic music does not share many clear common characteristics with minimalistic paintings or sculptures. While pieces of the visual art depict a single idea, music does the exact opposite and makes use of a wide range of variations. That, along with the consequent flat form, static pitches and rhythms and the low degree of the tonal contrasts within the composition, allegedly has a hypnotic effect on the listener (Strickland, 243).

2.1.3 Literary minimalism

Minimalistic literary tendencies developed primarily after the WW2 and during the 1960s (Obendorf, 20) as an outcome of the reduction trends that had been gaining power since the break of the century through the decentralized, incoherent artistic movement. The nondescript style of its works is characterized mainly by an objective, literalist approach towards language (Clark, 1), but the forms of literary minimalism are as varied as the styles of the writers assigned to the movement. Authors most obviously associated with minimalism are Americans (Obendorf, 50), such as Ann Beattie, Raymond Carver or Tobias Wolff (Saltzman, 1).

Of course, the literary examples employing minimalistic aesthetics are much older than half a century. With its simple means of expression, emphasis on the natural imagery and the repeated structure of three rhymes, the Japanese lyrical form of haiku may undoubtedly be designated as minimalistic. Correspondingly, the poetic forms of limerick or cinquain feature a simple five-line pattern. Cynthia Hallet (12) argues that minimalistic patterns can be found even in some works by Edgar Allan Poe, James Joyce or Anton Chekhov. In Poe’s writings, the notion of unity is achieved through exclusion, as every word seems to serve the pre-established design of the story and the works eschew of being excessively long (Obendorf,

53). Chekhov objectively presented the narrative and focused on a single experience (Hallet, 31). Joyce's early works with its minimal dependence on the plot also fall within the tradition (Hallet, 12).

Nevertheless, minimalism as a movement heavily influenced by imagism (which similarly employed clear language and imagery) and impressionism (in which the symbols and associations play likewise crucial role) is not defined through genre delimitation; rather by a protagonist from ordinary, everyday surroundings, and apparently common, mundane topics (Clark, 1). Furthermore, it is distinguished by its exclusive aesthetics, ellipticism and austerity of expression. In its merely surface descriptions, the reader can only rely on a very finite number of epithets and adjectives depicting and detailing the characters' features and the scene. It is a matter of the reader's imagination to participate in the completion of the written material; thereupon the experience is much more individual. A piece of information may become more weighty and significant for the overall story, despite not being explicitly included within the text (Hallet, 1). Clearly, these impressionist principles and methods are quite contrastive to the "what you see is what you see" policy of Marco Stella and other minimalist painters.

"While 'Minimalism' in the visual arts tried to avoid any implications beyond the object itself, for literature the opposite could be claimed: within a minimal frame, the evocation of larger, unnamed issues is often effectuated by figurative associations." (Obendorf, 49)

As such, this practice has been famously utilized in works of Ernest Hemingway, the American author awarded with the Nobel Prize for literature. Known for his "iceberg theory," Hemingway may be considered the key persona of the minimalist movement – even though he died in the early 1960s.

Hemingway took up his career with periodical contributions to a newspaper and made his living as an editor. This is an essential fact, as a lion-share of the aforementioned reduction trends, which have heavily influenced the intersecting of minimalism and literature, had in fact originated from the investigative journalism.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a burgeoning number of long informative articles emerged in newspapers, dealing with the United States' participation in the world wars, the American progressivism, and the subsequent economic depression (Applegate, 10). Those so called "Muckrakers," denoted so by Theodore Roosevelt as an allusion to John Bunyan's allegory *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), employed clear and sharp language in their writings (Applegate, 20).

Correspondingly to the Muckrakers' investigative journalism, the minimalist literature strives to present to its reader the essential elements with precision and brevity. In the minimalistic texts, there is only the basic exposition and dialogues, accompanied with no sentiment, explanatory comments or evaluations. At the same time, no luxuriant descriptions, metaphors or insights to the deep thoughts of the characters (which would justify their actions or explain their behaviour) are to be found. Ergo, these texts indeed are practically written in a journalism-like objective manner (Clark, 106, 108). This general description applies to much of Hemingway's short fiction, e.g. his 1925 story "*The Cat in the Rain*:"

"The American wife stood at the window looking out. Outside right under their window a cat was crouched under one of the dripping green tables. The cat was trying to make herself so compact that she would not be dripped on.

'I'm going down and get that kitty,' the American wife said.

'I'll do it,' her husband offered from the bed.

'No, I'll get it. The poor kitty out trying to keep dry under a table.'

The husband went on reading, lying propped up with the two pillows at the foot of the bed. 'Don't get wet,' he said."

The way reader assembles the images in a coherent narration (Clark, 106, 107) and the details implied in such a careful usage of language become much more crucial to the experience than the actual words put down on paper (Obendorf, 49). The bits of conversation in *The Cat in the Rain* suffice to give the impression of the prevailing mood in the room, as well as the probable state of the relationship of the married couple.

This theory of omission has been metaphorically compared to an iceberg, out of which 80% is hidden beneath the sea level and the observer witnesses only the top of it – just as the reader of a story sees only what is presented to him by the writer. Since the author bears the background pieces of information in mind whilst writing, these pieces should put out to the surface eventually and therefore implicitly complete the story and deepen its description to its entirety (Clark, 23). Unlike Hemingway’s journalistic apprenticeship, this qualifies as aesthetic rather than functional minimalism.

2.1.4 Other forms of minimalism

For the film-related subject matter of this thesis, it also seems justifiable to briefly mention the occurrence of minimalism in audio-visual media.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the French director Robert Bresson became one of the most profound minimalist directors with a long-lasting influence on his successors. Bresson avoided the usage of music unless essential for the narrative of his movies and made only a very sketchy use of the set and the costumes. He also made his (mainly non-professional) actors rehearse their parts over and over until the feeling of a mechanical, contrived performance was achieved. Anything superfluous or redundant for the plot or dialogues was omitted (Sklavounakis, “Minimalism in films”) and dramatic turnovers or revelations were replaced by subtle hints.

Through the deliberate and precise storytelling economy, lack of manifestations and repetitive approach, the minimalist filmmakers strived to amplify the intensity of the narration and the viewer’s experience (Bíró, “The Fullness of Minimalism”). Analogically to the minimalist literature, the minimalist movie strips its subject matter down to its essentials and smoothens it by working with only the few elements presented. It prioritizes an introspective into a simple human condition and heightens awareness to the everyday experience, while drawing attention to the details (Husseini, “10 Great Minimalist Films That Are Worth Your Time”).

The most famous example of the minimalist filmography would probably be Sidney Lumet’s *Twelve Angry Men* from 1957 with the whole plot largely taking place in one room and revolving around a jury arguing over the conviction or acquittal of a young man accused of

murder. The tenets of the minimalist filmography of course stretch beyond Bresson, Lumet and the 1960s – we can observe them even in films of the contemporary’s directors such as Aki Kaurismaki, Jim Jarmush, or many others.

2.2 The art of the movie translation

In the form of Teletext Subtitles or Close Captioning, the subtitles were first introduced to aid the television viewers suffering from various forms of hearing disabilities (Parkhill and Davey, 29). In these subtitles, even scenic notes like sound effects and music¹ are included. These intra-language aids gradually developed into the mode of translating movies for foreign audience as we know it today – and speaking on quantitative terms, creating subtitles is nowadays the mostly spread translational activity (Švelch, 13) and its role is undoubtedly indispensable. Popular movies have the power to get a certain message across to the mass audiences; and simultaneously its subtitles not only can enhance students’ reading skills, they also stimulate the vocabulary knowledge and lead to a better language literacy (Parkhill and Davey, 19).

Before the digital technologies, subtitling was rather expensive and onerous work. Cauterization of the texts to the 35mm reel copies for the subsequent cinemas screening was an irreversible process, so no later edits were possible (Švelch, 23). A certain role was played by the establishment of DVD, which contains a memory trace for the implementation of the digital subtitles (Švelch, 13). Nevertheless, the most crucial step ahead was marked by the spread of the internet across the globe. Sharing information became much simpler with it, and most of the information is of audio-visual nature. The digitalization irreversibly changed the systems of distributing movies, as well as the broad context of the translational work (Švelch, 13). The last century’s expansion of audio-visual media and its commercialization lead to the

¹ This applies mainly to diegetic music, rather than non-diegetic. Diegetic music is produced within the very scene for instance from a radio, and can be heard even by the characters of the movie. The characters tend to react to it in some way, therefore it is needed for the hard-of-hearing audience to know about the music’s presence. Non-diegetic music is added in the post-production and completes the atmosphere of the scene for the viewers, which is something that unfortunately cannot be substituted by subtitles (Bordwell and Thompson, “Film Art: An Introduction”).

efforts of presenting these to as big audience as possible. For the sake of the viewers with limited knowledge of the original language, movies and TV shows are getting sold to local distributors and afterwards submitted either to be re-dubbed or subtitled.

Movie subtitling is not a traditional translation simply divided into smaller chunks (Pošta, 157), but rather a standalone branch of the translation studies (Švelch, 13). In general, the main struggles of subtitling are found in striving to be economical, space-saving and elliptical. The practice is unique; it is dissimilar to the translation of literature and drama. By adding the human voice into the equation (Nornes, 29), a moving image medium represents reality more directly than literature (Huml, 1) and unlike in a live dramatic performance, the length of a character's line always remains the same.

The relationship of the original dialogue and its translation is further complicated by the fact that there are several forms of the default material – a screenplay, a list of dialogues, the actual movie itself, etc. Each of these may also appear in more versions; it is not unusual for a movie to have a theatre's cut and a director's cut, to slightly vary in different countries or to have a special edition when re-released (Švelch, 14).

A motion picture is the outcome of a major investment of money and time and energy of many people. Another countless people then consume the outcome and their experience is profoundly and directly influenced by the work of the translator. Even uninitiated viewers usually notice if there is something wrong with the subtitles and consequently feel distracted, even if they cannot specifically point out what the problem is.

Each translational and typographical decision therefore directly determines the foreign viewers' perception of a movie (Nornes, 17) One of the most important of these decisions is the implementation of the minimalist tendencies.

2.2.2 Technical aspects

The need for economical language when writing texts for a movie translation originates from many factors. The most prominent one is the application of the time and space restrictions, without which the viewers would not be able to read a subtitle. The character's utterances are segmented by the natural breaks in speech as well as the movie's cuts, which mark the borders

of the subtitle. The brevity of the translation is based on the physical space of the frame and the temporal length of the utterance (Nornes, 20).

Analogically to the quantitative prosody of poetry, the subtitle is limited by the number of symbols per a line. The amount of 30 to 37 symbols is usually acknowledged, and the number of lines should not exceed two symmetrical ones, with the first one ideally being shorter to compose the pyramid-like shape (Pošta, 43). It is a matter of functional aesthetics; the goal is to minimize the distance that the viewers' eyes must surpass – if too long, the reading would exorbitantly exhaust them and keep them from observing the scene. Outlining the subtitles is a rather complicated task, especially in case of the movies abounding with plethora of long and complicated dialogues.

Picture no. 5: *Casino Royale*, 01:55:39
- the pyramid-like shape of the subtitles



The duration of a subtitle's delineation on the screen is influenced not only by the source dialogue and the actual length of the character's utterance, but also by the viewer's optimal reading speed (Pošta, 46). Its value is highly subjective and therefore very difficult to be precisely quantified, so the translators do not agree unanimously on it. The generally accepted value is 17 symbols per a second. Should the number of symbols be notably higher, the subtitle would be shown excessively and disturbingly long; should it be smaller, the viewer would not be able to read the subtitle in time (Pošta, 67).

2.2.3 Distracting the viewers

Creating the subtitles is further complicated by the fact that their reading operates within the relationship with other semiotic systems (Švelch, 20). While comprehending a film, the viewer cognitively processes and connects the stream of auditory and visual stimuli to an image resembling perception of the real life (Lavour and Bairstov, 455). To do so, the viewers have to pay attention to the narrative while constructing the mental model of an event and keeping it in their working memory. These coherent models are then integrated with perceptions of the sensory channels and linked together to a single unity, which is necessary to understand the images of the movie as they occur (Lee and Roskos and Ewoldsen, 412, 414).

Apparently, the viewers in the subtitle condition devote more of their attention memory to generate these bridging inferences and comprehend a scene with a foreign language dialogue. The mental model is a complicated matter. As the story progresses, the viewer's overall comprehension of the film revolves around integrating the ongoing visual and auditory pieces of information, remembering the previous ones, and trying to figure out what shall happen next (Lee and Roskos and Ewoldsen, 413). However, when the attention is taxed by the aim to understand the information contained within the subtitles, this comprehension becomes much more difficult (Lee and Roskos and Ewoldsen, 435). The viewers apprehend a statement included within linguistic information through the auditory stimuli² and simultaneously through the medium of the written text (Lavour and Bairstov, 456). This is apt to burden the attention memory more than a dubbed version, which inevitably causes switching between the visual information and the subtitles in order to understand what is happening on the screen (Lee and Roskos and Ewoldsen, 415).

Of course, if the subtitles are done correctly and precisely, they sort off merge with the visual and auditory perception of the movie and the viewers consume them as a self-evident accompanying circumstance. According to some authors, good subtitles are those that the viewers never notice (Pedersen 22). However, as described above, the painstaking perception of a movie is an uneasy task for the cognitive processing even with no subtitles, so with the

² Thus the viewers are employing the ability of deciphering other people's utterances, participating in a conversation or understanding on overheard one.

addition of reading a certain amount of information may be lost. Because of the detrimental effect it exerts (Lavour and Bairstov, 456), the film's sense of mimesis becomes a bit muddled (Nornes, 17).

The studies observing the viewers' eye movement patterns had discovered the switch between the screen and the subtitles is sufficiently swift, but the tax on the attention-memory remains profound (Lee and Roskos and Ewoldsen, 415). This applies unexceptionally for all the viewers. Indeed, those who do not speak the original language rely on the translation more heavily, for it is vital for their overall comprehension (Lavour and Bairstov, 461); nevertheless, even the native speakers confirmed that an automatic reading behaviour generally occurs when the subtitles are present (Lavour and Bairstov, 457).

2.3 Minimalism in subtitling

Although the externality of reading subtitles is a certain degree of distraction, paradoxically the viewer's suggestive interaction with the *mise-en-scène*³ may simplify the whole matter.

A shared feature of reading books and watching a subtitled movie is the emphasis on the use of imagery. Many low-progress readers have trouble with conjuring up images in their mind whilst reading a book, but the continuous exposure to the images of audio-visual media provides them with enough visual representation when reading the subtitles (Parkhill and Davey, 29). The translation of a movie is completed by the corresponding visual and vice versa.

When comprehending a film and reacting to the story on the screen, it passes its message to us via sensory codes. These contain: (1) language codes, such as the actor's dialect or tone of their voice, which give us a clue about the character's background and state of mind; (2) extra-language codes like music or sound effects; (3) the visual codes, which enable us not to simply observe, but also interpret the perceived images; and finally (4) the cultural codes, which include perception of the costumes, the set, etc. In addition to these, the seemingly

³ i.e. everything that appears before the camera, its arrangement, composition, lighting, sets, props, actors, costumes etc. (Bordwell and Thompson, "Film Art: An Introduction")

incidental factors like the length of the shot, distance of the camera or the used angles are part of the movie's complex narration (MacFarlane, "Reading Film and Literature").

Despite the taxed distribution it causes, the multimodal perceptions of the visual and auditory information in the background may implicitly complete the translation. The activities of reading, hearing, and seeing should work together in harmony (Nornes, 18). Similarly as in drama, the movie dialogues are a form of the verbal act. A significant role is played not only by the content of the utterance, but also by the very diction, physical behaviour of the character, their mimics, performance, looks and body language. The mimetic and diegetic aspect mutually complete each other and together they create the unity of dialogue. The idea is that the viewer's distraction may be minimized if the subtitles are minimalistic enough to work in symbiosis with its visual context.

While in the literary theory that Hemingway practised most of the iceberg was hidden under the water, a movie represents the background information more directly. It is unnecessary to mechanically translate every single word of the character's utterance; then the subtitle is read more quickly, more of the visual context is absorbed and the two aspects consequently complete each other. Thus, it is desirable to condense the verbal material. As Levý writes (180):

"A written text only approximately indicates the phonetical qualities of the speech. It is not able to capture the so-called supra-segmental prosodic qualities, such as mainly tempo and intonation, if not given away by syntax etc."

Employing several dramatic conventions in their work, the actor is instructed by the movie's director. The emotion of their character's utterance is therefore included within the performance and its minimalist translation may significantly differ from the literal one. It may be argued whether it is essential to capture interjections, greetings, thanks, some onomatopoeic words and similar universalities which are understandable by the general audience. Generally, it could be said that the attention given to subtitles is proportionate to the viewer's language skills, so it is crucial to carefully consider what the target group of the

translation is. The line that the translator should not cross is narrowing the subtitles into some form of simple aid for the language-speaking audience (Pošta, 17). The most practical and logical solution undoubtedly is not to rely on the viewer's ability to understand; nevertheless, if the speed of the dialogue is rapid, it is suitable to omit similar chunks from the translation. When deciding whether to omit such a chunk or not, Levý (128, 129) also points out considering its position in the whole utterance, and whether it stands in isolation or whether it is a crucial element of the whole formulation. At the same time, he emphasises that unconditional cling to these chunks tends to lead to an albeit truthful, but also servile and meticulously unartistic translations. This is basically the need to choose from the two basic translational patterns outlined by Cicero 2000 years ago: sense for sense vs. word for word (Nornes, 25).

When making the subtitles, both of these patterns should intertwine. While reading the subtitle should not last longer than the character's line nor be shorter than it, more importantly it must convey its meaning and content. However, even if otherwise correct, the naturalist way of translation⁴ should not be used for audio-visual media. The translators' task is not to create a mere reproduction of the original. They also need to recreate the original's elements, structure, words and ideas to the correspondingly functional, suitable and efficient equivalents as appearing in the target language (Levý, 14).

Even if the subtitles are formally and grammatically correct, they feel sort of computer-generated if no creative invention is thrown to the mix. In contrast to scholarly works, manuals or technical texts, creating the subtitles to a motion picture should above all be a creative process, since not only denotations, but also connotations play a major part in it (Knittlová, 6). The stylistics and the expressivity of the form influence the recipient's final experience and therefore must fully correspond to what is happening on the screen.

This leads to the aesthetic and linguistic factors influencing the need for minimalism when making the subtitles. The previous part of this thesis described how minimalism manifests itself in different spheres of art. Similarly as in the minimalist paintings, sculptures, music, movies, and mainly the literature, the subtitles should strive to give away as much as possible on the smallest space possible.

⁴ This means of translation reproduces the original literally and colourlessly.

There are some fundamental rules that subtitling shares with the average translational practice. Understandably, the translator's excellent knowledge of the original language is necessary, and they must also possess faultless grammar skills and a wide range of vocabulary in terms of the target language. It is also undoubtedly crucial for them to understand the subject matter and precise content of the original material (Levý, 17) – the translation carries and transforms the captured meaning into another language's framework, which usually imposes different discursive relations and constructs the reality in a different way (Nornes, 19). Since each language is a unique system, it is essential for the translator to be acquainted with this to be able to transfer the utterances between them adroitly and thus find the most suitable version of the translated utterance.

Translator's work is to understand the original, interpret it and aesthetically re-stylize it (Levý, 53). Subtitling, however, adds one more step: ensuring that the subtitle is as concise as possible, yet without interfering with the transactional function of the translated utterance by altering its meaning or changing its register and style. This is an intersection of the functional and aesthetical minimalism, which can be quite a troublesome task to maintain. As seen in the examples from other forms of minimalist art, the longer forms of expression are usually easier to come by, while the short forms must be sought carefully.

3. The practical part

The practical part of this thesis analyses six chosen dialogues from the movies *Casino Royale*, *22 Jump Street*, *Death Becomes Her*, and the TV show *The Big Bang Theory*. The information about the movies has been picked from the Czech movie database, as found on the website www.ČSFD.cz.

Since the presented analysis compares the suggested minimalist version with the subtitles downloaded from the internet, some background information of the authorship of these subtitles should be outlined:

With the aforementioned burgeoning of digital technologies and the online sharing of media content, the number of non-professional home-working translators has significantly arisen. An unprecedented number of people enters this branch of translation, as they are motivated by the potential to have their work downloaded by countless internet users. These enthusiasts create subtitles mostly in their free time as a hobby, for no (or very little) financial profit, they often learn throughout the process and tend to be in a rush.⁵ The non-professional translators also tend to lack the dialogue list; however it tends to be adequately substituted by the intra-language Close Captioning for the hard-of-hearing audience, which they often download and re-write (Švelch, 21). Due to this, the standard subtitling norms still reflect in the outcome of their work (Švelch, 48). The resulting texts are therefore certainly shaped by the professional norms of subtitling, but the emphasis is put on different priorities. Thus, the content these users generate hardly ever meets all the technical and linguistic factors described in the theoretical part.

3.1 Methodology

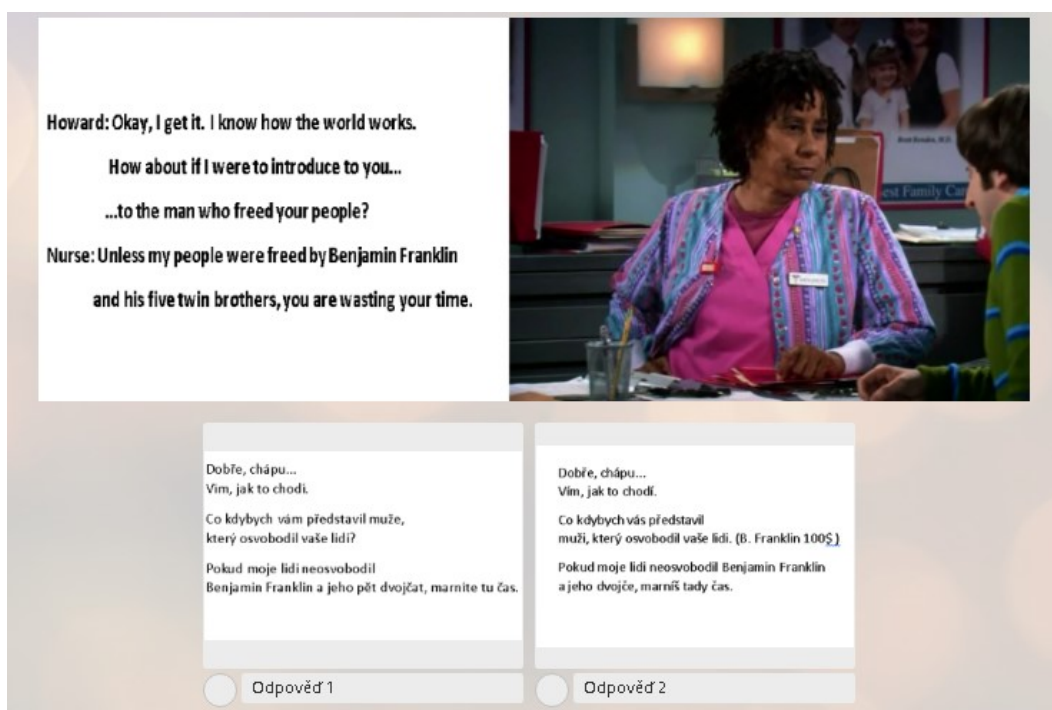
The subtitle comparison presented in the charts and the following comments are by no means meant to derogatorily claim which solution is better or to tarnish the downloaded subtitles or its translators; rather to argue in favour of the minimalist tendencies and the benefits arising from their usage.

⁵ The speed of delivering the translation to the audience is considered to be one of the highest values of the amateur subtitling, since it offers a chance to watch a content ahead of the official distribution

The presented number of the spared seconds in the minimalist solution was counted via dividing the number of saved symbols by the average value of the optimal reading speed⁶. This number contains spaces, for the viewer's eye is slowed down even by those. The assumption is that the viewer can use this spared time to comprehend the visual context of the subtitles, and the whole perception of the scene therefore becomes more completed.

To be objective, the two versions of the subtitles were bestowed via an online query upon 100 responders and shared via social media to the community of the translational portal *www.VideaČesky.cz*, which focuses on forwarding chosen *YouTube* videos with added subtitles to a broader Czech audience.

Picture no. 6: Example of the survey's question



Few of the respondents' verbal comments are chosen in each case to illustrate the collected opinions. They are translated from the original Czech to English as exactly as possible, with no adjusting or alternations, except one – in the survey questions, the order of the translation versions had sometimes been switched so that the respondents would not have noticed any shared pattern in them. In the comments presented here, “the first version,” always stands for

⁶ 17 letters per a second.

the user generated translation and “the second version” stands for the minimalist solution (just as presented in the charts).

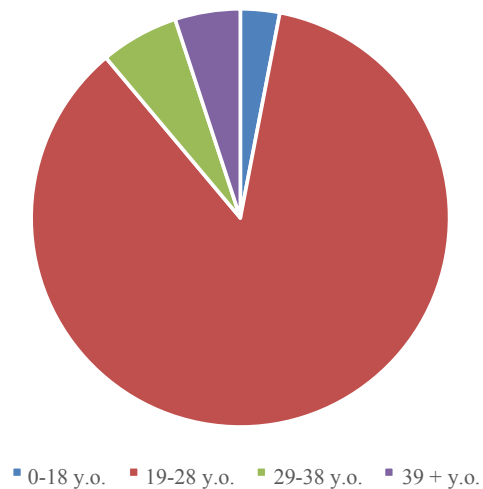
Picture no. 7: Example of the verbal comments collected from the respondents

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimalizace počtu slov/znaků při zachování obsahu • malý prostor k dovysvětlení kulturně-politických souvislostí • braní v potaz rychlost čtení 	<p>Fráze a hovorové výrazy - ty se v tištěných médiích tolik neobjevují</p>	<p>Překlad by měl sedět jak co do významu, tak i co do kontextu situace. Ne vždycky je nutné překládat vše doslova, pokládám za důležité titulkem postihnout i atmosféru dané scény. Titulky musí sedět časově, abych je jako divák byla schopna přečíst a zároveň sledovat děj.</p>	<p>Například některé narážky, které jsou typické jen pro angličtinu a jsou spojené s nějakým předmětem, který se právě na obrazovce objeví.</p>
<p>Široká cílová skupina (problém s kulturními referencemi); u osob, které nejsou v aj zběhlé náročně sledovat text i obrazový děj.</p>	<p>Překlad musí být stručný, aby se do titulků vešel.</p>	<p>Zcela určitě ano, poněvadž během takového překladu, překladatel musí dbat na to, aby zvolena slova v překladu byly nejen fakticky přesné, ale také aby odpovídali kontextově, citově, situačně ale také i dle neverbalní komunikace mluvčích na AV záznamu.</p>	<p>Rozdíl oproti simultánnímu tlumočení je jasný - máš na to čas. Oproti překladu literatury je největší rozdíl asi v tom, že věci jako kulturní reference nemáš šanci vysvětlit v poznámce pod čarou, zároveň je problém převést je přímo do kontextu kultury, pro kterou překládáš (kvůli suspension of disbelief) a přímý překlad taky sednout nemusí. To jsou problémy, které se řeší ve všech typech překladů, u titulků se ale musíš vejít do desíty slov.</p>
<p>Většinou se překladatel musí vyrovnat s nepřeložitelnými vtipy (v literatuře k nim ale nemá obrazový materiál, tak to může zahrát někam, kde to čtenář pochopí). Ve filmu/seriálu je to mnohem těžší, když to musí korespondovat se situací na obrazovce.</p>	<p>Je určitě těžké načasovat titulky tak, aby na obraze odpovídaly zvuku, aby se včas přepínaly apod.</p>	<p>Ne rozdíl oproti simultánnímu tlumočení, ale</p>	
	<p>Reálie, idiomy, vtipy</p>		
	<p>Překladatel by měl více přemýšlet o formě, aby to přeložil správně ve vhodném kontextu a stylu a aby titulky nebyly moc rozsáhlé.</p>		
	<p>Překladatel by měl více přemýšlet o formě, aby to přeložil správně ve vhodném kontextu a stylu a aby titulky nebyly moc rozsáhlé.</p>		

3.2 The survey results

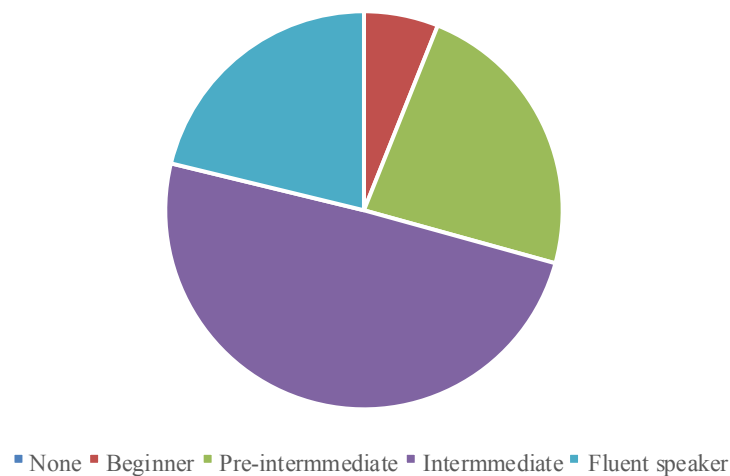
A predominant majority of the respondents – 85.9% - turned out to be 18–28 years old. There were only three younger participants and eleven older ones.

Graph no. 1 Age of the respondents



49 of them evaluates their English language skills as “intermediate,” 23 see themselves as “pre-intermediate,” and 21 of them consider themselves to be a “fluent speaker.”

Graph no. 2 The respondents' English level self-evaluation



30.3% of this sample downloads the subtitles for the audio-visual media “frequently,” 21.2% “very frequently” and 29.3% do so “sometimes.” There were just five respondents who claim to “never” have searched for subtitles.

Only minority of the respondents who do download the subtitles tends to be “disappointed” with them, by contraries 38.8% feel to be “quite satisfied.” 22% are “neutral” about them. 16.3% are “completely satisfied.”

Also, 64 of the viewers “never” or “rarely” manage to read a subtitle in time. One respondent experiences this “very frequently,” five of them has to deal with this “frequently” and the rest only “sometimes.”

This suggests that overall apprehension of the Czech user-generated subtitles is fairly positive and sufficient for the average viewing experience of younger people with intermediate English skills. Yet, there is some space for improvement; and indeed, in the verbal evaluation of the individual translations, most of the respondents tends to be able to point out the eventual inaccuracies. With most of the distributed movies originating from the Hollywood production and with English being a global number one lingua franca, the viewers seemingly are indeed capable of pointing out the alleged mistakes, inaccuracies and wrongly chosen expression nuances; they feel distracted by them.

Also, regarding the question: “Do you think that translating the audio-visual media presents specific difficulties, which it does not share with translating literature, a spoken word etc.?” 61.6% of the sample answered “yes.” Only 7.1% answered “no” and the rest chose the option that they “do not know.” Many of those who suspects that some differences exist indirectly describe them via the minimalist principles this thesis deals with. This implies that the viewers do somehow inadvertently apprehend the need of minimalism in subtitling, they just designate the issue slightly differently. The message remains analogical and is repeated throughout the comments. Out of forty comments, five were chosen to illustrate the opinions. One of them even actually employs the word “minimalization” in it:

“minimalization of the number of words/symbols while preserving the content; confined space to explain the cultural and political contexts; keeping in mind the reading pace”

“A wide target audience (the problem with the cultural references); the viewers with low language skills may have some difficulties with simultaneous perception of the text and visual plot respectively”

“Just as in literature, it is sometimes difficult to precisely capture some hidden meanings, connotations and wordplay. Unlike in literature, the translator must deal with the situational humour often employed by movies or TV shows.”

“It must be translated concisely, yet with no long sentences, so it was possible to be read in time”

“As for the subtitling, the main issue is probably the abridgement (and timing generally), also the transformation of the spoken language into the written one (syntactic and stylistic differences), and it is important to count with the fact that screenplay contains some sounds that are not fitting to be translated (and mainly the amateur translators forget this a lot). The dubbing translation is even more sensitive in terms of timing, but the problems regarding the transformation into the written form disappear.”

“The brevity of subtitles – the viewer must be able to read them in time, so the text can’t be too broad, and yet it must fit the visual. The viewer should have the chance to read the subtitles and watch the movie. Also if some equivocality or culturally specific phrase is used, it is often somehow tied to the visual, so it’s more difficult for the subtitle translator to deal with this and present it to the viewer than it is for the literature translator.”

3.3 Example no.1: *Casino Royale*

(Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Columbia Pictures, 2006)

The movie, partly shot in Prague and Karlovy Vary and released in 2006, marks the 21st addition to the James Bond series and also the first appearance of the British actor Daniel Craig in the titular role. Directed by Martin Campbell, *Casino Royale* portrays the events described in the original Ian Fleming’s book and follows the beginnings of Bond’s career in the MI6, the British spy intelligence service.

The original language is British English. The subtitles were downloaded on the 10th March 2017 from the server *www.titulky.com*, where it had been uploaded by the user “*gimli61*.” At the time, they have been downloaded 4 337 times.

Scene: 00:21:26 – 00:21:52 of the screening time

Context: During one of his first missions, Bond pursues a bomb maker to his country’s embassy. Having no other resort, he shoots him in front of the cameras and blows up the building, which, of course, triggers an international scandal.

The following monologue is delivered by M, the head of the MI6, as portrayed by Judi Dench. After she had to deal with Bonds irresponsible actions in front of the committee in London, she is complaining to her subordinate:

Picture no. 8: Visual context – *Casino Royale*

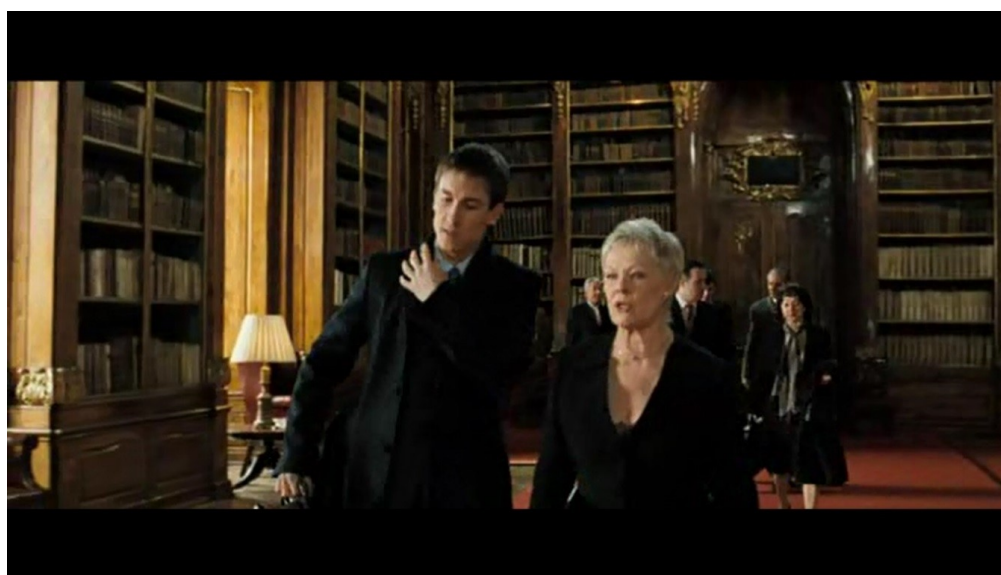


Chart no. 1: *Casino Royale*

Original dialogue:	<i>gimli61</i>'s Subtitles:	Number of symbols:	Minimalist solution:	Number of symbols:
<i>Who the hell do they think they are?</i>	Co si o sobě sakra myslí?	25	Co si o sobě sakra myslí?	25

<i>I report to the Prime Minister, and even he's smart enough...</i>	Musela jsem dát hlášení premiérovi, i když ten je dost chytrý	60	Já se zodpovídám premiérovi, a i ten má dost rozumu,	52
<i>...not to ask me what we do.</i>	aby se nevyptával na to, co děláme.	35	aby se nevyptával, co děláme.	29
<i>Have you ever seen such a bunch of self-righteous, arse-covering prigs?</i>	Už jsi někdy viděl tolik ješitných a zbabělých snobů?	52	Taková banda povýšených alibistů...	33
<i>They don't care what we do, they care what we get caught photographed doing.</i>	Nezajímá je, co děláme, ale při čem nás přichytí fotografové.	60	Nezajímá je, co děláme, ale při čem nás kdo vyfotí.	51
<i>And how the hell could Bond be so stupid?</i>	Jak to mohl Bond takhle zpackat?	32	Jak to mohl Bond takhle zpackat?	32
<i>I give him the double-0 status, he celebrates by shooting an embassy.</i>	Dala jsem mu dvě nuly a on to oslavil střelbou na ambasádě.	58	Dostane status dvou nul, a on si vystřelí ambasádu.	51
<i>Is the man deranged?</i>	Má všech pět pohromadě?	23	Zešílel snad?	13
<i>And where the hell is he?</i>	A kde teď sakra je?	19	A kde ksakru je?	16

<i>In the old days, when agent did something that embarrassing,...</i>	Když dřív agent provedl něco takového	37	Dřív, když agent provedl něco takového,	39
<i>...he'd have the good sense to defect.</i>	tak potom raději přeběhnul na druhou stranu.	43	měl alespoň dost slušnosti, aby přeběhl.	40
<i>Christ, I miss the Cold War.</i>	Bože, jak mi chybí studená válka...	35	Zlatá studená válka...	22
	Total:	479	Total:	403

Commentary: From the minimalistic point of view, the very first sentence needs no alternation; the formulation is correct.

As for the second utterance though, the literal translation of the word “*report*” as “*dávat hlášení*” along with the unfitting subjunctive “*i když*” raises the number of letters unnecessarily, as well as the usage of prepositions “*na to*” in the following sentence, which can easily be omitted and the whole formulation becomes more condensed with no loss of meaning.

An interesting situation comes with the following sentence: „*Have you ever seen such a bunch of self-righteous, arse-covering prigs?*” M asks the question in a frustrated manner and the adjective “*self-righteous*” is spitted out ironically. The two words used in *gimli61*’s translation, “*ješitný*” and “*snob*,” in this case more or less intertwine. Therefore, they may be merged together in the word “*povýšených*,” which expresses the character’s opinion on much lesser space. The idea of the committee shielding themselves with righteousness, while in fact merely trying to cover their own backs and get rid of the responsibility, is expressed via the word “*alibistů*.” The reason of calling the committee so is further explained in the following: “*Nezajímá je, co děláme, ale při čem nás kdo vyfotí*” The irony of the exclamation also remains in the utterance through describing the committee as “*banda*.” Also, addressing the subordinate agent by *gimli61*’s “*už jsi někdy viděl*” may be left out with no change of the

context or the meaning, as it is clear for the viewer that since he is walking behind M and reacting to her complaints, she must be talking to him.

In the translation of “*he celebrates by shooting an embassy,*” *gimli61* employs the word for word translation pattern. In the minimalist solution, the idea of Bond performing a reckless act right after his promotion as the “00 rank” agent is kept by the Czech pronoun “*si*” in the collocation “*si vystřelil*” – and so the notion of Bond’s sudden whim to perform such an irresponsible action is preserved on a lesser space. It is not needed to dwell on the “*celebration*” part exceedingly. The pure word-for-word translation would emphasize the materiality of language without carrying the essential meaning hidden behind the letters (Nornes, 25). The translator should reach behind it and ferret out the concepts and ideas that are ought to be transported to its closest equivalent in the target language.

As for the following two questions about Bond (“*Is the man deranged? And where the hell is he?*”), the synonymic, yet shorter formulation were used in the minimalist solution.

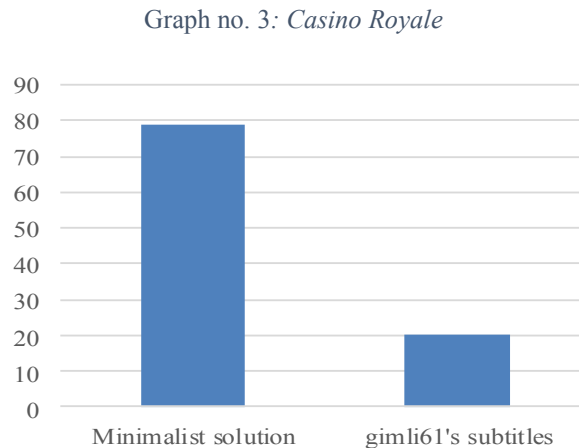
In *gimli61*’s translation of “*...he’d have the good sense to defect*” as “*tak potom raději přeběhnul na druhou stranu,*” the M’s pointing sarcasm depicted in the original “*good sense*” vanishes from the utterance. While being shorter of three letters, the minimalist “*měl alespoň dost slušnosti, aby přeběhl*” keeps it.

Translation of the last piece of the monologue has the potential to take advantage of the viewers’ comprehending of the mimetic context of the scene. The sight of the huffing M as quickly walking through a hall provides the viewer with the sight of the part of the iceberg that would remain hidden in the minimalist literature. The utterance “*Christ, I miss the Cold War*” with no further context could be understood literally, and then *gimli61*’s “*Bože, jak mi chybí studená válka...*” would be an absolutely correct translation. Yet, since we hear M being angry about the conditions she has to deal with and we know that the whole monologue is marked by the speaker’s infuriation, we can translate her ironic sigh, seemingly expressing how she misses the simpler and more straightforward times of the Cold War, as much shorter and frustrated: „*Zlatá studená válka.*”

In this case, the minimalist solution saved 76 letters, which is a considerable number in a 26 seconds long scene. It allows the viewers to save roughly 4.5 seconds of reading, which they

can spend on concentrating on Judi Dench’s mimetic bearing and her delivery of the biting monologue.

Survey results: Out of the 100 respondents who were asked to choose the version of the subtitles which they deem more suitably or naturally translated, 79.8% chose the minimalist solution.



When asked to shortly comment on the reasons for their choice, the participants for example wrote:

“The syntax of the first version is extremely complicated, that’s not how the people talk. This is something that really drives me crazy in subtitles!”

“I’d probably choose a combination of both translations – the first one is very literal, although ‘hlášení premiérovi’ fits into an average conversation more than ‘zodpovídat’ from the second one – which is much more likeable for me, as it is more similar to an average upset talk in which more condensed sentences are chosen. That’s why I choose the second version.”

“The second version is much more precisely and intelligibly translated. The first version is too literal, there are some mistakes and it doesn’t sound very natural. A Czech speaking person would never talk like this.”

“The second translation is much more dynamic, which fits more to the character of the scene. The first translation is too punctilious, it contains excessively long words and collocations.”

“The first one is unnecessarily literal, there are no ellipses and language adaptations, so I choose the second version.”

“The second one fits the Czech speech better, the first one tries too much to correspond with the English and it is not appropriate. A movie is not a book, so it doesn’t have to try so hard to preserve the form of the translation.”

“I chose the first version, but it was problematical – more like 50/50. Both version have better and worse translations.”

“The subtitles are sharper and they more correspond with the original text, they don’t clutter it unnecessarily, so the subtitles shouldn’t be too quick.”

This suggests that the more condensed minimalist version appeals to the viewers more, yet some of the formulations may be subjectively more likeable when stretched a bit. Perhaps the sense-for-sense translation sounds too loose to some of the viewers. This only shows the onerousness of finding fitting, yet truly concise minimalist equivalents in the target language.

3.4 Example no. 2: 22 Jump Street

(Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Columbia Pictures, 2014)

22 Jump Street, directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, is the sequel to the 2012 film *21 Jump Street*, based on the TV series of the same name. The American actors Jonah Hill and Channing Tatum are producing the movie, as well as starring in the main roles of policemen Schmidt and Jenko respectively.

The film is a light-hearted criminal buddy-comedy, with the two main characters experiencing grotesque and incredible situations during their service. The two protagonists speak American English and talk to each other mainly informally.

The subtitles have been downloaded on the 11th March 2017 from www.titulky.com, where it had been uploaded by the user “*krasnyprinc90*.” At the time, the subtitles have been downloaded 28 837 times.

The scene: 01:36:05 - 01:36:21 of the screening time

Context: Throughout the film, Schmidt frequently tries to be helpful to his more successful colleague Jenko in miscellaneous ways, yet often it ends in a disaster.

This short verbal exchange takes place towards the end of the movie, just after Schmidt has tried to throw himself in front of the bullet that had been shot at Jenko by a criminal. He fails however by being too slow, and the bullet hits Jenko to the shoulder. Jenko hands over his gun to Schmidt as he tries to stop the bleeding, and this conversation takes place:

Picture no. 9: Visual context – 22 *Jump Street*



Chart no. 2: 22 *Jump Street*

Original dialogue:	<i>krasnyprinc90's</i> subtitles:	Number of symbols:	Minimalist solution:	Number of symbols:
Jenko: <i>Here, take this. Okay.</i> Schmidt: <i>I tried to take a bullet for you, man.</i>	- Vezmi si tohle. - Chtěl jsem za tebe chytit kulku.	51	- Vem si to. - Chtěl jsem to koupit místo tebe.	47

Jenko : Yeah. But you didn't. Schmidt: But I tried. It's the thought that matters.	- Ale nechtyl. - Ale chtěl jsem. Důležitý je ten úmysl.	55	- No, snaha byla. - Ale snaha se taky počítá!	46
Jenko: No, it's not the thought that counts. It's taking the fucking bullet.	Ne. Důležitý není úmysl, ale chycení té posrané kulky.	52	Ne, počítá se, koho ta zasraná kulka trefila.	45
Jenko: Cover me. I'm gonna go long. Schmidt: Okay.	- Kryj mě. Půjdu tam sám. - Dobře.	33	- Kryj mě, jdu tam. - Dobře.	28
	Total :	191	Total :	166

Commentary: As for this case, the minimalist version saved 25 symbols, which means 1.47 seconds spared in a 15-second-long scene.

In the first verbal exchange, we can see usage of the contracted form of the Czech demonstrative pronoun “to” instead of the longer “tohle.” Furthermore, as Schmidt and Jenko are young and frequently utilizing informal discourse and vulgar words, it seems believable that Schmidt would say the colloquial “*koupil jsem to*” in the sense of getting hit by a bullet.

In the original dialogue, we can see that Jenko bitterly repeats and slightly alters Schmidt’s: “*It’s the thought that matters*” by disagreeing with: “*No, it’s not the thought that counts.*” To transform the altered repetition into Czech and at the same time not to use excessively long wording, the concise Czech phrases “*snaha byla*” and “*snaha se taky počítá*” are used as translations of the preceding utterances “*Yeah, but you didn’t*” and “*it’s the thought that matters*” instead of the word for word pattern of *krasnyprinc90*.

One specifically tricky part of the subtitling translation can be nicely illustrated through the sentence: “*It’s taking the fucking bullet,*” which contains the strong vulgarity. Excluding the

genres employing improvisation, the movie dialogues usually do not absolutely correspond with the actual everyday speech; their prior preparation via screenplays creates a gap between actual discourse and a prescribed line. Even if subtitles mirrored the on-screen characters' oration with categoric precision, they would not be reminiscent of the accurate conscription of an authentic discourse, such as written down for instance at a court.

Contrastively, when dealing with both norms of written and spoken language, the custom to employ standardized forms in the written texts repeatedly tempts the translator to use relatively incongruous collocations, like the combinations of invectives with the literary forms of adjectives. It is true that the standardized forms of the Czech adjectives usually tend to be shorter than the colloquial ones - see "*krásnej*" and "*krásný*" - but there are many reasons why it is advisable not to use them in subtitles. The Czech standardized codified form and the actual discourse assuredly differ considerably, and in subtitling it is desired to consider the lexical style of the speaking character (Pošta, 35), which is determined by several factors - the momentary situation in which the character finds themselves at the moment, the social background they have arisen from, etc. Even with very little context, the formality of the target language should be clear enough to avoid such unnatural collocations.

For these reasons, in an action scene it is highly unlikely for a policeman to use a standardized form of an adjective, such as in *krasnyprinc90*'s: "*Důležitý není úmysl, ale chyčení té posrané kulky.*"

The line sounds somehow unnatural and does not fit the scene or the character of Jenko, who has just been shot into the shoulder. The minimalist subtitles are indeed meant to be short, but they cannot interfere with style and lexis, therefore this kind of translation does not feel correct.⁷ A translator should not care only about the formal proprieties, but also about the subtle transformation of the utterances to the target language. Besides the correct uses of the resulting phrases or idioms, the accurate degree of formality is also notable. Should it sound unnatural or forced in the particular context, the conversion of spoken word into written text also entails a partial deliverance from the codified standards of the language.

⁷ To present another case in point, compare two collocations including masculinum, in which the issue is more apparent: "*ty hnusný všiváku*" and "*ty hnusnej všiváku.*" the first formulation is shorter by one symbol, but the discourse is not natural.

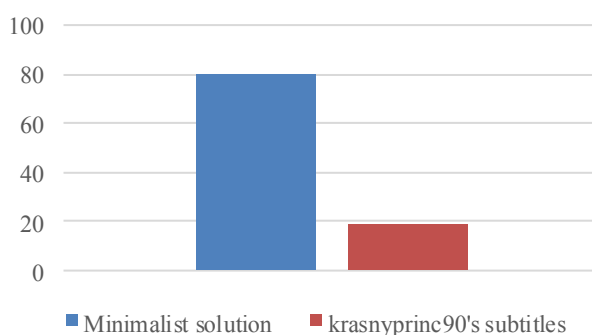
A corresponding issue is the translators' tendency of softening a vulgarity with a less harsh expression similar in meaning, for its most faithful target language equivalent might appeal too strong if written down. Perception of these language devices is individual and regarded very subjectively by each receiver. In here a crucial role is played by the different degrees in the apprehension of expressivity in different tongues and cultures. Generally, expressivity belongs among the basic communication rules, without which it would be almost impossible to give away the emotions and only pure facts would be passed on via language (Křivohlavý, 92).

According to Levý (132), the universal standard is that if the translator softens the vulgarism in one place, they should add the expressivity somewhere else, and by doing so to keep the overall nature of the discourse on the same level. He adds that the process of translation is then understood as an act of decision of which of the possible variants to pick; an important factor here is the structure of the translator's linguistic memory, idiolect and personal preferences.

Speaking of audio-visual media, the parental rating should also be considered. If a movie contains graphic scenes, violence and similar elements, then translating the vulgarisms with its softer counterparts would seem as unfitting. The truth is that the Czech language is especially rich in this linguistic area. The creative role of a translator is the greatest when many possibilities abound (Levý, 80), so the challenge is to create a subtitle which fits the original's expressivity, emotionality and stylistics while being brief, creative and formally correct.

Survey results: 80.8% of the respondents identify themselves more with the minimalist solution.

Graph no. 4: 22 *Jump Street*



“The formulation of the second translation is once again more natural and brief, the dialogue is fluent and makes sense.”

“Two friends wouldn’t talk like in the first version, but the second one also isn’t optimal.”

“The second version seems like a better choice from the statistic point of view, it keeps the tone of the speech where it should be. The first one is too unnatural. Short and legible are both of them.”

“The sentence ‘chtěl jsem za tebe chytit kulku’ makes absolutely no sense in Czech. Another thing is that in such an extreme situation they would hardly be so polite – the formulations like ‘vezmi...’”

“The second version is again better in terms of translation, as it is not literal (chytit kulku), but uses our Czech phrasemes (koupit to), which ‘fits’ the utterances more; the first version uses short sentences, sounds unnatural, so I choose the second one, which also handled the syntactic aspect better.”

“I’m bothered with combining the vulgar expressions with the literary suffix in the first example. Either one, or the other.”

“It’s important to maintain a certain atmosphere here. The policemen or generally people of some profession frequently employ some form of slang, or at least colloquialisms which include shorter and sharper expressions. They shouldn’t sound like some white collars.”

This should prove that the translation which is shorter does not automatically mean better. The necessity to capture the accurate style and expressivity in the target language’s minimalist equivalent is something striking and obviously important for the viewers.

3.5 Example no. 3: *The Big Bang Theory*

(2007 - ongoing, Chuck Lorre Productions, Warner Bros. Television)

The Big Bang Theory is an American comedy TV show revolving around everyday lives and social awkwardness of four scientists who work at the Los Angeles university of Caltech.

The young group of friends talks to each other fairly informally, even colloquially at times, but due to their education the discourse sometimes takes a more formal turn – it accords to the momentary settings and situation.

The following translation of the show’s 16th episode of the 1st season, called *The Peanut Reaction*; they have been downloaded on the 12th of March from *www.titulky.com*, where it had been uploaded by the user “*Pilot2*.” At the time, the subtitles have been downloaded 4999 times.

The scene: 00:14:11 - 01:14:28 of the screening time

Context: One of the main characters, Howard, has an unusual request in a hospital, but the nurse repeatedly refuses to meet his wishes. In an attempt to persuade her, Howards pulls out a bill of his wallet, displays it to her and tries to bribe her with it.

Picture no. 10: Visual context – *The Big Bang Theory* no.1



Chart no. 3: *The Big Bang Theory* no.1

Original dialogue:	<i>Pilot2</i>'s translation:	Number of symbols:	Minimalist solution:	Number of symbols:
Howard: <i>Okay, I get it. I know how the world works.</i>	Dobře, chápu... Vím, jak to chodí.	33	Dobře, chápu... Vím, jak to chodí.	33

<i>How about if I were to introduce to you...</i>	Co kdybych vás představil	25	Co kdybych vám představil muže,	31
<i>...to the man who freed your people?</i>	muži, který osvobodil vaše lidi. (B. Franklin 100\$)	52	který osvobodil vaše lidi?	26
<i>Nurse: Unless my people were freed by Benjamin Franklin and his five twin brothers, you are wasting your time.</i>	Pokud moje lidi neosvobodil Benjamin Franklin a jeho dvojče, marníš tady čas.	76	Pokud moje lidi neosvobodil Benjamin Franklin a jeho pět dvojčat, marníte tu čas.	82
	Total:	186	Total:	172

This example was used to touch on several practices which often appear in the user-generated subtitles despite being incompatible with the minimalist principles. Sometimes the translators use different colours or fonts to distinguish the individual utterances. This could come in handy in case of the hearing-aid subtitles, yet the general audience is indubitably capable to differentiate the voices. A different situation emerges if there are two or more languages used during the dialogue - then some sort of distinction may be deemed plausible. More disputable though is adding the explanatory notes, as seen in the presented dialogue. The user-generated subtitles not infrequently do their best to prevent as much loss of information as possible. The explanatory notes occur there to introduce the culture of origin when confronted with a reference largely unknown to the target audience.

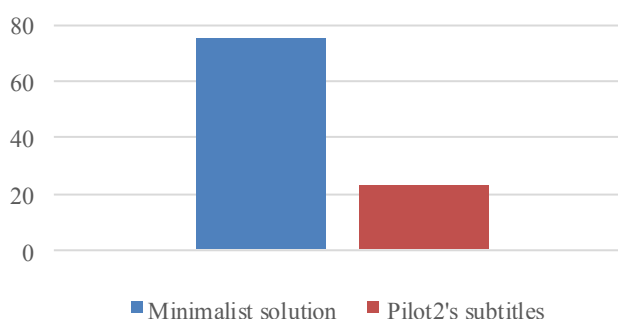
It usually possible to avoid this however. In this case, the name of Benjamin Franklin is mentioned in the next utterance, after the nurse sees the bill. Therefore, the viewers may know that the handed amount of cash is 100 USD; and even if they do not or will not search the information afterwards, the comedy effect should not be lost if the specific sum is unknown. More important for the effect is her demand for the five times a bigger sum, should she accept the bribe – which is a piece of information that somehow got lost in the *Pilot2*'s translation,

perhaps because he or she did not understand the nurse correctly. The fact that the bill is meant as a bribe is also clear without the explanatory note, if the viewer has the time to observe the mis-an-scène.

The explanatory notes in subtitles have a broad backing also amongst the academics (Švelch, 23), but it is rarely possible to finish reading of the subtitle along with a long explanatory note in time. Some authors like Levý (96, 97) think that any small detail drawing attention to the cultural differences disturb the recipients from their hand-to-hand experience, and one of the abilities of a translator should be to settle the differences that emerge from the bivalent character of two languages. Some others, however, have the feeling that the user-generated subtitles may be seen as an alternative to the professional translations, since they add emphasis on the detailed and complete transmission of the original - despite the distractions that the explanatory notes may cause (Švelch, 47).

Survey results: The survey showed that the explanatory notes also have its backing among the viewers. Almost a quarter (23.5%) of the respondents chose the *Pilot2's* version and also defended it in the comments.

Graph no. 5: *The Big Bang Theory* no.1



Some of the respondents pointed out that even though they liked the explanatory note, they got distracted by the misunderstood “*five twin brothers*” as “*jeho dvojče*” and also by the familiarity of the nurse towards Howard (the difference between “*tykáni*” and “*vykáni*” in Czech).

“The first version made a mistake in the punctuation and the explanatory note is not necessary (so it’s detrimental); the fact that it is a bank note is clear from the video and the dialogue is legible even without knowing the exact value of it. The other differences in the translations are irrelevant.”

“I move towards the second version in this case, since I don’t like the explanatory notes as presented in the brackets. The viewers are either educated enough to understand or they will come to it in time. The second reason is keeping the familiarity degree, which complies with the mutual respect of the characters in a hospital surroundings which do not know each other.”

“I chose the second version because of the difference between one twin and five twins, though the first version explains the 100 USD bill.”

“The second version is more precise, although I would welcome the brackets note from the first version for those that don’t know the American money or B. Franklin.”

“I chose the second version. I liked the explanation of the 100 USD bill in the first one, yet unfortunately the last sentence is not correct, the number of twins (banknotes) should be five (one twin is less funny); I’m not sure which structure is right (introduce you to the man – představil vám muže / představil vás muži), nevertheless ‘vám představil muže’ sounds more natural, so I choose the version two.”

Another example to illustrate the usage of explanatory notes is taken from the 21st episode of the 3rd season of *The Big Bang Theory* called *The Plimpton Simulation*. The subtitles were translated by the user “*Ďasík*” and downloaded on the 12th March 2017 from www.big-bang-theory.cz. The number of downloads is not available on the web.

The scene: 00:15:10 - 00:15:14 of the screening time

Context: The character Rajesh suddenly pulls out a flask and drinks from it during the lunch. All of his friends are stunned, for they think that it is an alcohol:

Picture no. 11: Visual context – *The Big Bang Theory* no.2



Chart no. 4: *The Big Bang Theory* no.2

Original dialogue:	Ďasík's subtitles:	Number of symbols:	Minimalist solution:	Number of symbols:
Howard: <i>What the hell are you doing?</i>	Co to sakra děláš?	18	Co to sakra děláš?	18
Rajesh: <i>Relax, it's Nyquil.</i>	Klid, je to Nyquil. /sirup proti kašli/	38	Klid, to je proti kašli.	24
Leonard: <i>You still have a cold?</i>	Pořád jsi nachlazený?	21	Pořád nemocnej?	15
Rajesh: <i>Maybe, but I don't care.</i>	Možná, ale je mi to jedno.	26	Možná, ale je mi to jedno.	26
<i>That's the great thing about Nyquil, it's like ten percent booze.</i>	Na Nyquilu je skvělé, že je to desetiprocentní alkohol.	65	Vždyť ten sirup je v podstatě desetiprocentní alkohol.	54
	Total:	168	Total:	137

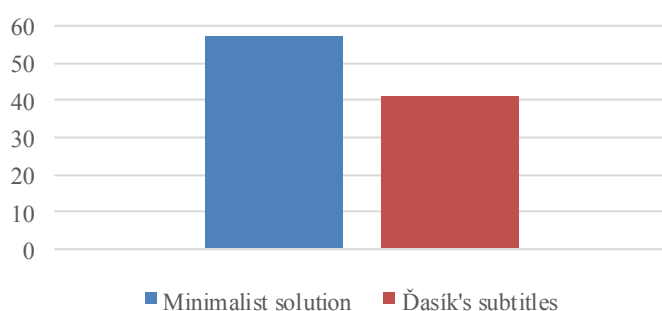
This *Big Bang Theory* example shows that otherwise rather condensed subtitles (two lines did not need any alternation) can unnecessarily stretch if an explanatory note is used.

When translating literature, there is the rule that the translator should avoid under-translation⁸. However, speaking of minimalist subtitles, the optimal way is probably substituting the original specific reference to a neutral symptomless analogy (Švelch, 23), as in the suggested “*sirup proti kašli.*” Interestingly, one of the respondents noted this in the very first open question of the survey, dealing with the aspects in which the audio-visual translation differs from literary or other translations:

“It is impossible to explain the cues to certain local things, so these are translated through their more known Czech equivalents... like E-bay > Aukro, Wallmart > Tesco etc. Eventually there’s the necessity to explain a joke, which stretches the subtitles and speeds them up, and even though the explanation is sometimes required, it spoils the impression.”

Survey results: In this case, the portion of respondents choosing the “*Nyquil*” version is fairly striking 41.8%, and some of the comments defended the explanatory note. Yet, more than a half of respondents is still against it.

Graph no. 6: *The Big Bang Theory* no.2



“I like the more literal translation with the explanation in this case, because sometimes I wonder what the used word means, which I wouldn’t have found out from the second option.”

⁸ I.e. the usage of more general synonyms than originally appearing in the source material (Knittlová, 9).

“Nyquil is unknown in this area, so mentioning a syrup is better.”

“I like the unnecessary name being omitted, the alternation in the second version is nicely done and the text therefore has swifter cadence, which suits an average conversation more.”

“The second version hands the joke over to the viewer, while the first one explains it, so the experience is more fragmented for the viewer.”

“The reason for choosing the second version is the same as before. The colloquial talk amongst friends reads better, and the brackets shouldn’t be there. Maybe I’d even chose the variant ‘Klid, to je Biotussil.’ After 30 second of googling I even know the percentage of the alcohol, so that the facts would be correct as well.”

This suggests that some of the viewers feel their experience of the movie to be somewhat incomplete if they do not comprehend all the nuances; they seem to consider the translator’s role to be a mediator between them and the foreign culture. Dealing with this role in the condensed space of a subtitle therefore poses yet another challenge.

3.6 Example no.4: *Death Becomes Her*

(1992, Universal Pictures)

Death Becomes Her is the tenth motion picture of the director Robert Zemeckis. It is a black comedy fantasy movie, starring Bruce Willis, Meryl Streep and Goldie Hawn and revolves around two female rivals drinking a potion of youth. The movie won an Academy Award for Visual Effects.

The characters speak the American English.

The subtitles have been downloaded on the 13th of March 2017 from the web www.mojetitulky.com, where it had been uploaded by the user “*tkimitkiy*.” The number of downloads is not available on the web.

Scene: 00:17:38 – 00:18:23 of the screening time

Context: One of the three main protagonists, an actress Madeline (played by Meryl Streep) who's fame relies mainly on her beauty, is heavily anxious about her growing old and worn down. She desperately seeks help from a cosmetician, who is afraid that Madeline's demands are unrealistic for a woman of her age. While Madeline hopes that some extra money may resolve the whole matter, the cosmetician's boss, Mr. Chagall, unexpectedly appears to share the room with them for the whole time.

Picture no. 12: Visual context – *Death Becomes Her*



Chart no. 5: *Death Becomes Her*

Original dialogue:	<i>tkimitkiy's</i> subtitles:	Number of symbols:	Minimalist solution:	Resulting number of symbols:
Madelin: <i>Mmm. I could pay you extra.</i>	Mmm. Můžu si připlatit.	23	Můžu si připlatit.	18
Madelin: <i>You know what I mean? How about that?</i>	Myslím ... Něco jenom pro Vás. Víte, co mám na mysli?	51	Víte, co tím myslím?	20

Madelin: <i>Money is no object. It means nothing to me.</i>	Nehled'te na peníze. Pro mě nehrají roli.	40	Peníze pro mě nejsou problém.	29
Chagall: <i>Ahem.</i> Anna: <i>I'm sorry mister Chagall!</i>	- Ehm, ehm. - Pane Chaggalle!	29	Pane Chaggale!	14
Chagall: <i>I'm really, really sorry.</i>	Je mi to moc moc líto.	22	Moc se vám omlouvám!	20
Chagall: <i>Anna, don't talk, just go away.</i>	Anno, mlčte a běžte prostě pryč.	32	Anno, nic neříkejte a zmizte.	29
Chagall: <i>Leave us alone, mmm?</i>	Nechte nás tu o samotě, hmmm?	29	Nechte nás o samotě.	20
Chagall: <i>I don't want to look at you anymore.</i> Anna: <i>Oh, okay.</i>	- Už Vás tu nepotřebuji. - Oh ... OK.	37	- Nechci vás už ani vidět. - Dobře...	35
Chagall: <i>Thank you so much.</i>	Moc Vám děkuji.	14	Děkuji vám.	11
Chagall: <i>Please.</i>	Prosím, posad'te se.	19	Prosím.	7
Madeline: <i>Well, I suppose I should apologize.</i> Chagall: <i>Oh, no, no.</i>	- Myslím, že bych se měla omluvit. - O, ne, ne.	47	- Asi bych se měla omluvit. - Ale kdepak.	40
	Total :	343	Total :	243

The minimalist solution in this case saved 100 symbols, which equals to roughly 5.8 spared seconds in a 45 seconds long scene.

Madeline's repeated or reformulated question which seemingly stems from her importunateness and adamant urgency: "*You know what I mean? How about that?*" is not needed to be translated in such a literal manner. Simple "*Víte, co tím myslím?*" while comprehending the visual context of the nervous character should suffice. The same goes for "*Money is no object. It means nothing to me.*" The Czech formulation: "*Nehled'te na peníze. Pro mě nehrají roli*" is imposingly long and the cling on the original formulation leads to the unnecessary division into two sentences.

The utterance: "*Je mi to moc moc líto*" is a fine specimen of the word for word pattern translation. The emphasis of the statement could have been expressed through an exclamation mark; the repetition of a word is redundant.

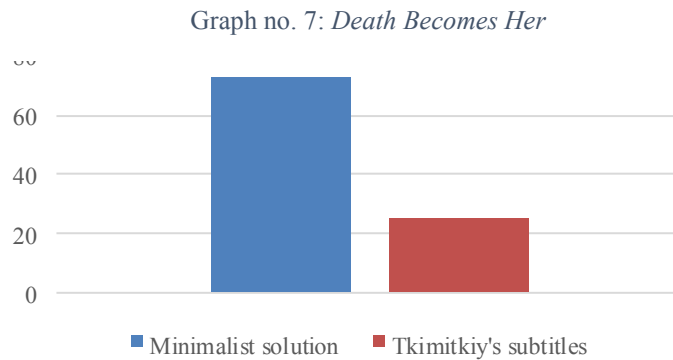
The following subtitle contains a typographic typo in "*bezte*" instead of "*běžte*."

Furthermore, "*OK*," however short, is not a Czech word. In Czech language, plethora of corresponding alternatives and synonyms like "*dobře*" or "*dobrá*" or even "*fajn*" exists. "*OK*" is sometimes used in a colloquial conversation by younger speakers, but in a written text it does not seem natural. Contrastingly, the Czech pronoun "*Vám*" with the capital, used to express that the recipient is held high by the writer, is exclusively a matter of written discourse.

Translation of Chaggals: "*Please*," while he points his hand at a chair simply as: "*Prosím*" is possible due to observing the mis-an-scène. The mimetic context clearly shows what the purpose of the line is, and it therefore not needed to add the "*posad'te se*" into the subtitle.

However, the example was mainly chosen to broach the subject of certain elements of the spoken discourse which feel somehow inappropriately when written down. These sounds, such as interjections, hesitation sounds or empty filling words, spoken for instance in order to buy the speaker some time, originate from the spontaneity and the rapid pace of speech. Yet, they clutter the user generated subtitles in a fairly frequent manner, which of course is a blatant disaccord with the minimalist brevity – as seen in *tkimitkiy's* usage of words like "*hmmm*," "*mmm*" or "*oh*."

Survey results: 74.5% of the respondents chose the minimalist solution.



Many of the respondents pointed out that the interjections in subtitles may be distracting:

“The first translation is clearly a work of an amateur. The interjections shouldn’t be there at all; ‘Vás/Vám’ with the capital shouldn’t appear in the subtitles; sometimes they are unnecessarily slow-gaited. The second translation reads better, doesn’t contain needless staff and I wouldn’t be even ashamed to claim them to be my work.”

“The interjections in the subtitles are funny.”

“In this case I wouldn’t choose neither option. The first one is too specific, and the second one is too brief. If I had to choose, I would pick the first one, but with slight changes.”

“Paradoxically I like the first one here, because the company in the movie is terribly fancy and artificial and the movie keeps making fun of it, these sloppy and long sentence constructions exactly abet the whole joke. In a higher (or wannabe higher) society one just speaks weirdly, it’s appropriate in here.”

“Translating the interjections is useless. And OK should also be translated, so number two is a clear choice.”

“I think that it’s not necessary to translate the sounds.”

Although one viewer suggests that the second translation is in line with the context of the film and more on point, the main aim of this example was mainly to show that not every single element of the original expression has to be forcefully put into the translation. Most of the viewers seem to be in line with that, so the decision of which chunk to omit or not was proved to be a crucial part of the translator’s work.

4. Conclusion

There is a tacit agreement between the viewers of audio-visual media and its translators that the subtitles must correspond completely with the movie dialogue. This illusion requires the viewers' willing suspension of disbelief to extend from mere immersion into the motion picture to also include reading its translation. Altering the code from spoken to written, only few oral elements can be presented in the subtitles; the language has to be cleaned up (Pedersen, 22).

Consequently, the art of audio-visual media translation crosses with artistic minimalism as employed in the realms of painting, music and mainly literature. Because of the technical issues like the viewer's optimal reading speed and the maximum number of symbols displayed on a line, the translator strives to capture the message within the movie's dialogues and character's lines in the limited space available. The principles of subtitling are heavily tied to these technical matters, but also to the artistically minimalist "less is more" tendencies.

It is an onerous task for the movie translator to preserve the economical space of the subtitles while retaining the original meaning with all of its richness, stylistics, expressivity, implicit connotations, etc. Luckily, the multimodal experience of audio-visual media may help substantially as it allows the viewer to comprehend the translation and its source material as a merged whole unity.

Film subtitles can then be seen as a postmodern literary subgenre whose main organizing principle is minimalism, likewise generated by both the functional and the aesthetic criteria. In the iceberg theory's literary style, most of the metaphorical iceberg is hidden underneath the sea's surface, and the reader is left to speculate about the background information which results in the described plot. With the movies representing reality more directly than literature, a movie viewer has the advantage of observing the hidden features of the iceberg through the *mis-en-scène*. If the subtitles are condensed enough to allow the viewers to sufficiently absorb the mimetic context, then the audio-visual sensations function in symbiosis with them, resulting in a perfect communication of the movie's original message.

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