



شبكة المعلومات الجامعية
التوثيق الإلكتروني والميكرو فيلم

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم



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Translating Humour in Audiovisual Texts: A Technical Comparative Study of the Arabic Dubbing and Subtitling of Selected Multicultural Disney Animated Movies

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Dedication

To those who inspired it and will not read it

To the soul of my beloved aunt, Samira.

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Abstract

This is a comparative study of the Arabic dubbing and subtitling of some Disney animated movies. It attempts to explore problematic areas of analysis that humour translation might present, how humour was translated in dubbing and subtitling and whether it had lost its power to amuse in the target culture. The study particularly looks at the restrictions and guidelines for dubbing and subtitling, and investigates how they differ in the data and which of them is more faithful to the source language and culture. This is achieved by adopting a product-based cross-cultural approach to humorous discourse for the analysis, accounting for both: the need for the text to be enjoyable for the target audience as well as the respect of the original author's intent. The study traces back the main premises of humour represented in the Incongruity theory adopted by Immanuel Kant (1790) and refined later by Arthur Schopenhauer (1819). It relies on The General Theory of Verbal Humour, developed by Salvatore Attardo and Victor Raskin (1991) as an extension and revision of Victor Raskin's Script-based Semantic Theory of Humour (1985) and Patrick Zabalbeascoa (1996) humour typology. Believing that in crossing geographical borders humour risks losing its power to amuse, or even disappear beyond its culture of origin, the study explores how the comic effect and humour are rendered in some Disney animated movies. This will be done through analyzing the dubbing and subtitling of these movies while investigating the challenges of these two modes of translation and the extent to which they are faithful to the ST as outlined in the classification of strategies by Cintas and Ramael (2007). The study also addresses the code-switching used in some of the films in question. The films under examination are *Aladdin* (1992), *Hercules* (1997), *Mulan* (1998), *The Princess and The Frog* (2009), and *Moana* (2016). These are selected for their multicultural themes and characters. The study shows that the translation strategies used by the translator differ significantly between subtitling and dubbing; because subtitling has been found to be faithful to reproducing the exact semantic content of the SL. Dubbing, on the other hand, is faithful to the function of the ST; namely creating a humorous effect.

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Introduction

Since the 1930s, Disney has been well-known for its animated films. Although their stories or adaptations are often different, there is one common element that can be found in many, if not most, of these films, namely humour, both visual and verbal. Given the fact that humour plays a large part in these films, it is vital for the enjoyment of the target audiences that this humour is translated in a satisfactory way. As Vandaele points out, humour frequently relies on cultural or linguistic aspects that differ between the source and target cultures and languages, which means translators may be posed with challenges when they are required to translate humour (2010:149-150). With the advent of technologies, globalization and global digitalization, new forms of intercultural transfer have emerged. Audiovisual products are “a powerful vehicle for the transmission of assumptions, moral values, commonplaces and stereotypes among cultures” (Diaz Cintas, 2012:280). Hence, there is an overriding need for audiovisual translation (AVT) as a distinct form of language transfer.

Context of study

AVT is a fast-growing research area in translation studies. It generally involves the transfer from one language to another of the verbal and non-verbal components contained in audiovisual works and products, intended for cinema, television, or video. It makes it possible for audience to enjoy audiovisual products that comes from different cultures in their own languages. As the word suggests, audiovisuals are made to be both heard (audio) and seen (visual) simultaneously but they are primarily meant to be seen. Hence, AVT is a special type of translation, mainly due to the presence of image and sound. The AVT process is even more complex when it comes to translating humour, as humourous effect in audiovisual texts is achieved through an infinite number of resources. The fact that the means to achieve comic effects are countless and not always shared in cultures, undoubtedly challenges the translator in several ways.

Humour is one of the defining aspects of humanity and represents different areas of human life. It relies on infinite cultural and linguistic aspects that differ between source and target cultures and languages. Therefore, the role and skills of the translator as a creative problem-solver and adapter is central. Animated movies are among the most difficult audiovisual texts to

be translated not only because they fall under AVT category where the visual and acoustic source text (ST) elements need to be interpreted together with what is uttered, but also because of their audience that can be children and adults alike. In the final analysis, it is the audience's ability to reinterpret the translated product that plays a major role in its final appreciation and enjoyment.

The modes of AVT that are taken into account in this study are dubbing and subtitling, being the two most frequent forms of this type of translation. Subtitling is a type of AVT that has its own specifications; a translation that has restrictions of time and space. Technical processing of subtitling including timing, spatial constraints and synchronization attaches a higher level of difficulty to translating humour. Given the cross-cultural shared and/or non-shared knowledge and that humour is a socio-cultural phenomenon, what is funny and humorous in one culture may seem humourless in another, a translator must find alternatives that help him/her realize the intended humorous effect in the target culture. This can be achieved through adopting several translation strategies, ranging from literal translation to "complete recreation" of the text. (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007: 200).

As for dubbing, the main technical issues translators have to face while dubbing include the impossibility of adding captions or descriptions for things that may be incomprehensible for the target audience of different cultures, along with the necessity of synchronizing the dubbed text with the original lip-movements of the actors delivering the ST. Therefore, the acoustic element needs to match with the visual one in order to achieve a target text (TT), that is linguistically, culturally and pragmatically equivalent (Iaia, 2015:13). The visual constraint should be highly respected in dubbing audiovisual texts. The translated text should contain more or less the same words as the original script, in order to remain faithful to the ST. The lines have to give the impression of being uttered in the target language, trying to produce expressions that are produced by means of similar lip movements in both the original and translated versions. Moreover, utterances should not be perceived as "estranged", if related to visual context that completes the audiovisual text. The purpose of dubbing and subtitling is usually to make audiovisual material available for a broader group of audience. However, the extent of their usage differs between different countries and to some extent also depending on the target audience. "It is known that historical factors, financial means, cultural background, political orientation,

linguistic choices and geographical dynamics have influenced countries around the world in choosing the form which better suited them" (Perego & Taylor, 2012:25).

Due to the differences between these two types of translation, it is to be expected that there will also be differences between the subtitled and dubbed translations of the same texts. In this study, the different translations of instances of humour of the same animated Disney films are compared in order to see how these differ from each other. The nature of these two modes of AVT as well as the importance of realizing humour in these texts will be taken into account. Most of the research conducted in AVT focuses on subtitling, being the most common AVT modality. Dubbing also draws research, particularly in countries that have deep-rooted dubbing traditions such as France, Italy, Germany and Spain. However, studies that comparatively tackle subtitling and dubbing are still limited.

Moreover, previous studies have attempted to describe the strategies used to render specific aspects of humour in languages and cultures that are different from the languages and the cultures in which the products in question has originally been conceived. They have all attempted to explain what it means to deal with humour in translation, and to understand the reasons for certain translation tendencies and choices that have determined the success or failure, of a given product (Perego, 2014:10). Most AVT published studies are case studies that consider the rendering of humour in subtitling, excluding the analysis of the complex role played by cultural and non-verbal features and how they affect the resulting translations.

Since language and culture are indivisible, and that a joke has linguistic features and sociocultural references, which are often bound to particular language and culture, a joke or humour in general runs the risk of not being understood and appreciated outside its culture-bound context. In fact, some sorts of humour play on both linguistic and cultural levels, making the task of a translator even more complicated. Understanding a particular form of humour requires a shared knowledge, which does not normally exist in case of translation between the source and target cultures. Another problem arises when a translator deals with humour that involves culturally unacceptable elements, which violate social and moral rules of the target culture, such as taboo language. Therefore, the translator must apply certain strategies to ensure that these elements do not offend the target audience.

The present study aims at: first, analyzing the dubbing and subtitling of the selected audiovisual texts of Disney's animated movies from a cross-cultural interdisciplinary approach within the framework of the Incongruity theory adopted by Immanuel Kant (1790) and refined later by Arthur Schopenhauer (1819), and The General Theory of Verbal Humour developed by Salvatore Attardo and Victor Raskin (1991) as an extension and revision of Raskin's Script-based Semantic Theory of Humour (1985), in order to examine how comic effect and humour are rendered, while paying special attention to the fact that animated movies are among the most difficult audiovisual texts to be translated, not only because they fall under AVT category, where the visual and acoustic source text elements need to be interpreted together with what is uttered, but also because of their audience that can be children and adults alike. Second, establishing the extent to which the different component of audiovisual message influences the translation. Third, investigating the issues that humour translation might present while taking into account the need for the text to be enjoyable for the target audience as well as the respect of the original author's intent. Finally, looking into the restrictions and guidelines for dubbing and subtitling in order to see how they differ from each other and which of them is more faithful to the source language and culture. The study also touches on the code-switching used in one of the films in question, especially that there has been a heated controversy in the past few years over Disney's decision in 2012 to start using Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in dubbing its animated movies into Arabic.

The data of the present study is the Arabic subtitled and dubbed DVD versions of Disney animated movies: *Aladdin* (1992), *Hercules* (1997), *Mulan* (1998), *The Princess and The Frog* (2009), and *Moana* (2016). The audiovisual texts chosen are animated movies; this genre creates a certain style of expression and consequently affects how the translator transposes the original dialogue if harmony is to be established between the character we see on the screen and what s/he is supposed to be saying in the translation. For the purpose of this analysis, these five Disney movies are specifically chosen for their multicultural themes and characters. The characters belong to different cultural backgrounds including the Greek, the Chinese, the African-American, the Middle-Eastern and the Polynesian. Culture-bound humour often presents a dilemma: the translator can either abandon the idea of perfect fidelity and instead try to find humour that rings some of the same bells in the target text as the ST or risk losing the target audience with a "cryptic" allusion and over explanation.

Research Questions

With the aim of gaining a proper understanding of subtitling and dubbing of humour, this study sets out to attempt to answer the following questions: (1) Can humour be transferred between different languages and cultures without losing its amusing effect, given the fact that humour has linguistic and sociocultural references? (2) What are the restrictions and guidelines for translating humour through dubbing and subtitling? (3) How do they differ from each other in terms of faithfulness to the source language and culture? (4) To what extent do the unique technical constraints of subtitling affect the process of translation? (5) To what extent do the different components of audiovisual texts (i.e. non-verbal features) influence the translation of the text? (6) Does the audience have a role to play in determining the final product of the translated humour in audiovisual texts?

Methodology

The study follows a technical comparative approach as it compares between subtitling and dubbing. The analysis in chapter two of the present study is based on Zabalbeascoa's Humour Typology where the dubbing and subtitling of films are analyzed and evaluated according to the strategies proposed by Cintas and Ramael (2007), while classifying the categories of analysis horizontally as per Zabalbeascoa (1996) humour typology. In chapter three, the subtitled and dubbed instances of humour are analyzed also according to the classification of strategies proposed by Cintas and Ramael (2007) while classifying the categories of analysis into synchronization and visual constraint to determine whether humour can be transferred between different languages and cultures without having to violate the technical constraints of AVT and without losing its amusing effect.

Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The introduction sets out the context of the study, the research hypotheses, and the central problem. Chapter one provides the theoretical framework as it investigates in detail the Incongruity theory, the Semantic Script Theory of Humour, the General Theory of Verbal Humour and the typology of suggested translation strategies. Chapter Two analyzes the dubbing and subtitling of *Aladdin*

(1992) and *Hercules* (1997), while classifying the categories of analysis as per Zabalbeascoa (1996) humour typology. The dubbing and subtitling of the selected films are analyzed from a cross-cultural interdisciplinary approach; along with the translation strategies used by both modalities to examine how comic effect is rendered and to find out how the strategies affect the translation quality in terms of accuracy and acceptability by target audience. Chapter Three focuses on the technical constraints of the dubbing and subtitling processes and how they pose a challenge for humour translation in *Mulan* (1998) and *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) and *Moana* (2016). A comparative technical analysis of the subtitled and dubbed instances of humour is applied in order to determine whether humour can be transferred between different languages and cultures without having to violate the technical constraints of AVT and without losing its amusing effect. It should be noted that the subtitles of selected examples might include some spelling mistakes. The researcher copied them as is from the DVD versions of Disney animated movies and did not wish to make any changes for the sake of fidelity. The conclusion reports the study findings and provides recommendations for future research. The APA edition observed in the study is the seventh edition (2019).