Original article

Strategies for Translating Idioms Involved in The Dubbed Version of 'Monsters Inc.' Movie for Children

by

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Abstract

This research attempts to investigate the strategies for translating idioms involved in the dubbed version of 'Monsters, Inc.' movie for children from English into Egyptian Arabic. Monsters Inc. is a 2001 American animated comedy film, released by Walt Disney Pictures. The Arabic dubbed version of the movie witnesses a great spread in the Arab world. This paper examines how the product is linguistically and culturally accepted in the target language culture. Moreover, one of the purposes for conducting this study is to explore the technical barriers involved in the process of dubbing. For the purpose of this research, a number of English idiomatic expressions are taken out of 'Monsters, Inc.' movie and are contrastively analyzed with their translations. This research is based on Baker's model of translating idioms which entailed four strategies. The analysis shows that the translator has to realize the fact that idiomatic expressions is composed of a set of words that cannot be dealt with separately to get the meaning of it. The findings show that the dubbed version seems to be more humorous than the source one. This is due to the expressive nature of the Egyptian dialect that has been seen in its huge entity of idiomatic expressions. Evaluating translation as being successful, is judged on reception of the target text as though it were original not a translation.

Key words: idioms, translation, strategies, Dubbing, and Monsters Inc.

إستراتيجيات ترجمة التعابير الإصطلاحية المتضمنة في النسخة المدبلجة من فيلم "شركة المرعبيين المحدودة" للأطفال

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تلقي هذه الدراسة الضوء علي إستراتيجيات ترجمة التعابيرالإصطلاحية وعينة الدراسة عبارة عن فيلم رسوم متحركة أمريكي مدبلج إلي العامية المصرية وهو "شركة المرعبين المحدودة" من إنتاج شركة والت ديزني بيكتشرزعام 2001. وقد شهدت النسخة المدبلجة من الفيلم إنتشاراً ساحقًا بالوطن العربي. تبحث الدراسة كيفية ملائمة الفيلم المترجم وتقبله في ثقافة اللغة المنقول إليها علي الصعيدين اللغوي والثقافي. ومن أهداف الدراسة أيضاً إيضاح الصعوبات التقنية لعملية الدبلجة. وبناءً عليه تمت دراسة وتحليل مجموعة من التعابير الإصطلاحية المأخوذة من فيلم شركة الرعبيين المحدودة بالعربية (العامية المصرية) ونظيراتها الإنجليزية. قامت الباحثة بتطبيق نظرية بيكر(1992) لترجمة التعابير الإصطلاحية والتي تتضمن أربع إستراتيجيات علي النسخة العربية المدبلجة من الإنجليزية. أوضحت النتائج أن النسخة المدبلجة إلي العامية المصرية تتميز بطابع فكاهي واضح مقارنة بالنسخة الأصلية نسبة لطبيعة العامية المصرية المعبرة والزاخرة بتلك النوعية من العبارات الإصطلاحية. وأن علي المترجم الأخذ في الإعتبارأن تلك التعابير الإصطلاحية هي عبارات لا يمكن إدراك كل لفظة بها علي حدة وإلا ضاع المعني، فهي مجموعة كلمات لها دلالة ككل غير الدلالة المعجمية لكل لفظة منفصلة منها وهذه الدلالة تأتي نتيجة لإتفاق جماعة لغوية علي مفهموم هذا التجمع اللفظي. لا ثقافة تخلو من تلك التعابير الإصطلاحية. ومن نتائج تقييم الترجمة كترجمة موفقة ومقبولة في ثقافة اللغة المنقول إليها هو جعل المشاهد العربي يشعر عند مشاهدة الفيلم كأنه نص أصلي غير مصطنع أو مترجم.

I.   Introduction

Translation is a challenging task. This challenge can be noticed in the diversion between languages and cultures. Each language has its own peculiarities which differentiates it from others. The process of translation is not about knowing the meaning of every single word. The awareness of the linguistic and cultural aspects, of the language which is being translated from and into, is no doubt inevitable. Translating idioms is one of the problematic areas which requires paying more attention not only to the linguistic differences between both the source language and the target language but also to the cultural diversions between them. So, the translator has to follow well-thought-out strategies in order to produce a text which is culturally accepted in the target language culture. Each language has its own idiomatic expressions which are impossible to change their word order or grammatical forms. The meaning of these expressions can be understood as a whole. In other words, the idiomatic expression is composed of a set of words that cannot dealt with separately to get the meaning of it.

II. Research Questions

This research is tackled to answer the following questions:

1- What are the strategies which have been mostly focused in translating the idiomatic expressions appeared in 'Monsters, Inc.' movie?

2- What are the technical constrains of the process of dubbing?

3- How the idiomatic expressions are effectively presented in the target language movie?

III. Theoretical Framework

As a starting point, idioms are defined and examined by a vast number of scholars. Shaw (1975) points out that "the word 'idiom' is originally Greek" (p. 24). Idioms are defined by Saddik as (2014) "a fixed group of words with a special meaning which is different from the meanings of the individual words" (p. 79). According to A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics, Crystal (2008) presents a comprehensive definition of idiom. He defines idiom as:

> "a term used in grammar and lexicology to refer to a sequence of words which is semantically and often syntactically restricted, so that they function as a single unit. From a semantic viewpoint, the meaning of individual words cannot be summed to produce the meaning of the idiomatic expression as a whole. From a syntactic viewpoint the words often do not permit the usual variability they display in other contexts .e.g. It's raining cats and dogs not permit it's raining a cat and a dogs"(p. 236).

From the above mentioned definitions, it can be noticed that the lexical elements of an idiom cannot be separated to single units. If the constituents of the idiom is treated individually, the real meaning behind it will be invalid. In this regard, Collis (1994) states that "since the true meaning of an idiom generally cannot be determined by a knowledge of its constituent parts" (p. 5). The difficulty of translating idioms as mentioned by Newmark (1988) is "in translating idiomatic into idiomatic language, it is particularly difficult to match equivalence of meaning with equivalence of frequency" (p. 28). So, the act of translating idioms poses a certain problem. According to Baker (1992), here is the difficulty of translating idioms.

The main problems that idiomatic and fixed expressions pose in translation relate to two main areas: the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly; and the difficulties involved in rendering the various aspects of meaning that an idiom or a fixed expression conveys into the target language (p: 65).

The issue of translating fixed expressions is getting more critical when dealing with such types of audiovisual texts. The constraints of the dubbing process is, as proposed by Laurence Raw (2012), "involving limited space or time frame, as well as untranslatable semantic correlations between text and image. In addition to these technical difficulties, there is always the matter of cultural, linguistic and semantic differences" (p: 31).

No language used in everyday life is free of such idiomatic expressions. They add taste to the language. According to Ghaffari (2001) "without using idioms, the language becomes harsh and unattractive, hence it can be said the words are like a skeleton of the language and the idioms are like its soul. Therefore, incorrect translation of idioms leads to damaging the soul of the language" (p. 2).

Language and culture are inseparable. Language is the tool by which human express their thoughts and feelings. Whether spoken or written, language is an original part of culture. Ferdinand de Saussure claims that language forms the way we think, and that in turn influences culture. Recognizing culture starts from contacting with the language of that given culture. Idioms, fixed expressions, and proverb are regarded as main active parts of each language culture. Translation is not only focused on transferring the meaning from one language into another, but also on the cultural aspects of the language into which the ST will be transferred. The notion of the cultural turn in translation was primarily presented by Bassnett and Lefevere (1990). Cultural translation as defined by Robinson (1997) is "the

process 'not of translating specific cultural texts but of consolidating a wide variety of cultural discourses into a target text that in some sense has no "original", no source text" (p. 43).

Culture has multiple forms. Cinema movies are one of which. Movies are a reflection of the cultures from which they come. From Varga's (2012) view point, "the movies as discourse represents a mimesis of everyday life discourse, a mix of audio, video, verbal and non-verbal elements intended to make a made-up story credible" (357).

Idioms are classified into various types. Burger (1997) divided idioms into two categories "colloquial and belletristic" (p. 234). The former is used for communication in casual conversation; the latter is used in literature in order for showing a purely esthetic function.

Idioms are described by Baker (1992) as "frozen patterns of language" (p. 63). They are also known as 'fixed expressions'. These names go back to some reasons; idioms cannot be changed neither in their wording nor in their grammatical form. The translator deals with them as a whole not as a part of something. It can be said that idioms are holistic and have certain characteristics which distinguish them from other non-idiomatic expressions. In this regard, Baker (2011) also mentions some specific characteristics of idiomatic expressions as follows:

- Idioms cannot accept change in the order of the words they are made of. (e.g. the idiom *the long and the short of it* cannot be *the short and the long of it*;

- Idioms cannot accept a deletion of a word. For instance, the idiomatic expression *spill the beans* cannot be *spill beans*;

- Idioms cannot accept addition of a word. For instance, *the long and the short of it* cannot be *the very long and short of it*; and the idiomatic expression *face the music* cannot be *face the classical music;*

- Idioms cannot accept replacement of one word with another. For example, *the **tall** and the short of it; *bury **a** hatchet*; and

- Idioms cannot accept grammatical structure change. E.g., the idiom *face the music* cannot be *the music was faced* (p: 67).

IV. Methodology

This section shows the procedures of collecting data and the tools utilized during the process of analysis.

IV.1 Data collection and procedures

For the purpose of the present study, a number of translated idioms extracted from the Arabic dubbed version of 'Monsters inc.,' Movie and their English counterparts are examined and analyzed.

The movie under discussion has been collected from http://185.45.14.82/kj2vy2w5em6vtaw52bjj4loogtg6eex72axtzolj4jeiafl2nf5z3kgvxkja/v.mp 4 and its Arabic dubbed version from http://shahidlive.co/Video-1140161. 'Shaid Live' is an internet website which is subject to one of the most widely watched channels in the Arab World, MBC channels group. Monsters Inc. is a 2001 American animated comedy film, produced by Pixar Animation Studios and released by Walt Disney Pictures. Pixar is an American computer animation film studio based in Emeryville, California that is a subsidiary of the Walt Disney Company.

IV.2. Justification of the data selection

Generally speaking, Monsters Inc. is a movie for all ages, whether young or old will probably be interested in watching it. The criterion in choosing this movie is based on reviewing the feedback of critics and a vast number of foreign and Arab audiences. Monsters, Inc. is praised by critics and proved to be a major box office success from its release on November 2, 2001, generating over $577 million worldwide and becoming the third highest-grossing film of 2001 (imdb website, 2018). Up till now, it still wonderful and remarkably charming movie. The Arabic version of the movie also witnesses a great spread in the Arab world. Another justification for selecting a movie produced by Pixar which is owned by the large Company WD, WD is a pioneer company of the production of cartoons and animation industry. To conclude, the main factor for sampling Monsters, Inc., is the success of its both versions, the original and the dubbed; that has been measured, economically, in terms of sales and also in terms of its impact on the target audiences.

IV.3. Analytical procedures

There are some strategies that are employed in transferring the selected idioms from English into Egyptian Arabic through the process of dubbing in order to introduce a product that is suitable to the TLC of specific audiences (children). To sum up, Baker's (1992) model of translating idioms consists of a number of strategies. These strategies are the ones on which the research at hands depends on. The strategies claimed by Baker (1992) are discussed briefly in the following sections.

1-   "Using an idiom of similar meaning and form

This strategy involves using an idiom in the TL which conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source-language idiom and, in addition, consists of equivalent lexical items. Such kind of match can only occasionally be achieved.

2-   Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form

It could be possible to find an idiom or fixed expression in the target language which has a meaning similar to that of the source idiom or expression, but which consists of different lexical items.

3-   Translation by paraphrase

This is so far the most common strategy of translating idioms when a match cannot be found in the TL or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the TT due to differences in stylistic preferences of the source and target languages.

4-   Translation by omission

Similarly as the case with single words, an idiom may sometimes be omitted altogether in the TT. It could be because it has no close match in the TL, its meaning cannot be easily paraphrased, or for stylistic reasons" (p: 72-77).

IV.4. Data Analysis

Example 1

Mike: HEY. HEY, HEY, HEY, HEY!

COME ON, GET LOST, YOU TWO.

YOU'RE MAKING HIM LOSE HIS FOCUS.

مارد وشوني: إيه ده إيه ده إيه ده... ورونا عرض كتافكو هتشوشروا عليه بكلامكم

The translator seems to follow the second strategy of Baker's (1992) model for translating idioms. When translating the English idiom 'get lost, you two' into ورونا عرض كتافكوا. The former phrase is said when telling someone forcefully to go away. He/she utilizes the strategy of "using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form" (p. 74). The target idiom has the same meaning as the source one, but it contains different lexical items.

Example 2

Mike: OH, WE'RE EASY PREY, MY FRIEND-- EASY PREY.
WE'RE SITTING TARGETS.

مارد وشوشني: إحنا صيدة سهلة يا حبيبي لقطة خيبتنا تقيلة

The above mentioned Arabic translation example entails two idioms صيدة سهلة and خيبتنا تقيلة. The source utterance is rendered into familiar cultural expressions to the target audiences. The expression 'لقطة خيبتنا تقيلة' is the colloquial Egyptian Arabic equivalent of 'we are sitting targets'. The word 'لقطة' means 'looking for a catch' and 'خيبتنا تقيلة' denotes disappointment because of something bad one expects to happen. The translator joined the two previous common Egyptian expressions that cognitively give the sense of the original. When comparing the target expressions with their peers in the source, it can be noticed that the first of them 'easy prey' is an English idiom that is translated to صيدة سهلة and the second 'setting target' is not an idiom. It is a collocation, but the translator substitutes it with an Egyptian Arabic idiom خيبتنا تقيلة. So, in the former expression the strategy of using an idiom of similar meaning and form is utilized, but in the latter the translator follows the strategy of translation by paraphrase because of the technical constraints of the dubbing process which force the translator to choose an idiom which fits the movement of the actor's mouth in the Arabic dubbed version.

Example 3

Mike: COME ON, THE COAST IS CLEAR

مارد وشوني: تعالي الدار أمان

In this example, the translator precisely utilizes the strategy of using an idiom with similar meaning and form. No problem is detected in translating the source utterance 'the coast is clear', according to Cambridge Online dictionary, is an idiom means it is safe to do something or go somewhere because no one is watching or listening who would prevent you or catch you.   Idioms are culturally bound expressions. Consequently, translating such fixed expressions is one of the most challenging problems a translator faces, especially, when there is no equivalent idiom in the target language that corresponds with that of the source. Fortunately, the idiom included in the example mentioned earlier, has a clear Arabic equivalent 'الدار أمان' which is commonly used in the spoken target language.

Example 4

Mike: YOU WANT ME TO PROVE EVERYTHING'S ON THE UP-AND-UP?

مارد وشوني: عايز تفهم من طق طق لسلامو عليكوا

Noticeably, the target utterance does not match the wording of the source. According to Collins Online Dictionary, 'on the up-and-up' is an idiom, means strictly honest, respectable, and strait-laced. It is translated into من طق طق لسلاموا عليكوا that is an Arabic idiom means 'to tell a story in details'. The translator does not keep the form of the source and just intends to communicate the function of it. It can be said that the translator follows the strategy of using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form to translate the source idiom.

Example 5

Mike: I WAS JUST THINKING

ABOUT THE FIRST TIME I LAID EYE ON YOU--

HOW PRETTY YOU LOOKED.

مارد وشوشني: كنت بفتكر أول مرة حطيت فيها عيني عليكي أد ايه سحرتيني

   Despite the fact that, word for word translation does not concern with the sense of the source text and causes the target text to be unintelligible. But this case cannot be generalized. Surely, there are exceptions. There are examples of literal translations have taken out of the movie to be used as evidences on these exceptions, as in the above mentioned example. The source utterance is closely transcribed in the original. This is seen in rendering the source idiom 'I laid eye on you' literally into the Egyptian Arabic counterpart idiom 'حطيت عيني عليكي '. It is obvious that the strategy of using an idiom of similar meaning and form is used here.

Example 6

 Celia: LAST NIGHT WAS ONE OF THE WORST NIGHTS

OF MY ENTIRE LIFE, BAR NONE!

سالي: إمبارح كانت ليلة أسود من قرن الخروب والزتون

   In this example, employing the cultural adequacy procedure transfigures the original utterance into an Arabic utterance which is suitable for the target language audiences. Roughly, every culture contains a collection of sayings, idioms, and proverbs, the target statement is one of which. This example contains two idioms, one of them is on the S utterance 'bar none' and the other is on the T one. To put it clearly, the statement ' ليلة أسود من قرن الخروب' (9) is an Arabic idiom denotes something that is very unpleasant happened. But it is not the equivalent of the idiom 'bar none'. The translator here tends to assimilate

three translation strategies to render the above mentioned utterance. He/she pursues translation by paraphrase strategy, using an idiom of similar meaning and dissimilar form strategy, and translation by omission strategy. The translator adds the word والزتون to the Arabic idiom for the purpose of assuring, as mentioned in the source utterance, that this night is one of the worst nights in Sally's life. Additionally, he/she omits the idiom 'bar none' from the target utterance. This omission does not flout the reception of the target.

V.   Conclusion

The main reason behind tackling this topic is to investigate the challenge which has faced the translator during the process of translating such type of expressions. In this sense, dealing with two different languages obliges the translator to be aware of both the linguistic and cultural aspects entailed in both languages. Furthermore, this research deals with the technicalities of the process of dubbing and how these technicalities pose an additional difficulty for the translator besides the issues originally involved in the process of transferring such culture-bound expressions from one language to another.

The notion of misunderstanding idioms is evoked from the fact that idioms cannot be fully understood if the translator looks at the meaning of its words as single units. Furthermore, the detailed analysis of the Egyptian version of Monsters Inc. results in the following concluding remarks. The findings show that the dubbed version seems to be more humorous than the source one. This is due to the expressive nature of the Egyptian dialect that has been seen in its huge entity of idiomatic expressions. Idiomatic expressions are an integral part of daily life conversations. Evaluating translation as being successful, is judged on reception of the target text as though it were original not a translation. Thus, what could be felt while watching the Egyptian Arabic dubbed version of Monsters, Inc.

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     young People. (pp. 357 – 394). Berlin: Frank & Timme.

Appendix

List of Abbreviation

SC	Source Culture
SL	Source Language
SLC	Source Language Culture
ST	Source Text
TL	Target Language
TLC	Target Language Culture
TT	Target Text