

SONGS AT WORK – THE CASE OF “HATARAKU SAIBŌ”’S ENGLISH DUB

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Abstract: *A case study of a Japanese anime opening, the following article analyses the choices made by the translator of the English dub. In order to assess the quality of the target product, three main frameworks are employed, namely the pentathlon of criteria by Low pertaining to songs, the synchronisation types defined by Chaume in regards to dubbing, as well as the general translation techniques suggested by Vinay and Darbelnet. By identifying specific translation difficulties and the solutions employed in this case study, a better understanding of the Japanese-English audiovisual translation field may be gained, aiding potential translators.*

Keywords: *anime translation, audiovisual translation, Japanese-English dub, lyrics translation, song dubbing, translation difficulties*

1. Introduction

Audiovisual media has become a daily part of our lives in the 21st century, leading to both an increase in interest, as well as a need for research pertaining to it. With access to streaming platforms the average consumer no longer relies on fixed television channels and the constraints they used to be accompanied by, being left with much more freedom in terms of what media they wish to consume. With the increased demand comes an increase of supply, leading to multiple streaming platforms, such as Netflix, HBO, Hulu, Crunchyroll, each with their own particularities and types of media, including films, series and even cartoons.

Though animation may often be perceived as created with children in mind, this is not always the case, being an entertainment category of its own with broad topics, themes and styles. When looking at anime, which refers to animation originating from Japan, the target audience is much broader, with series and movies split by demographics. Due to its particularities, it may be treated as its own category, separating it from other animations in order to explore it in-depth.

In modern times, anime has become popular outside of Japan and can presently be accessed on streaming platforms, such as Netflix and Crunchyroll, both in subtitled format as well as dubbed, depending on the preference of the viewer. Anime series have varying numbers of episodes, however, these are generally 20 minutes long, with exceptions being rare. An opening and an ending are usually encompassed in most episodes, with a length of roughly 90 seconds each. These act as credits, highlighting the names of studio staff, voice actors, providing information about the soundtrack and other elements pertaining to the production of the anime itself in the form of text shown on screen. Simultaneously, the visuals shown on screen hint at plot arcs and showcase characters and other elements related to the contents of the story itself. Some openings and endings consist of artwork, pictures, sequences from the actual anime or even separate original animations, usually set to the background of a song matching the plot or theme of the series in question with the aid of lyrics.

Since the first anime dubbed in English, “Tetsujin Nijūhachi-gō” (1963) (official translation: “The Gigantor”), appeared not so long ago, in 1964, this field is still relatively new. In research, common related topics include the localization of dubs, the history of anime and the reception of this type of media, however, not many papers focus on translations of openings. This is also due to the fact that usually, anime openings are left as-is or subtitled at best, occasions where an opening song is dubbed being rare. This provides a good opportunity for

analysis of a text that is highly restrictive, being a dubbed song that appears in an audiovisual context. One method would be looking at the original lyrics of an anime opening and comparing them to the dub translation, using a bidirectional format, while bearing in mind the video they are attached to. By doing so, the way translators adapted to the situation, finding solutions to the difficulties encountered can be assessed, leading to a better understanding of the potential reasons for their decisions.

With this purpose in mind, the following paper aims to explore the English dub translation of the opening of “Hataraku saibō” (2018) (official translation: “Cells at Work”). This is an educational anime in the shōnen (adolescent boys) demographic based on the manga of the same title depicting the life and role of cells inside the human body. Though a macro-textual point of view, looking at multiple anime and their translation would be ideal in painting the bigger picture, the limitations of the paper force it to focus on a micro-textual approach, using a smaller corpus. When further research in the field becomes available, a more ambitious comparison may be conducted, paving the way for a better understanding of the audiovisual translation field pertaining to Japanese animation. This would also facilitate identifying the main difficulties encountered as well as potential trends in the solutions employed by the translators.

In terms of ethical considerations, this paper focuses on an English translation of a text originally in Japanese, neither of the two being the researcher’s native language. This is due to the fact that when anime series receive dub translations in Romanian, the openings are based on the English dub songs, using them as an intermediary. In the identified cases of anime dubbed in Romanian, the English dub openings differ from the Japanese original both in content and melody, rather than being translations. For this reason, a comparison between the Japanese text and the Romanian dub would be impossible as they are two distinct elements rather than one being a translation of the other. The paper therefore focuses on an English dub which remains faithful to the Japanese source material for the research to be possible.

2. On Translation

Translation is a broad topic, with vast research spanning many years. With an array of different views and theories, the selection of methodology fitting for a case study is one of the first and, arguably, most difficult tasks the researcher must focus on. However, what is nearly impossible would be to summarize the methods identified up to this point in a concise manner, fitting for the size of an article. With these limitations in mind, this section focuses on a select few techniques and guidelines, relevant for audiovisual translation, specifically a song dub, from Japanese into English, being nowhere near exhaustive.

Generally, researchers agree that translation can be split in two major categories, namely direct translation and free translation. Translation can then be further looked at in terms of translation techniques, for example, using the procedures proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (2000). They have identified seven strategies in total, with the previously mentioned free translation category dubbed as oblique translation. Oblique translation is particularly relevant to this study as song translation often requires changes, not due to the difficulty of the text itself, but in order to keep the same structure as the source, therefore not affecting its other qualities.

The seven translation strategies identified by Vinay and Darbelnet (2000) are comprised of: “borrowing” (directly from the source language), “calque” (maintaining the structure from the source), and “literal translation”, these first three belonging to the direct translation category, followed by “transposition” (changing the grammatical structure), “modulation” (a change in the point of view), “equivalence” (used in translating idioms) and “adaptation” (used when translating cultural elements). Alongside this framework, it is essential to mention the seventeen translation techniques identified by Molina and Albir (2002), who agree with Vinay and Darbelnet on the seven, however suggesting the addition of other methods circulated in the field

for a more complete view, such as: “amplification”, “compensation”, “description”, “discursive creation”, “generalization”, “linguistic amplification”, “linguistic compression”, “particularization”, “reduction”, “substitution” and “variation”.

These techniques are suitable for the following analysis due to the nature of the text, which requires creativity in order to not produce a fitting translation. In this type of case, the translator may for example opt to use words adjacent to the one translated, or replace them with synonymous structures, which would benefit from a more in-depth method of categorization alongside the seven main strategies identified by Vinay and Darbelnet (2000).

Approaching the subject at hand, difficulties specific to Japanese-English translation must be mentioned. The issues relevant to the text in question mainly stem from grammatical differences between the two languages. First, English usually follows a Subject-Verb-Object order, whereas Japanese uses a Subject-Object-Verb pattern, leading to a necessary rearrangement of words in translation. Japanese is also very context-heavy and prone to suggestion rather than outright expression, being filled with subtleties and nuance, whereas English is oftentimes a more direct language. With this in mind, differences in the use of pronouns comes to mind: the English language always uses the subject, whereas in Japanese it is often omitted as it can be grasped from the context and pronouns in general are very rarely used. Japanese is also very strict when it comes to politeness and societal status, changing the forms of the verbs as well as the method of addressing someone depending on their relation to the speaker, a particularity which may prove difficult to transpose into English, where there is no direct equivalent with the same impact. One other issue, yet again clarified by context, is the lack of distinction between the present and future tense in Japanese. This ambiguity can be tricky to render in English where the tense is unambiguous.

Other differences can be identified in terms of culture, which leads to the difficult choice of foreignization versus domestication. The writing system specific to Japan may also pose a challenge to the translator as it is composed of two syllabaries with specific uses, combined with ideograms. These two difficulties are however merely mentioned and will not be given special attention in the following analysis, as they are not relevant. This is due to the fact that specific cultural elements are not present and the text in question is oral, not accompanied by writing.

No matter the language pair in question, audiovisual translation differs from literary translation and must be presented separately. This type of translation is notoriously difficult due to the plethora of restrictions it is surrounded by. This includes space and timing limitations, both in the case of subtitling and dubbing. However, translators of audiovisual content have access to a clearer text, being helped both by visuals and nonverbal communication as well as intonation, which may provide a better understanding of the text. Audiovisual translation is characterized by a need for flexibility as it involves many variables which must be taken into account for a successful translation. In order to solve difficulties that arise during the translation process, creativity is often required, alongside the ability to make decisions related to which elements are to be considered important and which are to be deemed disposable in a situation where such a choice is required.

Though subtitling and dubbing both belong to the audiovisual translation genre, the approaches used by the translators and the rules they are subject to could not be more different. When translating subtitles, the lines must be short enough to fit the screen while at the same time being easily readable for the audience within the time the character utters the sentence in question. This often leads to the translation being more concise in order to satisfy these requirements.

Though countries have different preferences when it comes to subtitling versus dubbing, with some opting to dub most audiovisual texts, one constant is that dubbing is frequently used in children’s films and cartoons. This is a choice made to the benefit of the audience in question,

making the translation accessible to them, by removing the need to read, which some viewers may not be able to do at the required pace.

Even outside of media targeting children as the main audience, “[...] one of the advantages of dubbing is that it leaves the semiotic structure of the film intact, because there is no extra layer added onto the image, as in subtitling, where written information activates a third reception mode” (Filimon, 2017:147). For this reason, dubbed media may be preferred over subtitled media by viewers.

In terms of translation, in the case of dubbing, the text must not only be utterable in the same timeframe as the original, but it must also follow the mouth movements of the character on screen. This poses additional difficulties as the meaning of the text must be preserved while visual elements are to be simultaneously taken into account. Synchronization is very important in order to obtain a final product that looks natural, with viewers of the dub not being distracted by discrepancies between the video and the audio.

According to Chaume (2004:43) there are three types of synchronization used in dubbing, namely: phonetic synchrony, kinetic synchrony and isochrony. Phonetic synchrony refers to adapting the translation in order for it to match the mouth movements of the character uttering them, especially in the case of close-up shots. Thus “the translation should particularly respect the open vowels and bilabial and labio-dental consonants pronounced on screen” (Chaume 2004:43). The second type, kinetic synchrony refers to the relation between the movement of the characters and what they are saying. This means their actions must match the translated text and not go against it. The final type, isochrony, refers to the actual duration of the translated line matching the time when the characters open and close their mouths.

In the case of cartoons and animations, as the characters are drawn, they are not actually enunciating, but rather are made to emulate the mouth shapes during speech, making synchronization easier than in the case of a live-action using actors. Depending on the art and animation, phonetic synchrony may be more or less difficult to achieve, for example comparing a highly realistic art style with stop-motion animation. Anime being stylized in terms of characters makes phonetic synchrony a less daunting requirement, however, attention must still be paid to it, alongside kinetic synchrony and isochrony.

As Adachi (2012:4) mentions, the popularity of anime, which has spread to America (and the world at large) not only via legitimate means, but also through internet hosting websites has led to fan-subtitles and fan-dubs. These fan-made translations in turn have sometimes had an impact on official translations. The phenomenon in question is also important due to the fact that the popularization of Japanese media has a ripple effect, with the public often times becoming interested in the language itself. This in turn leads to more learners and speakers of the language, giving rise to better translations.

Adachi (2012:7) further argues that despite anime being so impactful, research has strayed away from it due to its novelty and its perception as animation for children, reflected both in Japanese academia, as well as in other countries.

Due to the lack of studies, there is no set method for analysing anime dub translations in order to compare this paper and the results with previous research. However, in terms of methods, though not focused on anime or the Japanese language specifically, theories pertaining to song translation can be used, alongside the general synchronization concepts by Chaume (2004) mentioned above.

And lastly, moving on from the bird's eye view of general translation, audiovisual translation and dubbing, the more specific song translation guidelines are to be explored. Song translation is in many ways similar to poetry translation, in the sense that it must preserve the form of the original, with the rhythm and rhyme present, while still being faithful to the meaning of the text. However, song translation poses additional challenges brought by its audio nature.

In order to assess the quality of a song translation, the criteria formulated by Low (2003) are invaluable as they cover important aspects which extend further than the text itself. The pentathlon proposed is comprised of singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm and rhyme.

The first criterion, singability, is difficult to quantify as it is related to the ease with which the translated song can be sung, with the main objective of being as close to the original as possible. This means that difficult consonant or word clusters must be avoided as they may lead to issues in pronunciation, affecting other criteria, such as rhythm. Special attention should be given to moments of stress and emphasis in the song in order to select appropriate words. In summary, singability may therefore be assessed in terms of how the final product sounds and whether it fits the music or presents parts that do not sound as they are supposed to when compared to the source material they are mirroring.

The second criterion, sense, refers to the text itself, looking at the target text versus the source text. This criterion is concerned with whether the meaning is properly expressed in the resulting product, denoting proper understanding of the initial song by the translator.

The third criterion, naturalness, is also related to the contents of the text itself, this time not concerned with the meaning, but rather whether the resulting text sounds natural to a native in terms of expression. This is an important criterion in song translation as the lyrics must be easy to understand when the song is presented, without causing confusion or forcing the listener to think about the potential meaning of a less common word or structure.

The fourth criterion, rhythm, is focused on the form of the text, rather than the meaning. This is used to assess how well the translation fits the music it is layered on top of, with particular regard to the number of syllables. This is due to the fact that having more or less syllables than the original will lead to a difference in the way the words are sung.

The final criterion, rhyme, refers to repeating sounds at the end of lines, bearing in mind how they are pronounced rather than how they are written. Rhymes can be essential to the integrity of songs, however, at times, they may need to be sacrificed if no rhyming equivalent can be found in order to not affect other important criteria, such as rhythm or sense. However, rhyme is not always present in songs, making it a criterion that should be taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis as it may not be applicable.

By taking into account this pentathlon of criteria by Low (2003) focused on songs, together with the synchronization types defined by Chaume (2004) in regards to dubbing, and with a view to the general translation techniques suggested by Vinay and Darbelnet (2000) as well as Molina and Albir (2002), the quality of a song translation may be assessed while determining the potential reasoning behind the choices of the translator. Through the following case study of a dubbed song, namely an anime opening, from Japanese into English, these theories may be observed in practice. Revealing potential difficulties, this paper may further aid other translators by providing them with a more in-depth understanding of the subject and solutions that have been applied.

3. “Hataraku saibō” (2018)

Background

“Hataraku saibō” is first and foremost a Japanese manga series, serialized between 2015 and 2021, with 6 volumes. The manga was adapted into an anime with two seasons, airing between 2018 and 2021.

The story follows the lives of cells inside the human body, fulfilling their normal tasks. The main character is AE3803, a rookie erythrocyte with a poor sense of direction, setting the story in motion by the various troubles she encounters. The other main character is U-1146, a neutrophil who combats various enemies of the body. The anime is educational as it portrays important and, to some degree, accurate information about the human body and the way it

works. By using flashy anime visuals and comedy it manages to draw in teens, the target audience being “shōnen” (“boys”, more specifically adolescent boys).

In terms of translation, the manga was published in English by Kodansha between 2016 and 2022, with a complete box-set coming to stores in 2022, the translation being only one year behind the actual Japanese release. The dub of the first season of the anime, which is what this paper is concerned with, premiered on April 29th, 2021 on the streaming website Crunchyroll, specializing in anime content.

Analysis

The opening itself does not consist of characters singing on screen, rather it is a compilation of scenes from the actual anime, introducing characters, setting the mood and foreshadowing future events. In this case, phonetic synchrony and isochrony are not applicable as the mouths of the singers are not visible. However, kinetic synchrony is applicable as words may still relate to the actions showed on screen, therefore the enunciation should be synchronized with its correspondent.

The song starts with a few lines that are already sung in English in the source text, “One, two, three, four. We are cells at work!”, lines which were kept as-is, meaning no translation had to be performed. They are sung in exactly the same way both in the source, as well as in the target material, posing no issues in term of synchrony or the song translation qualities formulated by Low. The following line, however, “We are hataraku”, is partly in English, partly in Japanese. This was translated as “We are working for you”, using direct translation for the verb “hataraku”, meaning “to work”. As most other verbs in the song, the verb is in the present/future plain form, denoting a casual, friendly style, rather than a formal, polite one. Additionally, “for you” is added to the verb, an information which is not specified in the original text, therefore it would qualify as “linguistic amplification”. This choice was likely made in order to preserve the rhythm of the song, as “working”, the English translation of “hataraku” only had two syllables without this addition. By doing so, the 6-syllable line is kept in the target text, alongside the ending vowel “u” making it sound close to the original. This translation however does not have the same effect on the target audience as the source text would, considering the fact that it is fully in English rather than bilingual. The use of English loanwords and English phrases in Japanese therefore poses a difficulty in translation.

Following this introduction, the line “Kyō mo hakobu yo sanso sanso” (literally: today also carry oxygen oxygen) was translated as “Another day of sending O2, O2”. The more specific “kyō” (“today”) was translated as “day” via “generalization”, however by placing it adjacent to “another” it can be inferred that it refers to the current day, not just a day in general. Though “hakobu” means “to carry” or “to transport”, it was translated as “to send” which is an appropriate verb in the context of the human body and helps respect the rhythm of the song. The same can be said about the usage of the two-syllable “O2” instead of the three-syllable “oxygen”, however changing the register to a more scientific one. These changes result in a line that has the same number of syllables as the original, maintaining the intended rhythm of the song and by preserving this, the kinetic synchrony is also kept, the enunciation of “O2” coinciding with the character depicted carrying a box of oxygen. It is worth mentioning that the particle “yo”, denoting a new information that the speaker wishes to convey to the listener, is ignored, having no equivalent in the target language.

In the case of the next line, “Karada-chū no sumi kara sumi e” (literally: from the corners of the whole body to the corners) the translator first uses direct translation “All throughout the body”, while choosing a version that has more syllables in order to match the rhythm of this long line. However, the second part of the line is transformed into “every nook and cranny filled”, once again a case of “linguistic amplification” as the meaning is preserved, albeit more stressed, and the form is expanded. Once again, these changes make the translation sound very similar to the source text, keeping the rhythm via number of syllables.

Though the following line, “Dakedo hirokute maigo maigo” (literally: but spacious and lost child, lost child”), omits the subject, from the context of the video it can be deduced that it is still referring to the main character, who is now shown looking confused while transporting the previously mentioned oxygen. The translation “But it's confusing and now I'm lost, I'm lost” first of all replaces the potential two-syllable “spacious” with the three-syllable “confusing” in order to preserve the rhythm, it adds the first-person subject, once again using “linguistic amplification” as the method. Conversely, the “lost child” is merely translated as merely “lost”, using the opposing method, “reduction”. However, “I’m lost” is slightly difficult to pronounce due to the consonant cluster, mildly affecting singability.

The final lines of the first stanza, “Tedasukesareteru hataraku saibō / Sā, ikō!” (literally: being helped work cells / come on, let's go) rhyme and in order to preserve this, as well as match the rhythm, the translator opted for “Though we may seem helpless, we are cells at work for you and so / Here we go”. By interpreting “being helped” as “though we may seem helpless”, the translator yet again uses “linguistic amplification”, adding both meaning as well as words themselves. In the second half of the first line “we are cells at work for you and so” the translation still uses “linguistic amplification” as it specifies both the subject and the object of the “work” while also using “transposition”, turning the plain form verb “work” into “at work”. The structure “and so” is simply used in order to preserve the rhyme with the following “Here we go” which eliminates the demand or invitation found in the original with a more neutral statement while still specifying the originally omitted subject.

Next is the chorus, which was translated freely in order to fit the rhythm by sacrificing sense, turning “Hataraku zo hataraku zo” (literally: let's work, let's work) and “Mainichi mainichi shugyō-chū” (literally: everyday everyday training during) into “Let's get down to work! Let's get down to work! / Every day's a struggle, but I gotta pull through”. The repetition in the first line is maintained, however, it is omitted in the second line. Worth mentioning is that final word of the second line, “through” ends in the same sound as “shugyō-chū” bringing it closer to the source song. In the second rendition of this chorus with the word “senjō” (literally: battlefield) replaces “shugyō-chū”. Once again, the repetition of “mainichi” is omitted, the translation “Every day's a battlefield” mirroring the previously discussed “Every day's a struggle”. This is followed by “you better prepare”, which, alongside “but I gotta pull through”, is the translator's own contribution, having no relation to the source material. These additions are used in order to match the rhythm of the song and can be classified as “amplification”, reflecting the positive attitude and tone of the characters.

In the following stanza, the focus shifts from AE3803 to U-1146, with an appropriate voice actor change in the dub as well, switching from a high-pitched feminine register to a masculine and authority-filled voice. In terms of lyrics, “zakkin”, a broad term denoting microorganisms, germs, bacteria, fungi and so on, was left untranslated in the first line, turning “Kyō mo zakkin haijo haijo” (literally: today also germs eliminate eliminate) into “Another day I'm out here slicing, slicing”, sentence lacking a direct object. The verb “haijo” meaning “eliminate” was translated as “slicing” which is less accurate in terms of sense, however, the translation compensates in kinetic synchrony. The enunciation of “slicing, slicing” matches a scene where the white blood cell slices with his knives on screen, matching the rhythm of the lyric. The next line, “Saikin uirusu dete koi ya” (literally: bacteria virus come out) was translated as “Filthy germs and viruses, show your ugly face”, emphasizing the disgust of the character towards the mentioned organisms. In the original Japanese, this aggression is simply expressed through voice acting and the colloquial masculine particle “ya” which is an imperative exclamation, difficult to transfer into English due to the abundance of meaning behind a single syllable.

The following line, “Zettai nidasu na yūsō yūsō” (literally: definitely don't let get away, cell migration, cell migration) was translated as “Won't let 'em get away, I'll chase 'em, chase

'em", omitting the adverb "definitely" while specifying the object of the verb "'em" which is absent in the source. Conversely, in the second half, the term "yūsō", meaning "cell migration", was paraphrased and generalized, while also adding a subject "I" and, again, the object "'em". These changes were necessary due to the particularities of the English language which, unlike Japanese, usually require a subject and an object in sentences. This led to the need to condense the word "them" in order to preserve the rhythm of the song. Staying true the source material, the repetition is kept, bringing the form of the translation closer to it.

The final lines of this stanza are almost identical to the ones in the first stanza, with one change, "tedasukesareteru" being replaced by "Purofesshonaru na" (literally: professional). The translator opted for "We are professionals", using "transposition", as "professional" was an adjective in the source text, as well as once again specifying the subject. In order to preserve the rhythm, as opposed to "we are" in the first stanza, the words are now contracted into "we're". Once again this is a word stemming from English, therefore the impact on the target audience is different than the one on the source audience, as the bilingual nature of the sentence is omitted.

Following this stanza comes the bridge, transforming "Sanjyu nana chō ko no hitori / Tsugi ni aeru no wa itsu ka na?" (literally: Of the 37 trillion pieces one (person) / next able to meet when will it be I wonder) into "37 trillion and we are only two / Still I hope that one day soon, we'll meet again", altering the meaning of the lyrics. Though the Japanese line refers to only one single person, in the English dub this is interpreted as referring to both main characters, AE3803 and U-1146. Though the meaning is not present in the source text, this modification may not sound unnatural to the target audience due to the next line once again referring to them, as well as the fact that the line is sung by both of them. In the following line, the feeling of wonder that is presented in the line through the "ka na" ending is transformed into a hopeful statement rather than a question in the English version alongside using "linguistic amplification" by adding other elements such as the words "Still", "one day", "soon" and "again". These are not present in the source text however they preserve the naturalness of the sentence for English audiences.

The next part, still in the bridge of the song, is the one that is furthest in terms of meaning from the source material, being interpreted by the translator in order to fit the tune. In Japanese, the two very similar lines, "Dare ka no tame ni" and "Minna no tame ni", meaning "For anyone's sake" and "For everyone's sake" were translated as "Though we don't know who you are" and "No matter what kind of strife", straying away from the original. Another deviation from Low's pentathlon is in terms of rhyme, which is non-existent in the Japanese song in this section of the song, however, appearing in English as "strife – life". Surprisingly, singability is also improved, as in Japanese "Isshō kenmei" is a difficult to pronounce consonant cluster making the song sound strained during this line. In English, however, this is translated as "For your sake we're working hard" which is easier to pronounce and thus, sing. Despite these changes, the naturalness and rhythm are kept intact.

The final line of this stanza contains the saying "Ken kou dai ichi" which is a standard phrase in Japanese used to point out the importance of health, which was translated via "equivalence" into "health comes first" rendering both sense and naturalness to the target audience. This is also present in the title of the song which is called "Mission! Ken kou dai ichi" in Japanese and rendered as "Mission! Health Comes First", being consistent with the translation of the lyrics. An important mention here is that the word "mission" was borrowed in the Japanese title, therefore it was kept as-is in English, requiring no further translation.

The ending of the song is comprised of the simple form verb "hataraku" (literally: work) used as both a question and an answer. Due to the ambiguity surrounding Japanese language this can be interpreted in terms of subject, however, the situation is somewhat clarified by the fact that different voice actors are pronouncing it every time, making it a question-answer

exchange. The tone does not differ significantly, therefore there was no need for modifications from one “hataraku” to the next, the translator leaving their touch on the final product by transferring the lines as "Are you working? / Yes, I'm working / Are you working? / 'Course I'm working!" however, keeping the repetition, rhyme and rhythm of the song. The final “hataraku”, pronounced by all the voice actors together is translated as “Working for you!”, losing the rhyme with the previous lines, however, ending the song on the same vowel as in the original, in order to maintain singability, as it would have been difficult to end it in a consonant, such as the letter “g” from “working”. The structure “working for you” and “at work for you” is also recurring in the song, making it a cohesive choice to end the song on, highlighting the theme.

Overall, the dub of the song presented no issues in term of synchrony due to the small number of situations where it was relevant, as the characters were not shown singing on screen. In terms of song translation itself, singability was maintained, as the translation sounds very similar to the source material without any difficulties that can be heard by the audience, the translation is natural and easy to understand, without uncommon phrasing. The rhythm and rhyme are respected, taking into account the number of syllables from the original and the sense or meaning of the material is kept intact, with notable instances of “generalization”, “amplification”, “omission” and “transposition”, translation techniques which are indispensable in order to preserve the audio-visual properties of the text.

4. Conclusions

When faced with a task as difficult as dubbing a song, translators must pay attention to a wide array of aspects, making it a complex solution-oriented process involving creativity. In order to produce an enjoyable final product, all three types of synchrony, namely isochrony, phonetic synchrony and kinetic synchrony, must be taken into account, meanwhile respecting Low’s pentathlon of song translation, comprised of singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm and rhyme. However, respecting all the principles enumerated above is a near impossible task, therefore, translators must decide on what aspects may be sacrificed partially or even fully.

In order to be able to transmit the original message as well as keep the form of the text as close to the source material as possible, translators employ several techniques in the process. In the case study discussed in this paper, with particular regard to Japanese-English translation, the translator opted for a wide array of methods in order to achieve this, such as “amplification”, “compensation”, “generalization”, “linguistic amplification”, “literal translation”, “particularization” and “transposition”, as well as “omission”. All of these techniques helped preserve the meaning as well as keep the rhythm intact. Due to the fact that no characters were speaking on screen, isochrony and phonetic synchrony were irrelevant, leading to more freedom than usual in the dub translation.

Overall, taking into account the difficulties posed by the audiovisual translation genre, the English dub of “Hataraku saibō” (2018) comes very close to the source material, more often than not respecting the guidelines proposed by Chaume (2004) and Low (2003) while succeeding in transmitting the intended message to the target audience. The biggest gap between the translation and the source material is found in the bridge, where the translator played with the meaning and rhyme in order to keep the rhythm and naturalness intact while also improving singability.

This type of analysis could potentially be reproduced with other anime openings in order to establish if there are any trends or patterns in Japanese-English song dub translation. Therefore, this paper aims to open the discussion and pave the way for future research which is much needed in the emerging field of anime studies.

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Notes on the author

Andrea Putnoky is currently a PhD student at the Doctoral School of Humanities of West University of Timisoara. Her thesis focuses on the translation of Japanese literature into Romanian, comparing translation via intermediaries with direct translations. Her thesis uses two works by Yasunari Kawabata, *Senbazuru* and *Yama no oto*, as the corpus, focusing on the translation of cultural elements, especially realia. Her research topics extend to Japanese-English translation, as well as Japanese audio-visual media, including subtitling and dubbing in the case of anime and songs.

Annex 1 – lyrics

Japanese (romanized)	English dub
1 2 3 4 We Are Cells at Work 1 2 3 4 We Are hataraku!	1234 We are cells at work! 1234 We are working for you!
Kyō mo hakobu yo sanso sanso Tai-chū no sumi kara sumi e Da kedo hiroku te maigo maigo Tedasuke sareteruhataraku saibō Sā, ikō!	Another day of sending O2, O2, All throughout the body, every nook and cranny filled But it's confusing and now I'm lost, I'm lost! Though we may seem helpless, we are cells at work for you and so Here we go!
Hataraku zo! hataraku zo! Mainichi mainichi shugyō-chū Ooh!	Let's get down to work! Let's get down to work! Every day's a struggle, but I gotta pull through
Kyō mo zakkin haijo haijo Saikin uirusu dete koi ya! Zettai nigasu na yūsō yūsō Purofesshonaru na hataraku saibō Sā, ikō!	Another day I'm out here slicing, slicing Filthy germs and viruses, show your ugly face! Won't let 'em get away, I'll chase 'em, chase 'em We are professionals, we're cells at work for you and so Here we go!
Hataraku zo! hataraku zo! Mainichi mainichi senjō	Let's get down to work! Let's get down to work! Every day's a battlefield - you better prepare
Sanjyu nana chō ko no hitori Tsugi ni aeru no wa itsu ka na?	37 trillion and we are only two Still I hope that one day soon, we'll meet again

Japanese (romanized)	English dub
Dare ka no tame ni (dare ka no tame ni)	Though we don't know who you are (though we don't know who you are)
Isshō kenmei (issshō kenmei)	
Anata mo watashi mo hisshi ni hataraiteru	For your sake, we're working hard (for your sake, we're working hard)
Minna no tame ni (minna no tame ni)	
Inochigake da zo (inochigake da zo)	All of us together are supporting you with all of our hearts
Puraido motte Ken. kou. dai. ichi	No matter what kind of strife (no matter what kind of strife)
	Each of us would risk our life (each of us would risk our life)
	We always take pride in what we do and health comes first!
Hataraku? hataraku.	"Are you working?" "Yes, I'm working"
Hataraku? hataraku!	"Are you working?" "Course I'm working!"
Hataraku!	Working for you!

Source: <https://www.animesonglyrics.com/hataraku-saibou/mission-kenkoudahi>