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TEXT COMPRESSION IN SURTITLES: A CASE STUDY OF THE OPERA *LA TRAVIATA*

Summary. Surtitling as a mode of audiovisual translation is commonly used for intercultural communication both intralingually and interlingually in theatres. The largest Lithuanian theatres often provide surtitles as a means to present translated text of the original language, although in the scientific field surtitling is still a little studied mode. In order to provide qualitative surtitles that convey the essentials of the original language, translators and surtitlers applied a number of compression strategies. The duration and length of the surtitles are limited; therefore, the surtitle specialists must take into account the time and space constraints and provide the shortest text without losing the essence so that the viewer would be able to spend less time reading and mostly focusing on the performance. The article investigates cases of compression of translated text at both the syntactic and lexical levels. Using the descriptive, analytical and comparative methods, Lithuanian surtitles of the opera *Traviata* for two theatres, namely Kaunas State Musical Theatre and Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, are prepared, and a study of the cases of text compression is performed.

Keywords: compression; opera; surtitle; surtitling; theatre.

Introduction

The rapid evolution of technologies brought up new changes in a number of areas, including the audiovisual industry and translation. In the twentieth century, the demand for accessibility of such audiovisual products as films, TV shows, video games, and theatre production started globally growing. Therefore, the boom of audiovisual media encouraged the emergence of a new branch of translation – audiovisual translation (AVT). AVT has developed as a means to facilitate the communication between different cultures and nations, to present and adapt audiovisual products to foreign audiences and to eliminate language barriers.

During the last few decades, scholars have discerned more than ten modes of AVT, surtitling being one of the newest fields of research. Surtitling facilitates the intelligibility of plays and operas, as well as it allows various

theatres and companies to enlarge their audiences by overcoming linguistic barriers. Since surtitles deal with live audiovisual production, they are highly constrained by time and space. Thus, one of the utmost purposes of the surtitler becomes the rendition of a translated text in a most concise way possible.

The article aims at the analysis of the text compression instances at the word and sentence levels applied in the Lithuanian surtitles of Act I of the opera *La Traviata*. In order to achieve the aim, the following tasks have been set out, namely, to introduce peculiarities of opera translation with regard to the mode of surtitling and the strategies of text compression as well as to analyse the cases of text compression applied in the Lithuanian surtitles of the opera *La Traviata.*

The object of the analysis is the Lithuanian surtitles of Act I of the opera *La Traviata* which have been prepared by two Lithuanian theatres – Kaunas State Musical Theatre and Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre.

Opera translation

When opera first emerged in the 17th century, it was considered to be an art that would be mostly approached by the elite. However, in the course of time opera houses began to be more concerned with attracting wider audiences and eliminating the boundaries between social classes (Palmer, 2013, p. 22). After two world wars in the twentieth century, the national identity was strongly felt; accordingly, the performances in foreign languages were poorly recognized (Palmer, 2013, p. 22). The use of the vernacular in the performance of opera made it accessible to a wider spectrum of opera-goers and improved the "communication between the stage and auditorium" hence facilitating the intelligibility of the work and engaging the audience with the performance (Palmer, 2013, p. 22).

Marta Mateo (in Gambier & Doorslaer, 2012, p. 115) implies that opera is regarded as a musical genre instead of being observed as a dramatic art where "music, performance and verbal text all collaborate in the creation of meaning in an opera piece." Therefore, the transfer of the verbal text of

opera performance in either SL or TL is concerned with both music and translation studies. Catherine Nisato (in Orero and Matamala, 2007, p. 427) generalizes recent possibilities in opera performance which may absolutely exist together: "performing the opera in its original language and provide the listener with either a synopsis or translated libretto, to perform in the original language and make use of surtitles, or to perform a sung translation of the work." Hence, the translation of libretto should pay respect to the dominance of music, whereas the translator ought to comply with the pace and notes of the song.

Maria Freddi and Silvia Luraghi (2011, p. 59) define the verbal text of libretto as "stylistically marked because of its text-in-music nature; also, it has proven to be highly complex lexically, often convoluted and difficult to disentangle." There are multiple restrictions constraining the strategies of libretto translation such as rhythm and prosody; words must fit the music, repetitions, humour, singability and vocal constraints due to anatomical features.

These restrictions should be taken into account when translating libretto and adapting it to the singers and the audience. Hence, this verbal-text and the music-linked translation must be assiduously done before the text is transferred to surtitles and projected during the opera. To access an opera for the audience and for the singers in the SL is quite challenging; thus, the translation of libretto is highly favourable.

Surtitling as a Mode of Audiovisual Translation

As the discipline of AVT deals not only with the language and text but also with audiovisual products containing both acoustical and visual components, there are several different approaches to handling the transfer from the original language into the target one. Jorge Díaz Cintas (2009, p. 4) emphasises two essential prevailing approaches – *revoicing* (further subdivided into *dubbing, partial dubbing, voice-over (including narration), simultaneous interpreting, audio description for the blind and partially sighted, audiosubtitling, fandubbing/fansubbing/subbing (including fundubbing), free commentary (including Goblin translation)* and

*subtitling (further subdivided into subtitling, intertitling, **surtitling**, respeaking, subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing SDH, fansubbing).*

Definition and Features of Surtitling in Comparison to Subtitling

Gambier (2003, p. 172) defines subtitling as a mode that is concerned with the shift from the spoken form of dialogue to its written form consisting of one or two lines. Meanwhile surtitling is a relatively recent discipline of AVT, where "surtitles consist of a condensed written translation of the libretto" (Mateo, 2004, p. 170). Moreover, surtitling is concerned with the conveyance of the oral and music-linked texts which are present in the theatrical performances (Gambier, 2003, p. 176).

The first attempts to project surtitles in opera houses took place barely four decades ago (Freddi and Luraghi, 2011, p. 55). Even though this mode of AVT is thought to be derived from subtitling, many scientists of the field find differences between the two processes. As distinct from subtitles, which are placed at the bottom of the screen with some uncommon exceptions when they are displayed on the top of the screen (Gambier, 2003, p. 172), surtitles are mostly displayed above the stage or on small screens attached to the backs of the seats of the auditorium (Mateo, 2007, p. 170). Ana Isabel Hernández Bartolomé and Gustavo Mendiluze Cabrera (2005, p. 95) point out that unlike subtitles, surtitles consist of only one line. However, nowadays opera houses extend their surtitles to two or in some cases even more lines, depending on time restrictions and software used for displaying surtitles. The authors also note that surtitles are made beforehand with performance but in spite of that, surtitles are projected in real time and always go along with a performance (Bartolomé and Cabrera 2009, p. 95). Thus, surtitles are projected manually and have to coincide with the pace of performance and with the lyrics of songs or dialogues of the actors.

In addition, Mateo (in Gambier, Shlesinger and Stolze, 2007, p. 170) describes the resemblances of surtitling to subtitling as well. She borrows the definition of the process of subtitling introduced by Assis Rosa (2001, p. 213) and applies it to the process of surtitling. As well as subtitling,

surtitling may be defined as "multi-channel", since it contains:

- "a change of medium" – from the singing and gestures of the opera to the written text on the screen;
- "a change of channel" – from oral to visual;
- "a change of the form of signals" – from phonic/musical substance to graphic substance;
- "a change of code" – from sung verbal language, together with non-verbal language, to written verbal language (Mateo in Gambier, Shlesinger and Stolze 2007, p. 170).

In this way, text and music correlate with the visual representation of performance and should be translated in order to match it. Hence, surtitles must conform to the time limitations of music.

Technical Conventions of Surtitles

In the course of time, the necessity of the audience to know every word that is being sung by the actors during a live performance has created a demand for surtitles. Therefore, the reading of a printed libretto during a performance was superseded by a new digitalized approach to opera – surtitling. When at the beginning of the twentieth-century cinema emerged, operatic works were started being subtitled (Burton, 2009, p. 58). At first, subtitles were shown as "intertitles in silent film excerpts from operas" (Burton, 2009, p. 58). In the 1970s, opera was started being broadcasted on TV and subtitles were superimposed on the television picture. Later on, new electronic systems were created, and the titles were easily adapted to the changing pace of the music. Nevertheless, the most widely used technique for projecting opera translation came into being in 1983. It was the first time when surtitles were introduced to the audience and were acknowledged as the most convenient approach to opera performances (Burton, 2009, p. 59).

As Jonathan Burton (2009, p. 61) suggests surtitles help the audience to receive the meaning of the sung text better. Many opera critics favour the idea of the audience reading a translated opera text beforehand the performance (Burton, 2009, p. 61). Nevertheless, such preparation for the performance is fairly uncooperative as the audience merely cannot

memorize all the words and phrases of the opera text and recall them while watching the opera being performed (Burton, 2009, p. 63). Thereby, the songs must be performed in the language of translation, or the audience should be provided with the surtitles of the TL. Nonetheless, a singable translation also provides the audience with some obstacles since the text may sometimes be inaudible or incomprehensible due to a failure of a translator to apply the text properly for high notes (Burton, 2009, p. 63). For this reason, the text is displayed even in the same language in which the text is being sung. Therefore, surtitles are a major tool in helping both the audience to understand the meaning of the song and the directors to convey its gist better, as well as to avoid the occurrence of obscurities.

Dewolf names five crucial principles of surtitling to keep the audience focused and leave enough time for diverting spectators' attention on the action on stage:

1) translation for surtitles should omit "repetitions and secondary details;"

2) surtitles should not deviate from the original text and style and ought to remain simply comprehensible;

3) surtitles should be comprised of "sense blocks" and compose a "logical unity;"

4) surtitles ought to be displayed synchronically with the dialogues and singing of the performers;

5) the final and perhaps most significant principle is that surtitles must not "give the impression of nervousness" (Dewolf, 2001, p. 181).

Burton (2009, p. 62) contributes to the ideas of Dewolf and supplements them by stating that when dealing with surtitling, translators/surtitlers encounter a number of issues that should be dealt with. He asserts that a translator/surtitler should omit repetitions, expostulations, and lamentations, combine or simplify such quick exchange phrases as greetings, set the pace of surtitles in accordance to the music, omit or neutralise slang or invective words, avoid the preservation of archaic and poetic words or complex syntactical formulations that are usually present in opera libretti but should be simplified according to the norms of contemporary language in surtitles (Burton, 2009, p. 62).

Translators/surtitlers are inevitably constrained by the software and projection systems that they are obliged to use in order to make and project surtitles. Each of the systems contains different technical parameters; thus, each opera surtitling company depending on their choice of software has varying requirements for the production of surtitles. Having reviewed and analysed the conventions of a few surtitling companies/opera houses around the world, including Canadian Opera Company, Royal Opera House, Christopher Bergen Productions and Aria Nuova, Mateo discerns such technical norms inherent to surtitles:

Table 1

Technical Conventions for Surtitles (Mateo, 2007, p. 176)

Technical Parameters	Explanation
Characters	An average number of characters per line is 35–40
Size	One or two lines
Time of Exposure	It is determined by the musical tempo and is extremely variable
Punctuation	Punctuation is not uniform and is usually kept very simple (punctuation marks may be excluded depending on the choice of a surtitler)
Layout	Centre and left Right (in order to indicate a singer)
Colour	Colours of surtitles may vary from white to red and yellow (colours of the text depend on the client using surtitles)
Titles	Surtitles occasionally contain blank titles in order to mark a pause
Font	The fonts used are without serifs

Thus, there is no global convention for how the surtitles should be prepared and projected. The particular parameters of surtitles during each performance depend on a surtitling company, its employed system or demands of a client.

Although surtitling is thought to be a comparatively recent mode of audiovisual translation, its impact on the opera production and the audiences is cumulative. The nature of surtitles is defined by music, time and space.

However, the employment of various conventions and software for projecting surtitles and providing the audience with the translation of a foreign work widens the opportunities for the opera houses to attract more opera-goers and eliminate language barriers, while for the audience this helps to completely comprehend the action on stage and get the full opera experience.

Text Compression in Surtitles

Mona Baker (2011, p. 121) claims that translators "have to operate with lexical items and grammatical structures at various stages of the translation process." When translating texts from ST to TT, the translator is undoubtedly compelled to use a range of translation strategies, so that a high-quality translation would be achieved. As the main components correlating in both translated and original text, Baker names condensation and coherence (Baker, 2011, p. 121). One of the translation techniques to deal with the reduction of text is called *text compression*, which allows conveying a precise meaning of a text by changing grammatical structures and leaving out superfluous lexical items. As Olimpija Armalytė (in Kerevičienė and Čečumskaitė, 2011, p. 75) highlights, text compression "as a technique is very common in the practice of translation and is understood as a whole system of techniques enabling to shorten the text without destroying its meaning." Craig G. Nevill (1989, p. 3) introduces the essential principle of compression by stating:

> "The aim of compression is to store only the information contained in the text. The redundant part of the text is not stored, as it is predictable, and can, therefore, be re-created when the information is 'decompressed'."

Nigel Armstrong (2005, p. 159) refers to compression as non-translation. According to him, compression includes the elimination of the components in the TT that are involved in the ST (Armstrong, 2005, 159). This exclusion is likely to happen when "the segment contains needless detail that will weary the reader, or information that is difficult to translate concisely because of

culture-specific [items], or both" (Armstrong, 2005, p. 159). Hence, the text is shortened to such an extent that it would be enough for the readership to understand it.

As a technique of translation, compression is broadly used in the making of subtitles and surtitles, due to the rigid conventions of employing a constrained number of characters per title. It is also employed in order to present the gist of the verbal text and adapt it to the reading speed of the reader. Even though subtitles and surtitles are temporally and spatially constrained, the redundancy of a text leaves the context of an audiovisual product undamaged, since "in a polysemiotic context, semantic voids are often intersemiotically filled" (Gottlieb, 2001, p. 21). Nevertheless, compression must be done in such a way that the omission of crucial information would be avoided.

Jorge Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael (2009, p. 146) point out three reasons for text compression in subtitles which are also inherent for the case of surtitles:

- the audience generally assimilates verbal text more rapidly than the written one;
- the audience is simultaneously obliged to observe the action, listen to the verbal text and read the titles;
- time constraints, reading speed and the speed of a spoken original text define the length of a title.

Hence, the scholars discern text compression into partial and total compression (Cintas and Ramael, 2009, p. 146). Partial compression is accomplished by abbreviating the ST and presenting its abridged translation. In the meantime, total compression is accomplished by omitting lexical items. Usually, both types coexist and the task of a surtitler is to operate with the translated text by either employing the process of elimination or reformulation (Cintas and Ramael, 2009, p. 146).

The text may be condensed and reformulated by applying certain instructions that help to reduce the text at both word level and sentence/clause level:

Table 2

Text Compression (Cintas and Remael, 2009, p. 151)

Text compression at the word level	Text compression at sentence/clause level
Simplifying verbal periphrases; Generalizing enumerations; Using a shorter near-synonym or equivalent expression; Using simple rather than compound tenses; Changing word classes; Using short forms or contractions.	Changing negations or questions into affirmative sentences or assertions, indirect questions into direct questions, etc.; Simplifying indicators of modality; Changing the subject of a sentence or phrase; Manipulation of theme and rheme; Turning long and/or compound sentences into simple sentences; Turning active sentences into passive or vice versa; Use of pronouns and other deictics to replace nouns, or noun phrases; Merge of two or more phrases/sentences into one.

Hence, the omission becomes an integral part of surtitles since the words are lost in the process of text compression. Virkkunen (2004, p. 94) also supports the idea of text compression and notes that "by concentrating on the essential verbal contents, surtitles leave the audience more time for interpreting the signs other symbolic modes create." In the process of surtitling, text compression and rejection of some textual items are compulsory; therefore, surtitles commonly tend to omit more than one-third of the libretto text. Nonetheless, although the reduction of a written text is supplemented by a verbal text, music and the action on stage, a minimal loss of valuable information is a significant element for producing surtitles.

Analysis of the Opera *La Traviata*

The Italian opera *La Traviata* or *The Fallen Woman*was chosen for the analysis of this article. *La Traviata* is based on the French opera *La Dame aux Camélias* (1848) by Alexandre Dumas (Encyclopaedia Britannica). The opera was first performed in 1853 at the *La Fenice* opera house in Venice. The music for the opera was composed by Giuseppe Verdi, and the libretto was written by Francesco Maria Pave. Although the authors of the opera were aspired to present *La Traviata* in a contemporary setting, their choice was influenced by the *La Fenice* opera house, and the set of

the first performances reflected the past. However, in the 1880s the authors were allowed to use the primarily intended setting and *La Traviata* was produced in a contemporary environment. The title of the opera refers to the main character Violetta Valéry. *La Traviata* tells the story of a woman who is a Parisian courtesan and falls in love with a young man named Alfredo. Violetta's illness and the interference of Alfredo's father prevent her from being with Alfredo, and she sacrifices her love in order not to blemish the reputation of his family. Thus, the story involves ethical and moral problems as well as such relevant topics to an individual as self-sacrifice, love, illness, and death. When the opera was first performed, it attained a negative response from the audience since the appearance of the main character hardly fit the image of Violetta, and other opera singers were far from being professional. Nonetheless, the alteration of performers in subsequent performances was proved to be a huge success, and *La Traviata* became an opera performed on the most prominent stages all over the world and translated into many languages (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

The first performance of *La Traviata* in Lithuania took place in 1920, in the musical theatre that is now called Kaunas State Musical Theatre (Jūraitė, 2016, p. 22). Nowadays, *La Traviata* is mostly performed on two Lithuanian stages which are in Kaunas State Musical Theatre (KSMT) and in Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre (LNOBT). The repertoire of the opera in Lithuania varies from its contemporary staging improvisations as for example the one presented by the Estonian troupe *PromFest,* to the ones presenting the more steady setting of the opera which is the 1850s (Jūraitė, 2016, p. 26). The translations of the opera into Lithuanian for both theatres were made from the English translation of the Italian ST. Moreover, both theatres employed surtitles for rendering the SL into TL, even albeit technically different programmes for projecting surtitles were used. In KSMT the surtitles of the opera were displayed by the use of slide projection, while in LNOBT the surtitles were projected by using an LED display.

Instances of Text Compression

In the analysed surtitles, text compression is achieved by employing a range of strategies that are applied on both word and sentence levels. In order to examine the amount of the instances of text compression, as well as to find the most frequently utilized techniques, the first act of the opera *La Traviata* has been selected. A total of 59 surtitles containing text compression strategies have been detected in the translation of LNOBT; meanwhile, in the translation of KSMT, 68 surtitles involved different cases of text compression. Usually, the analysed surtitles contained more than one compression strategy and, sometimes, involved compression at both sentence and word levels. Accordingly, the numbers provided in the chart indicate the number of instances of compression, not the number of surtitles.

Figure 1

Amount of Text Compression in Surtitles
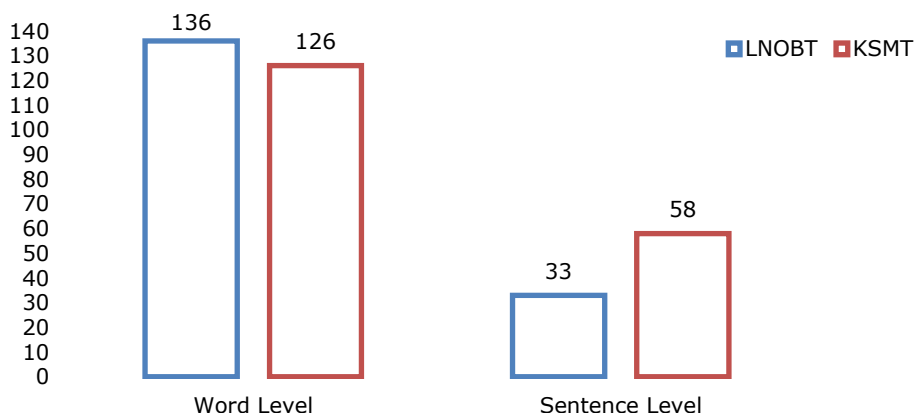
The surtitles of LNOBT appear to contain a slightly bigger number of compression cases at word level comparing to the surtitles of KSMT – 136 and 126 respectively. Nevertheless, at the sentence level, the surtitles of LNOBT contain a relatively low amount of compression instances comparing to the surtitles of KSMT – 33 and 58 respectively. Such difference between the amounts of text compression cases found at sentence level most likely appears due to the different technical parameters of surtitles and projection

systems. KSMT uses slide projection and confines to the rule to contain no more than 42 symbols in a line, as well as to use no more than two lines in one surtitle, whereas due to the employment of LED screen LNOBT does not meet such restrictions and may fit more than two lines in one surtitle, as well as to use a bigger amount of characters in a line. Hence, due to such limitations, KSMT is bound to impart a more concise text by making syntactical alterations.

Text Compression at Word Level

As it has been previously seen, the biggest amount of text compression instances has been found at the word level. The following chart illustrates the instances of text compression at word level which have been detected in the surtitles of both Lithuanian theatres.

Figure 2

Text Compression at the Word Level
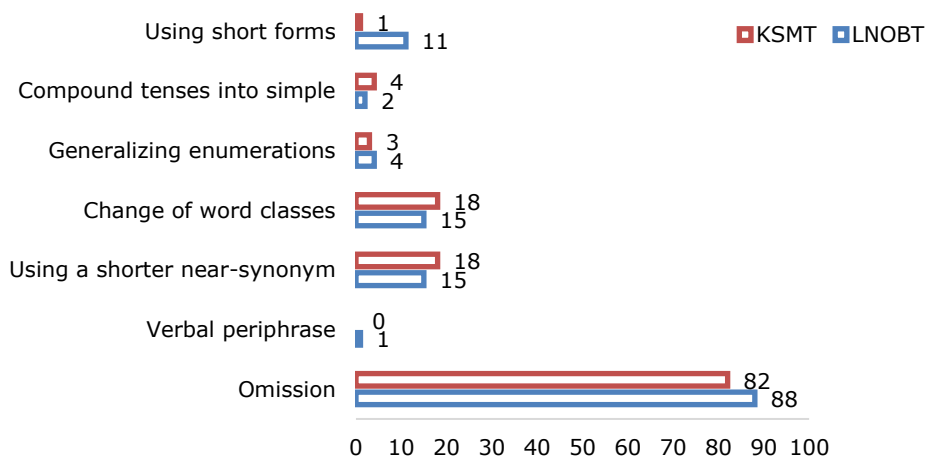
In the surtitles of the opera *La Traviata*, text compression at word level considerably frequently contains omission of different word classes. Omission appears 88 times in the surtitles of LNOBT and 82 times in the surtitles of KSMT. The surtitles also include such strategies as using a shorter near-

synonym and changing word classes (each consisting of 15 instances in the surtitles of LNOBT and 18 cases in the surtitles of KSMT). Such a strategy as verbal periphrase is encountered only once in the TT of LNOBT. Other strategies are also employed quite seldom: a generalization of enumerations appears 4 times in LNOBT surtitles and 3 times in the surtitles of KMST; compound tenses are simplified twice in the TT of LNOBT and 4 times in the TT of KSMT. The compression technique of using short forms and contractions of the lexical units is also observed: 11 cases in the surtitles of LNOBT and barely once in the TT of KSMT. The employment of such text compression techniques is not supposed to transform the meaning of the sentence. Such deletion or reformulation of words enables to create shorter surtitles which would take less time to read and allow the viewer to focus on the action on stage.

As it has been mentioned before, omission constitutes the largest part of instances of text compression in the surtitles of both theatres. One of the most common appearances of omission tends to be the exclusion of pronouns. This type of omission is broadly used and appears due to the different features of the two languages.

1) <u>We</u>play'd deep at Flora's,...
Pas Florą kortavome. (KSMT)
Lošėme pas Florą. (LNOBT)

In the example (1), the subject pronoun *we* which appears in the ST is excluded in the TTs of both theatres. Such deletion of pronouns in the grammatical construction of the Lithuanian language is rather frequent since the presence of the pronominal subject may be expressed by the use of a particular inflection applied on the verb. In this case, the specific inflection provides information about the subject and number (first person plural).

A large part of pronoun omission in the surtitles consists of excluding subject pronouns. Nevertheless, the cases considering the deletion of possessive pronouns are also found:

2) <u>My</u> dear <u>friends</u>, be seated;
Išgerkime, brangieji! (KSMT)
Mielieji, sėskitės:.. (LNOBT)

In the example (2), the possessive pronoun, or determiner *my,* has been excluded in the TTs. The omission, in this case, is justifiable since in the scene it is certainly evident who the character is referring to by using the possessive pronoun *my*. What is more, the example (2) contains the omission of the noun *friends*, as well. The deletion of the noun might be regarded as a loss of information. Nevertheless, the subject has been expressed by transforming the modifying adjective *dear* into the pronominal adjective. Thus, although both the possessive determiner *my* and the noun *friends* have been omitted, the surtitlers compensate the loss by applying the form of the adjective which specifies the group of addressees.

Another type of omission observed in the surtitles of KSMT and LNOBT involves the deletion of adjectives. It is seen in the following examples:

3) <u>Kind</u> Marquis!
    Markize. (KSMT)
    Markize. (LNOBT)

In the example (3) the adjective *kind* has been eliminated. The modifier *kind* is employed when the character answers the greeting of his friend which also contains polite and affectionate addressing (<u>*Dear*</u> *Alfredo*). The adjective may be regarded as a near-synonym to the afore mentioned word by another character – *dear*; therefore, the repetition of a synonymic word is evaded, simultaneously the ST is transferred into the TT without distorting its meaning. Moreover, the affectionate addressing might be heard in the intonation of the interlocutors; thus, it does not need to be repeated.

Another instance of the same omission of conjunctions appears in the following example:

4) I told you <u>that</u> combin'd here are friendship and pleasure.
    Neklystu<u>:</u> maloni tau bus mūsų draugystė. (KSMT)
    - Juk sakiau <u>–</u> draugystė čia susipina su malonumu. (LNOBT)

In the example (4), the syndetic word *that* which links two clauses – the main and the subordinate – has been omitted and superseded with distinct punctuation marks in the translations of both theatres. In the translation of

KSMT, the conjunction has been replaced by a colon which assists in establishing the asyndetic sentence and allows providing further explanation. Meanwhile, in the TT of LNOBT,the same conjunction has been substituted with a dash. Such employment of punctuation marks instead of conjunctions do not alter the meaning of the sentence and allows shortening the lines. In addition, the afore mentioned case of pronoun omission is observed in this example, too. In both translations, the pronoun *I* has been omitted, and its presence has been conveyed by inflecting the successive verb. Similarly, the pronoun *you* has been eliminated by LNOBT. The deletion of this pronoun may be regarded as a conscious decision taken by the surtitler since the addressee is seen in the action on stage; thus, the direct addressing by the use of the pronoun is unnecessary.

Since omission has been one of the main types of text compression in the surtitles, the deletion of interjections has been also fairly often observed. Interjections as a part of speech convey the emotional content of the utterance and express spontaneous reactions. In the surtitles, interjections become eliminated for the body language of the actors and the pitch of their voices signal about the emotions pertained to the scene and experienced by the characters, and that is instantly noticed by the theatre goer. Therefore, in order to consume less space of the surtitles and maintain the attention of the audience on stage, interjections might be omitted as it is seen in the example (5) provided below:

5) <u>Ah</u>! You suffer...
   Jūs taip kenčiate? (KSMT)
   - Jums skauda? (LNOBT)

Nevertheless, changing word classes, as it has been done in the case of KSMT, is a prevailing type of text compression; thus, there is a considerably large amount of instances found in the TTs of both theatres when the one-word class has been superseded by another:

6) Oh! A <u>happy thought</u>! We'll gladly join them!
   O, kaip <u>džiugu</u>! Mes jums dėkingi! (KSMT)
   - O, <u>puiku</u>! Pritariame. (LNOBT)

The example (6) depicts the change of word classes between the ST and the TTs. The original text contains a relatively longish phrase *happy thought*; whereas in the Lithuanian language both theatres have superseded the phrase with different interjections. In the translation of KSMT, the phrase has been replaced with an interjection *džiugu*; meanwhile, the LNOBT has changed the phrase into an interjection *puiku*. The expressions employed in the TTs correspond to the meaning of the phrase used in the ST; hence, the surtitlers embrace a shorter near-synonym equivalent. Moreover, due to the rigid text compression strategies applied to the second sentence in both TTs, the translations could be easily considered as distorted since they do not quite coincide with the meaning of the ST. Notwithstanding, in the overall context of the dialogue, the translation of LNOBT imparts the sense of the ST although the provided translation is quite remote from the original text. In the case of KSMT, the translation appears to be even more distant since one more instance of changing word classes appears. The verbal phrase *gladlyjoin* has been superseded with the adjective *dėkingi* (Eng. grateful). Such translation seems to be inadequate and having no conformity with the sense of the ST. However, taking into accountthe translated texts which precede the ones in the example (6) and the action on stage which supplements the text, the translation can be viewed as fairly appropriate, similarly allowing both theatres reducing the sentence.

As it has been observed, the strategy of changing word classes has appeared in different cases. In the TTs, nouns have been replaced by verbs, verbs by nouns, nouns by interjections, adjectives by verbs, etc. The example below (7) illustrates the change from the verb to adjective and noun:

7) I will <u>fill</u> then, like Hebe.
    Pabūsiu Hebe <u>vaišinga</u>. (KSMT)
    Pabūsiu <u>pilstytoja </u>Hebe. (LNOBT)

The sentence introduces the audience with the Greek goddess Hebe who was the cup bearer for other gods and goddesses (Apollodorus and Hard 1999, p. 181). Both translations into the Lithuanian language have removed the verb *fill* which implies the action and duty of Hebe and replaced it with distinct parts of speech. In the KSMT, through the usage of the adjective

vaišinga (Eng. hospitable) the reference to the personal trait of Hebe has been made; meanwhile, in the translation of the LNOBT, the noun *pilstytoja* (Eng. cupbearer) which marks the occupation of Hebe has been employed. Hence, both theatres have evaded direct translation which would manifest in a longer sentence; the usage of the verb would have obliged the surtitlers to translate the preposition *like*, as well, which is currently eliminated.

Considering the instances of text compression at the word level, one more strategy observed in the analysed surtitles is generalizing enumerations:

8) Trifles and folly.
Kvailiojame... (KSMT)
- *Truputį kvailiojam.* (LNOBT)

In the example (8), the change of word classes in the TTs is once again observed since the surtitles have been compressed by changing the enumeration of nouns which appears in the ST to verbs. The KSMT has chosen to translate the phrase by replacing it with one verb *kvailiojame* (Eng. we're fooling around). Such change allows generalizing enumeration of nouns which would prolong the translation and occupy more space. Moreover, the shorter expression in the TT has been rendered without losing the meaning of the ST phrase. On the other hand, the translation of LNOBT depicts the same strategy – generalizing the enumeration of nouns. Nevertheless, the phrase in this TT appears to be even longer than in the ST for the surtitler has decided to add a relatively insignificant adverb *truputį* (Eng. a bit) preceding the same verb as used in the TT of KSMT – *kvailiojam*. Therefore, in the case of LNOBT a few text compression strategies have been employed, but the desired result has been hardly achieved. In spite of that, another text compression strategy is observed particularly in the surtitles of LNOBT – using a shorter form of a word. In the Lithuanian language, plural verbs indicating the first or the second person are inflected. The usual form for the first person plural which is also used in the example (8) involves a suffix *–me*. Nonetheless, the last letter *–e* may be left out; thus, the verb attains a shorter form which is highly favourable for surtitles.

Another text compression strategy which appears quite rarely in the analysed surtitles is changing compound tenses into simple:

9) Your great devotion I <u>had</u> quite <u>forgotten</u>.
   Šią didžią meilę <u>leidau</u> sau <u>pamiršti</u>. (KSMT)
   Tokia didi meilė <u>nueis</u> <u>užmarštin</u>. (LNOBT)

In the ST of the example (9), a past perfect tense has been used in order to emphasise the action which has happened in the past. In the Lithuanian language, there are only four tenses. Nevertheless, the past perfect tense may be translated by adding a particular past participle to the past tense verb. In the sentence provided above, the past perfect tense can be easily replaced with a simple past tense since in this case. It is unnecessary to emphasize the chronology of the actions in the past. Thus, such cumbersome construction has been eliminated from both TTs. In the surtitle of KSMT, the past perfect tense has been rendered to the simple past tense and the participle *forgotten* has been replaced with an infinitive. Meanwhile, in the surtitle of LNOBT, the past perfect tense has been rendered by changing it to the future tense, and the participle *forgotten* has been superseded with a noun.

Therefore, the surtitles are compressed at word level by various means, including omission, changing of word classes, using shorter near-synonyms or contractions, simplifying tenses, generalizing enumerations and even periphrasing verbal constructions. Such employment of text compression strategies allows rephrasing the surtitles to a large extent, simultaneously sustaining the primary meaning, disposing of unnecessary information, and diverting the audience's attention on stage and action rather than on the surtitles and reading.

Text Compression at Sentence Level

Having analysed and overviewed text compression of the surtitles at the word level, the text compression dealing with the sentence level should be also considered since it significantly contributes to the achievement of the overall result.

As well as text compression at the word level, text compression at sentence level includes various strategies. Nevertheless, the amount of compression instances at this level is considerably lower. In this case, the omission has been observed only once in the case of LNOBT and a bit more frequently in the surtitles of KSMT – five times. Also, text compression contains the change of subject as well as simplification of compound/long sentences rather often. In some cases, the sentences have not been simplified, but, conversely, joined into one.

Figure 3

Text Compression at the Sentence Level
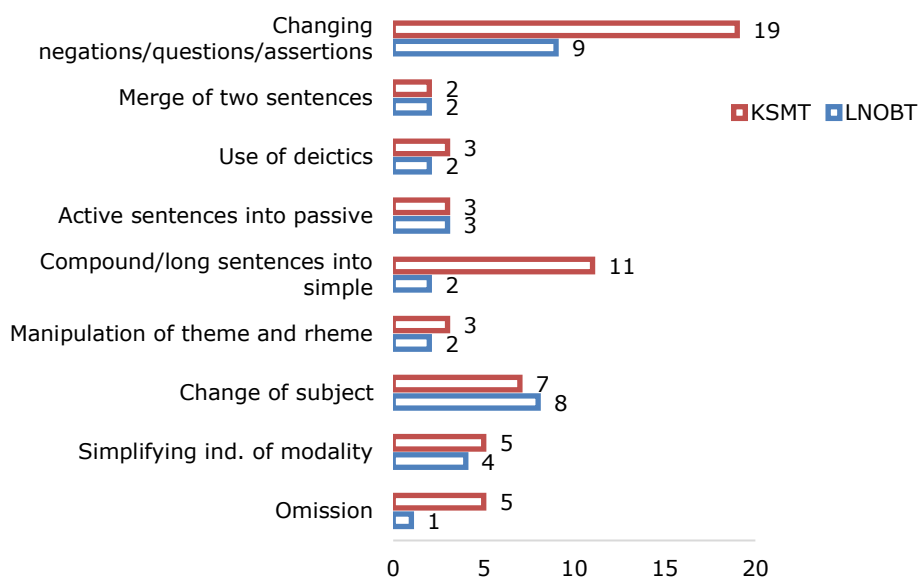
A few instances of simplifying indicators of modality, using deictics instead of nouns, manipulating theme and rheme, and changing the sentences from active into passive have been detected. As it is observed in the chart, the major part of alterations considering sentence structure has been done when the mode of the sentence has been changed. Such cases include changing affirmative sentences into the negative, questions to assertions, negations to questions, or vice versa. The example below illustrates one of the changes in the sentence:

10) Art thou not then, a singer?
   Juk dainuoti tu moki. (KSMT)
   Bet juk tu – tikras meistras. (LNOBT)

In this case (10), the ST contains a question which in the surtitles of both companies has been transformed into assertions. Such conversion of the sentence allows omitting the introductory verb which indicates the question; accordingly, the sentences have been observably reduced. Moreover, due to the modifications in the sentences, other changes considering word level have been noticed. For instance, the translation of KSMT reflects the change of word classes when the noun *singer* (Lith. dainininkas) is superseded by a shorter verb *dainuoti* (Eng. to sing). In spite of that, another change related to the text compression at sentence level appears when the participle *not* is eliminated from the TTs. The omission of this participle leads to another structural change of the sentence – the negative sentence has become affirmative in both TTs. Thus, even though a few strategies of text compression have been used, the sense of the ST has been rendered without great obscurities.

Similarly, the cases when the affirmative sentence has been converted into the negative also appear. The example depicting such a change is provided below:

11) <u>Someone</u>, perchance, then, <u>cares</u> for me?
   - *Nejaugi <u>niekas</u> <u>nesirūpina</u> manim?* (LNOBT)

In this case (11), the change of affirmative sentence into the negative sentence occurs only in the surtitles of LNOBT, meanwhile, KSMT imparts the sentence by maintaining the same structure. Such choice of LNOBT allows abbreviating the indefinite pronoun *someone* by replacing it with a shorter negative pronoun which in the Lithuanian language is *niekas* (Eng. no one). What is more, the pronoun is followed by the verb of negation since the syntactical rules of the Lithuanian language require such construction of negative sentences. Therefore, the negative verb appears to be longer than the affirmative verb. Nevertheless, the text acquires a more concise form by employing negations than maintaining the affirmative mode of the sentence.

Another strategy of text compression at the sentence level is

achieved when the active mode of the sentence is switched into passive:

12) I've no inspiration.
     Įkvėpimo nerasta. (KSMT)

In the example (12), the ST involves an active mode since the focus is on the performer of the action, whereas in the translation of KSMT the sentence is switched into the passive mode and focuses on the action itself. In the TT, instead of translating the short phrase *I've no* (Lith. neturiu), the surtitler decides to employ a particle in the Lithuanian language *nėra* (Eng. there is no), thus, eliminating the pronoun *I*. Nevertheless, such a shift does not really contribute to the major changes of the meaning, but rather helps to impart it more concisely. The character uttering the sentence is seen on the stage, so in the overall context, it is evident that the character is referring to himself.

Another strategy of text compression which has been detected in the Lithuanian translations of the opera *La Traviata* is turning long or compound sentences into simple sentences. Such cases are mostly found in the surtitles of KSMT:

13) If this be true! fly from me,
     Friendship alone I offer,
     I neither know nor suffer,
     A feeling of such devotion.

     Jei tai tiesa, palikite.
     Leiskite patarti – mane mylėti neverta.
     Nereikia jums taip aukotis!
     Praeitį mano žinote. (KSMT)

In the example (13), the ST is rhymed, and the lines are expressed in one sentence. Meanwhile, the surtitler of KSMT instead of separating every line by a coma as it is done in the ST divides the lines into four separate sentences. Such division allows the surtitler separating the text into two surtitles; thus, preserving necessary information. However, the most important aspect of such a rendition of a long sentence into four simple ones is the facilitation of comprehension. Long sentences usually aggravate the rendition of the meaning. As a result, the audience usually needs more time for reading

and understanding the text. Hence, by dividing long sentences into simple ones, more time for the observation of the action on stage is left, and the meaning without a significant loss of information is imparted. Nevertheless, the surtitles of KSMT contain some other types of compression which are related to both word and sentence level. For instance, the TT is lacking pronouns; shorter near-synonyms are used in order to supersede longer words; changes of word classes appear. What is more, in the last two sentences of TT the meaning of the ST is rather transformed and contains the phrases that are not mentioned in the ST at all. Moreover, the third sentence of TT also contains a change of subject since the original text refers to the first person while the translation refers to the second person; the fourth sentence seems to be a mere creation. Nonetheless, although some of the sentences are transformed or created, as well as they encounter major changes due to the use of text compression, the context of the opera itself may justify such inaccuracies in the TT since the translation is generally related to the plot of the play.

A large part of text compression at the sentence level is achieved by changing the subject of a sentence or phrase:

14) ...can my heart still disdain it. For follies dry and heartless, which now enchain me?
Ar galiu tai atmesti dėl nuobodžios savo gyvenimo beprasmybės? (LNOBT)

In the example (14), the first sentence of the ST contains the third person subject – the *heart*. Nevertheless, in the LNOBT translation, the subject of the sentence has been switched to the first person who is making the statement – *I*. Due to this deliberate shift between the subjects, some words such as the possessive pronoun *my* may be omitted. What is more, the subject does not necessarily have to be used since the verb *galiu* (Eng. I can) is inflected and simultaneously expresses the subject. In this instance, such a change of subject in the TT does not provide a major translation shift but rather assists in reducing the text by maintaining the meaning. What is more, another text compression strategy in the example (14) is noticed – the two sentences of the ST are merged into one in the TT. The compression

strategy of joining sentences into one renders the connection between the actions more precisely and enables the audience to perceive it at a glance. Such a combination of text compression strategies at sentence level affects the omission at the word level, as well. The surtitle omits the clause *which now enchain me* which has been superseded by the phrasal combination of the possessive pronoun and the verb *savogyvenimo* (Eng. my life). The text is also considerably concise since the enumeration of nouns *follies dry and heartless* has been superseded with a phrase *nuobodžiosbeprasmybės* (Eng. dry inanity). Notwithstanding, even though the translation considering the second sentence might look quite inaccurate, in the context of the opera, the surtitler manages to maintain the meaning.

One more text compression strategy which has been found in a few surtitles is the manipulation of the theme and rheme. The rheme is usually placed in the front of the phrase when a speaker wants to put a particular emphasis on something or to stress some issues. This manipulation of the theme and rheme may be noticed in the following example:

15) 'Twould be better if you had not spoken.
   Patylėti geriausia jums būtų. (KSMT)

The example (15) involves only the translation of KSMT since the LNOBT surtitle does not contain such type of compression. In the TT of KSMT the *if* clause has been placed in front of the sentence when in the original text it is written in the back of the sentence, thus, the neutral word order has been changed and the preferable action – not to speak – has been emphasized. Moreover, such manipulation of theme and rheme allows omitting the conjunction *if*, and generally simplifying the compound tenses used in the ST.

Another text compression strategy noticed in the selected surtitles is the use of deictics instead of nouns:

16) And <u>Alfred</u> a few minutes only.
   - *O <u>jis</u> – tik minutes kelias.* (LNOBT)

In the ST of the example (16), one of the main characters Alfred is mentioned. In the scene where the dialogue takes place, Violetta has

a conversation with the Baron and tells him about how Alfred fell in love with her even though he has known her for a few minutes only; whereas, the Baron was not so enamoured, although he had already known her for a year. In the TT, the name of *Alfred* which functions as a noun has been replaced by the pronoun *jis* (Eng. he). Usually, the employment of this type of text compression is rather inappropriate since it may raise some questions and cause obscurities. Nevertheless, in the context of the whole dialogue, both the interlocutors and the audience understand who Violetta is referring to. Thus, the change of the noun into pronoun is highly favourable, for it does not distort the meaning, as well as it does not complicate the comprehension of the conversation taking place on stage.

The last strategy observed in the surtitles is an omission. Omission does not appear that frequently at the sentence level as it does at the word level. The deletion of the entire sentences is certainly not advisable. However, cases of sentence or clause elimination may be found once in the surtitles of LNOBT and five times in the surtitles of KSMT:

17) There are few friends like him; <u>he's a treasure</u>.
   Tai toks draugas, kur šimtą atstoja. (KSMT)
   Labai mažai tokių draugų kaip jis. (LNOBT)

In the example (17) it is distinctly seen that the translations in the Lithuanian language do not contain the clause *he's a treasure* – it has been eliminated in both TTs. Nevertheless, although the clause has been omitted, the translations do not involve a loss of important information. In the scene, one of the characters refers to Alfred. The preceding clause already claims that there are little friends like Alfred having in mind that he is a very good human being and an extremely good friend. Therefore, in the translations, the additional clause which supplements the already known information has been eliminated. The surtitler of KSMT expresses the phrase by employing a Lithuanian idiom *Tai toksdraugas, kuršimtąatstoja*, meaning that Alfred is a better friend than a hundred of them would be. Thus, the meaning of both clauses is completely sustained. Meanwhile, in the translation of LNOBT, only the first clause has been rendered, while the second clause has been deleted. However, once again it should be taken into account that the second clause

merely supplements the first one by providing a similar kind of information. Here with the TT of LNOBT imparts the gist and reduces the text in the surtitle.

As it might be observed from the examples provided above, text compression at the sentence level is crucial in order to reduce the sentence at its most at the same time maintaining its gist. What is more, changes in the syntactical structure allow compressing text not only at the sentence level but also at the word level. Thus, the most important aspect of employing text compression strategies is attained – the attention of the theatre goer is easily kept on the performance while the meaning of the foreign text is imparted through the use of compressed vernacular surtitles. However, text compression at sentence level should be extremely carefully done and not too frequently employed since in some cases the loss of information and the change of the meaning may occur.

Conclusions

Surtitling as one of the AVT modes is gaining its importance in theatres worldwide as well as in Lithuania. More and more performances are accompanied by surtitles that make any piece of staging friendlier to theatre-goer. Following the international practice, Lithuanian theatres develop surtitles applying similar text compression and translation strategies; however, using different technical means.

The strategies of text compression have been employed by Kaunas State Musical Theatre and Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre in order to reduce the text in the surtitles so that the gist would be imparted without the loss of important information. In this way, the surtitles have met the spatial and temporal requirements which constrain the production of surtitles and allowed the audience focusing on the performance on stage rather than spending time on the reading of the TT.

In the Lithuanian surtitles of both theatres, text compression strategies regarding word level mostly include omission. Due to the employment of declensions in the Lithuanian language, such parts of speech as pronouns have been most commonly eliminated in the surtitles.

Other types of text compression such as the usage of a shorter near-synonym, change of word classes, generalization of enumerations, simplifying compound tenses, and usage of short forms have been used more sparingly.

Text compression at the sentence level has been observed less frequently. The most common strategies used in the surtitles are omission, simplifying indicators of modality. The strategies considering sentence level have been used more often in the surtitles of KSMT as instead of using a software system the theatre employs slide projection for displaying surtitles. Thus, the lines of the surtitles must meet stricter spatial requirements.

In a number of cases, the surtitles contained more than one strategy of text compression. Generally, in the surtitles containing text compression at the sentence level, compression strategies related to the word level have been also detected. Consequently, the combination of a few strategies in one surtitle has been fairly often employed in order to deliver a concise but meaningful TT.

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TEKSTO GLAUDINIMAS SURTITRUOSE:
OPEROS *TRAVIATA* ATVEJO ANALIZĖ

Santrauka. Surtitravimas – gana naujas, tačiau sparčiai pasaulyje plintantis audiovizualinio vertimo būdas, dažniausiai naudojamas tarpkultūrinei komunikacijai teatruose ir operose. Didžiuosiuose Lietuvos teatruose surtitrai dažnai naudojami kaip priemonė pateikti išverstą originalo kalbos tekstą, tačiau mokslinėje srityje surtitravimas – dar mažai tyrinėta moda. Siekdami pateikti kokybiškus surtitrus, kuriais būtų perteikta originalo kalbos esminė informacija, vertėjai ir surtitruotojai pasitelkia teksto glaudinimo strategijas. Surtitrų trukmė ir ilgis yra riboti, todėl surtitravimo specialistai privalo atsižvelgti į laiko ir erdvės apribojimus ir pateikti kuo trumpesnį tekstą, bet neprarasti esmės, kad žiūrovas praleistų mažiau laiko skaitydamas ir galėtų stebėti pasirodymą. Šio darbo tikslas – ištirti teksto glaudinimo atvejus tiek sintaksiniame, tiek leksiniame kalbos lygmenyse. Pasitelkus aprašomąjį, analitinį ir lyginamąjį metodus, išnagrinėti dviejų Lietuvos teatrų – Kauno valstybinio muzikinio ir Lietuvos nacionalinio operos ir baleto – lietuviški surtitrai, paruošti klasikinei operai *Traviata*. Atlikto teksto glaudinimo atvejų tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad teksto glaudinimo strategijos daugiausia taikytos leksiniame kalbos lygmenyje. Surtitruose, kuriuose strategijos taikytos sintaksiniame lygmenyje, dažniausiai randama ir leksinio glaudinimo atvejų. Taigi neretai viename surtitre naudojamos kelios strategijos, kad būtų sutrumpinta informacija ir pateikta jos esmė. Palyginus dviejų teatrų surtitrus galima teigti, kad aptiktų teksto glaudinimo atvejų kiekis skiriasi dėl skirtingų surtitravimo programų naudojimo.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: teksto glaudinimas; opera; surtitras; surtitravimas; teatras.