

Dubbing Verbally Expressed Humor: An Analysis of American Animations in Persian Context

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Abstract—This study was to compare the number of humorous expressions between ten best seller American animations and their Persian dubbed version, also to investigate the applied strategies in dubbing of humor. Ten American animation transcripts and their Persian dubbed versions were studied for humorous expressions. They were grouped into universal, cultural and linguistic humor categorization. The number of expressions in each group and the total numbers were compared between the ST (Source Text) and TT (Target Text). The applied strategies in each group were analyzed for translation of irony in universal group, the strategies for translation of allusion in cultural group and those for translation of pun in linguistic group. The results indicate that the number of humorous expressions increased in the TT. The most preferred strategy for translation of universal humor was literal translation, for cultural group omission and for linguistic one translation of pun to pun. Free translation was also added to the list of strategies in all three groups.

Keywords—Dubbing, Humor, Pun, American and Persian Animation, Translation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of communication. For a communication to be successful the key factor is understanding the message. Translation that is a kind of interlingual communication defined by Newmark as “an attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another” (1988: 7), and he added that, “rendering, as closely as the associative and syntactical capacities of another language allows, the exact contextual meaning of the original” (1988: 11).

Animation is a kind of audio visual product that has children as its main audiences and humor as its major element. Nowadays famous American companies as Disney, Dreamworks and Pixar make attractive animations for children and publish them all over the world. Many translators are involved in translating these American animations. These translated versions are viewed by children in different countries, with different cultures and languages. The knowledge of these young viewers about other cultures and languages is limited. Besides for fulfillment of the entertainment purpose of animations; understanding of expressed humor is needed. Considering that understanding humor needs great knowledge of linguistic and cultural

elements, the translator should carefully apply some procedures to transfer it well for children.

Dubbing as one of the audiovisual translation methods that greatly deals with humor and its transfer through different cultures via different languages. Regarding these constraints, it is important to find out how humor, a troublesome aspect of language in translation, can be transferred in dubbing of animations for children with limited knowledge on different languages and cultures. Some believe that humor transfer through translation is impossible; some others have tried to propose different strategies for its better transfer. Considering the limitations in humor translation on the one hand and the limited knowledge of young animation viewers on the other hand, the following research questions are raised:

1) Is there any difference between the number of humorous expressions in American animations and their Persian dubbed version?

2) What kind of humor (cultural, social or linguistic) is more affected in the process of dubbing?

3) Which specific strategies are mostly used for transfer of humorous expressions in each group?

II. METHODOLOGY

The focus of the present study is humorous expressions in ten best seller American animations. The transcripts are used for investigation. They are compared to their Persian dubbed version. The humorous expressions are classified in to three groups, including universal, cultural and linguistic humor. The translation strategies used in Persian dubbed versions are investigated using the strategies suggested for translation of pun by Delabastita (1996), allusion by Ritva Leppihalme (1997), and verbal irony by Mateo (1995).

III. RESULTS

562 humorous expressions are extracted analyzed in the source text from which 391 are universal humor, 103 cultural humor and 68 linguistic humor; that is about 69% universal, 18% cultural and 12% linguistic. 673 humorous expressions are analyzed in the target text, from which 273 are universal, 274 are cultural and 95 are linguistic; that is about 40% universal, 40% cultural and 14% linguistic.

As mentioned before the aim of this study is to find the answer for three questions; the results are discussed and the conclusions are drawn separately for each question. Concerning the first research question, it is believed that humor suffers from some losses in the process of translation; however, the results of this study shows that the quantity of

humorous expressions increases in dubbing of animations. In 90% of the investigated animations the number of the humorous expressions increased. Then it can be concluded that the number of humorous expressions in Persian dubbed version of American animations is more than the number in the original text.

Dealing with the second research question, as it is shown in table (4-2-11), the number of universal expressions decreased from 69% to 40.56%, the number of cultural expressions increased from 18.32% to 40.71% and the number of linguistic expressions increased from 12.09% to 14.11%. in spite of the

belief that since universal humor is not bound to specific features of a language or a culture, it is not greatly influenced in translation, the results indicate that it is numerically affected in the process of dubbing. Also it is believed that because cultural and linguistic elements are specific to one language then they are victims of translation, these numbers indicate that they are numerically increased in dubbing.

According to the third research question, tables (4-2-12) and (4-2-13) the most preferred strategy for translation of universal humor is literal translation.

Table (4-2-12) the frequency of strategies used in the translation of universal humor

Animation	Strategy 1	Strategy 2	Strategy 3	Strategy 4	Strategy 5	Strategy 6	Strategy 7	Strategy 8	Strategy 9	Strategy 10	Strategy 11	Strategy 12
Finding Nemo	20		1	1	7		3					4
Ice age 1	7		3	6	6	1	4					9
Ice age 3	18	5		21	14		4					1
Madagascar 1	5	6			2							4
Madagascar2	7	2		5	5		2					6
Monsters vs. aliens	13		1	8	7		2				2	2
Planet 51	8	1		3	3		3					7
Princess and the frog	7			5	4		1					6
Shrek 1	13		1	6	8		2					3
Shrek 2	6			2	3		1					5
Total	104	14	6	57	59	1	22				2	47

Table (4-2-13) frequency of free translation in translation of universal humorous expressions

Animation	Finding Nemo	Ice age 1	Ice age 3	Madagascar 1	Madagascar2	Monsters vs. aliens	Planet 51	Princess and the frog	Shrek 1	Shrek 2	Total
Frequency of free translation	1	13	9	4	7	9	11	1	1	14	70

As for translation of humor in cultural group the most favored strategy is omission; as it is shown in tables (4-2-14) and (4-2-15).

Table (4-2-14) the frequency of strategies used in the translation of cultural humor

Animation	Proper name strategies						Key phrase strategies									
	1.a	1.b	1.c	2.a	2.b	3.a	3.b	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Finding Nemo									1					3	1	
Ice age 1								1					3			2
Ice age 3						1		3	1				4	3	2	1
Madagascar 1													1	2		3
Madagascar2	1							2						1		4
Monsters vs. aliens	1				1			1					1			4
Planet 51							1	1					3	1	2	
Princess and the frog	2				1								2	2		4
Shrek 1							1						4	1	1	3
Shrek 2								2	2						1	5
Total	4					3	2	6	8				18	13	7	26

Table (4-2-15) frequency of free translation in translation of cultural humorous expressions

Animation	Finding Nemo	Ice age 1	Ice age 3	Madagascar 1	Madagascar2	Monsters vs. aliens	Planet 51	Princess and the frog	Shrek 1	Shrek 2	Total
Frequency of free translation		1	3		2		2	3	1	3	15

In translation of linguistic humor translation of pun to non-pun is the mostly used strategy. The frequency of the applied strategies is presented in tables (4-2-16) and (4-2-17).

Table (4-2-16) the frequency of strategies used in the translation of linguistic humor

Animation	Strategy 1	Strategy 2	Strategy 3	Strategy 4	Strategy 5	Strategy 6	Strategy 7	Strategy 8
Finding Nemo	2	1						
Ice age 1	1	1		1				
Ice age 3	6	7	1	1				
Madagascar 1		4		2	1			
Madagascar2		5	1	3				
Monsters vs. aliens	2	4						
Planet 51	3	2	1	3				
Princess and the frog		1	1					
Shrek 1	2	1						
Shrek 2		1		1				
Total	16	27	3	9				

Table (4-2-17) frequency of free translation in translation of linguistic humorous expressions

Animation	Finding Nemo	Ice age 1	Ice age 3	Madagascar 1	Madagascar2	Monsters vs. aliens	Planet 51	Princess and the frog	Shrek 1	Shrek 2	Total
Frequency of free translation	1	3	2	1		1	3		1		15

IV. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Free translation is an added applied strategy in all three groups. The applied strategies for each group are listed here based on their frequencies. As we move to the end of the list the frequency decreased.

A) Universal humor strategies:

- 1) ST irony becomes TT irony with literal translation
- 2) free translation
- 3) ST ironic innuendo becomes more restricted and explicit in TT
- 4) ST irony is enhanced in TT with some word / expression
- 5) Ironic ST is completely deleted in TT
- 6) the hidden meaning of ST irony comes to the surface in TT (no irony in TT)
- 7) ST irony becomes TT irony with 'equivalent effect' translation
- 8) ST irony becomes TT irony by means of different effects from those used in ST (including the replacement of paralinguistic elements by other ironic cues)
- 9) ST irony has literal translation with no irony in TT
- 10) ST irony becomes TT sarcasm (i.e. more overt criticism)

B) Cultural humor translation strategies

- 1) Proper name allusion translation strategies
 - 1-1) Retention of name (either unchanged or in its conventional TL form; with three subcategories:
 - 1-1-1) use the name as such
 - 1-2) Omission of name; with two subcategories:
 - 1-2-1) omit the name but transfer the sense by other means for example by a common noun

1-2-2) omit the name and allusion together

2) Key phrase translation strategies:

- 2-1) Omission of the allusion
- 2-2) Replacement by a performed TL item;
- 2-3) Free translation
- 2-4) Reduction of allusion to sense by rephrasing in other words, making its meaning overt and dispensing with the allusive key phrase itself;
- 2-5) Minimum change that is a literal translation without regard to connotative or contextual meaning- there is thus no change that would aim specifically at the transfer of connotation;
- 2-6) Recreations, using a fusion of techniques: creative construction of a passage which hints at the connotations of allusion or other special effects created by it;
- 2-7) Use of standard translation;

C) Linguistic humor translation strategies

- 1) Pun to non pun (pun rendered as non-pun): a non-punning phrase which may retain all the initial senses (non-selective non-pun), or a non-punning phrase which renders only one of the pertinent senses (selective non-pun), or diffuse paraphrase or a combination of the above
- 2) Pun to pun (pun rendered as pun): the ST pun is translated by a TL pun
- 3) Free translation
- 4) Pun to zero (pun rendered with zero pun): the pun is simply omitted
- 5) Pun to related rhetorical device [pun rendered with another rhetorical device, or punoid (repetition, alliteration, rhyme, referential vagueness, irony, paradox etc), which aims to recapture the effect of the ST pun]

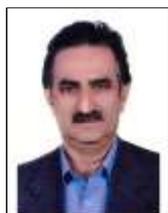
6) Pun ST = pun TT (ST pun copied as TT pun, without being translated)

V. IMPLICATIONS

The expected audiences of this study are those involved in translating and teaching. The results may be helpful for the translators in general and those who work in the area of audiovisual translation in particular. English teachers are also benefited. Because of its close relation with cultural and linguistic elements, humor always is considered as a burden on the shoulder of translators. On the other hand the young viewers of animations make the task harder in audio visual translation. Considering the great field of humor, no specific strategy is suggested for its translation. Introducing the mostly applied strategies in the translation of humor helps translators to have a systematic plan in their minds. It makes the work easier and more enjoyable. Also the comparison between the quantity and quality of humorous expressions in English and Persian makes the translators aware of the need for more effort in translating humor.

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