

Problems of Translating Humour in Subtitlingⁱ

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Abstract

This paper deals with the translation of humour in subtitling. The research attempts to explore notions of subtitling and humour in theory and to manipulate the strategies used in practice. The study used a descriptive approach in answering the two questions: Is subtitling target language/culture oriented or not? And are there any certain types of strategies employed by subtitlers in translating humour in subtitling? In this article, a short theoretical discussion about the main topics: audiovisual translation especially subtitling, and humour will be given. The material for the study consists of two American feature films 'Dumb and Dumber' (1994) and 'Liar Liar' (1997) both with Persian subtitles. In the analysis a classification of humour is made and then based on them, the strategies which were employed by the subtitlers in translating humour are analyzed and discussed.

Key Words: Audiovisual translation, subtitling, humour, norm, strategies

Introduction

As Jaskanen (2001) states, humour is a vehicle for mass entertainment and it is becoming increasingly part of the context of intercultural communication. Television nowadays offers feature films and TV series where humour is either a primary element or a secondary one. Moreover, translators are often faced with the task of having to translate seemingly untranslatable humour while not reducing the effect, which invariably tests their capacity for making creative solutions.

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In this paper, problems in subtitling are approached from the viewpoint of and difficulties in translating humour. The article addresses the two questions:

1. Can a SL oriented translation communicate the humour of the original to the target audience without breaking norms? And,
2. Are there any special strategies employed by subtitlers in translating humour in subtitling?

In order to take the safe side and get the crucial responses to the above mentioned questions, the researchers have proposed the following hypotheses:

- Translating humour in subtitling is target language/culture oriented.
- There are certain types of strategies employed by subtitlers in translating humour in subtitling.

1. Theoretical discussions

1.1 Subtitling

Henrik Gottlieb (1998) says, since 1929, when the first sound films reached an international audience, two methods of film translation have been dominant: subtitling and dubbing.

He defines subtitling, like any other type of translation by two factors: *semiotic composition* and *time duration*.

Subtitling is defined in Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997, p. 161) as 'The process of providing synchronized captions for film and television dialogue.' Gottlieb describes subtitles or captions as transcriptions of film or TV dialogue presented simultaneously on the screen. He further adds (1998, p. 245) 'Subtitles consist of one or two lines of an average maximum length of 35 characters. As a rule, subtitles are placed at the bottom of the picture and are either centred or left-aligned.'

Thus, Gottlieb (1992) defines subtitling as (1) written, (2) additive (i.e. new verbal material is added in the form of subtitles), (3) immediate, (4) synchronous and (5) polymedial (i.e. at least two channels are employed) form of translation.

In this study, subtitling is defined as transcription of film or TV dialogue presented simultaneously on the screen; it is additive, immediate, synchronous, and written and polymedial form of translation.

Now let us consider subtitling types. We have four different types of subtitling. Gottlieb (1998) follows Jakobson in distinguishing between different forms of subtitling. From a linguistic viewpoint, he maintains there are intralingual subtitling and interlingual subtitling. **Intralingual subtitling** is in the original language, it includes: subtitling of domestic programs for the deaf and hard of hearing and subtitling of foreign language programs for language learners. Moreover, he adds intralingual subtitling is vertical, in the sense that it involves taking speech down in writing, changing mode but not language. **Interlingual subtitling** is between two languages. This type is diagonal, in the sense that the subtitler crosses over from speech in one language to writing in another, thus changing mode and language.

Technically speaking, Gottlieb (ob. cit.) says, subtitles can be (i) **open subtitle** that is not optional. These include: cinema subtitles, which either are a physical part of the film or transmitted separately, and interlingual television subtitles, transmitted on terrestrially and broadcast as part of the television picture. And (ii) **closed Subtitling** is optional and transmitted as teletext. This type includes television subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing, selected by the individual viewer on a remote-control unit and generated by a decoder in the television set; and interlingual television subtitles transmitted by satellite, allowing different speech communities to receive different versions of the same program simultaneously.

Several scholars have talked about different subtitling constraints. What distinguishes AVT (audiovisual translation) from other forms of translation is that it involves both technical and contextual constraints. Gottlieb (1992) discusses textual (qualitative) and formal (quantitative) constraints on television subtitling. **Textual constraints** are those imposed on the subtitles by the visual context of the film, such as the need to reduce the original message, whereas **formal constraints** are the space factor (a maximum of two lines are allowed, with some 35 characters each) and the time factor. Particularly the time factor plays a pivotal role in the decisions that translators make. Traditionally 5–6 seconds have been considered sufficient for reading a two-liner.

Different scholars have identified different strategies in translating subtitling. The classifications proposed by Gottlieb (1992) and Jaskanen (2001) made the basis of the taxonomy in this study.

Gottlieb has devised a set of strategies used by translators (1992). They are as follows:

- (1) Expansion,
- (2) Paraphrase,
- (3) Transfer,
- (4) Imitation,
- (5) Transcription,
- (6) Dislocation,
- (7) Condensation: retaining both meaning and most of the stylistic features of original,
- (8) Decimation: using abridged expressions and a reduction in content,
- (9) Deletion: deals with non-verbal content, and
- (10) Resignation.

Among these strategies, condensation is usually seen as the essence of subtitling. According to Gottlieb (1992), with strategies 1–7, we get a more or less adequate rendering of the source text material into the target language, whereas strategies 8–10 involve some degree of semantic and stylistic loss.

Jaskanen (2001) divides the strategies employed by translators in terms of a SL-TL continuum into three categories: exoticization, naturalization and neutralization.

She says (ob. cit.) **Exoticization** is here what Toury (1995, p. 56) called 'adherence to source norms,' retaining culturally specific elements in the ST or slightly modifying them whereas **naturalization** means adapting the ST to target culture norms. The choice between these two categories constitutes an initial norm (Toury, 1995). Between these two extremes there is the middle ground covered by **neutralization** i.e. choosing a culturally neutral solution. However, she adds drawing exact boundaries between the three categories is difficult. The researchers used this categorization as a general category for the translation strategies.

1.2 What is humour?

Walter Nash defined humour as follows:

It is an occurrence in a social play. It characterizes the interaction of persons in situations in cultures, and our responses to it must be understood in that broad context, whether it makes the sudden demand of wit, or whether it has the more discursive appeal of description and anecdote (1985, p. 12).

In this study, the researchers have chosen to use 'humour' as a generic term to cover any phenomena with humour-inducing potential.

There are several classification presented by different scholars but the two that are more helpful are as follow:

Ross divides humour into:

1. Wordplay and ambiguity. This can occur at various levels of language;
 - a) Phonology,
 - b) Graphology,
 - c) Morphology,
 - d) Lexis, and

- e) Syntax.
- 2. Taboo-breaking,
- 3. Attacking a target,
- 4. Allusion and intertextuality, and
- 5. Nonsense or the absurd (1998: 4–8).

Schmitz (2002) classifies the division of humorous discourse into three basic groups. The first group includes humour that obtains mainly from the context and the general functioning of the world. To be more precise, this type of joke might be labeled the universal (or reality-based joke). In theory, jokes belonging to this group would continue to be humorous in translation from English into other languages. The second group is the cultural joke or culture-based joke. Cultural jokes serve as mirrors of the socio-cultural practices of the society and can inform the learner how some members of the community view themselves. The third group is the linguistic joke or word-based joke based on specific features in the phonology, morphology, or syntax of particular languages. The cultural or linguistic jokes may not always be humorous in translation.

Ross (1998) believes that television as a medium may carry audio and visual cues that guide or even dictate the subtitler's choice. The visual dimension of television as a medium means that translating humour in television has a great deal in common with translating comic strips.

In screen translation, we have visual, audio, and contextual feedback. Some puns are illustrative of negative visual feedback effect, where the image makes it practically impossible to rewrite the humour in the TL. Here the image carries 'cues which support the dialogue' (Roffe, 1995, p. 219), which cannot be altered or removed. However, visual feedback is not necessarily always negative; it can sometimes aid the dialogue, thus diminishing the scope of cross-cultural translation problems (Nedergaard-Larsen, 1993).

Besides the visual feedback, there can be audio and contextual feedback. Negative audio feedback means that the audio cues on the soundtrack are so

strong that translators feel that they must leave, say, a culturally specific name intact in the subtitle.

2. Methodology

2.1 Data Collection

In the study, the data was collected from two sources; feature films and the film scripts.

The data was gathered from analyzing the Persian subtitles of two 110 and 90 minutes American feature films. These are two comedy films 'Dumb and Dumber' and 'Liar Liar' screened in 1994 and 1997 featuring Jim Carrey. The researchers chose these two comedy films after full viewing of 12 others. These two are chosen because of the more humorous instances they possess.

In order to ensure that no instance of humour is left out, the researchers managed to access the script of the chosen films. Purchasing the educational CD of Dariche, providing 110 film scripts, the researchers accessed the 'Liar Liar' script. Since 'Dumb and Dumber' script was not available on the CD, the researchers tried to get access to it through Internet. The script of 'Dumb and Dumber' is available online under the www.script-o-rama.com.

2.2 Procedure

The procedure for obtaining required information consists of two parts; review of the film and reading of the film scripts.

The researchers used the three-stage review carried out by subtitles' editors of S4C (Channel Four Wales) for reviewing the films. The three stage review comprises a spell-check, a preliminary reading of the subtitled texts followed by a full viewing of the subtitled film.

Stage I

A spell-check was carried out in order to detect spelling errors. Since identifying spelling errors has no effect on the study, the result obtained from this stage was omitted through the analysis.

Stage II

At the second stage i.e. preliminary reading of the subtitled text, the concentration was solely on the linguistic contents of subtitle without being influenced by the soundtrack. Since obtaining the subtitled text was impossible it was done by placing the subtitled film with the speaker on the off mode – hence no influence by the sound track. Through this process, instances of lack of clarity, ambiguity of meaning, inconsistency of terms, missing links between subtitles, incorrect translations and so on were identified. At this stage, humorous instances based on the subtitles were extracted.

Stage III

In this stage, the researchers had the full viewing of the subtitled film. This provided them with the opportunity to concentrate on the overall impression created by the subtitles in relation to the film, thereby instances which were left out or not understood as humorous were identified. After these two stages, a list of humorous instances with their subtitles was prepared.

After **reading the scripts**, the researchers identified differences between the provided scripts and the shooting scripts and wrote down the differences. After the identification and correction of the differences, another list was provided. Then a comparison between the two lists was done and a complete list of humorous instances of the two films was arranged

3. Data Analysis

For analyzing the collected data, the researchers decided to classify them based on the types of humour. First, Jaskanen's (2001) humour classification was adopted. In this classification, humour is divided into two groups of intralinguistic and extralinguistic Humour. She defines **intralinguistic humour** as language related elements such as catchphrases and slangs; indirect allusions such as advertisements, etc; and wordplays, puns and phrases. On the other hand, she defines **extralinguistic humour** as culture-related elements

like direct cultural references to TV programs, films, music, and other cultural staples.

However, after more comprehensive analysis and investigation of the data collected it became known that the above classification could not cover all the humorous instances. So another classification similar to Schmitz' classification (2002) is formulated. Moreover, it is understood that humour mode of expression can be linguistic and extralinguistic.

Based on the formulated classification humour is divided into:

1. Language based humour,
2. Cultural humour, and
3. Universal humour.

Language based humours are those that are based on specific features in the phonology, morphology, syntax, lexis or language function of particular languages. These are catchphrases, and slangs; indirect allusions to advertisements, and famous people, etc; wordplay and phrases.

Cultural humours are language specific and serve as mirrors of the socio-cultural practices of the society. They are always a challenge for translators and may not be humorous in translation; and,

Universal humours are obtained mainly from the context and the general function of the world. Universal humours are understood by every culture and in every society and there is normally no special problem in translating them.

So the data was classified based on this classification, then the strategies employed by the subtitlers were identified and a classification of strategies was provided based on them.

3.1 An analysis of some humour-inducing elements in 'Dumb and Dumber' and 'Liar Liar' and the strategies used

As it has already been mentioned, the analysis is done based on humour categorization discussed above. For analyzing the translation strategies, the researchers used one subtitle, i.e. the amount of text seen on the screen at one time, as the logical unit of translation. The object of researchers' analysis was often part of one subtitle or it may occasionally extend over two or more subtitles. However, the researchers think that at a conceptual level it is reasonable to regard a subtitle as a unit of translation. Here are the classification and some examples.

Language based humour

Language based humour instances found in 'Dumb and Dumber' and 'Liar Liar' are examples of wordplay, allusion and swearword.

Wordplay

Wordplay, or punning, was defined by Delabastita (1996, p. 128) broadly as 'textual phenomena' contrasting 'linguistic structures with different meanings on the basis of their formal similarity'. For the purposes of a more fine-grained typology, puns can be further divided into such categories as homonymy, homophony, homography, and paronymy according to the type and degree of similarity (ob. cit.).

Examples (1) and (2) below represent one of the most classical forms of punning, i.e. homophony. In these two the subtitler used condensation strategy i.e. retaining the meaning and most of the stylistic features of the original; in Jaskanen's (2001) word 'naturalization strategy' that adapts the ST to target culture norms.

- 1) [Max:] My dad? He's ... a liar.
[Mrs. Berry:] A liar? I don't think you mean a liar.
[Max:] Well... he wear's a suit and goes to court and talks to the judge and...
[Mrs. Berry:] Oh, I see ... you mean he's a lawyer.

[مکس:] پدر من ... او یک دروغگوست.

[خانم بری:] یک دروغگو؟

[مکس:] خوب او یک کت و شلوار می‌پوشه میره به

دادگاه و با قاضی صحبت می‌کند.

[خانم بری:] آهان فهمیدم، منظورت اینکه او یک وکیله .

In this example, the wordplay is between two homophone words 'liar' and 'lawyer'. In the subtitle, their exact meaning that is *دروغگو* and *وکیل* is used. Since there is no other choices in Persian to keep the wordplay the subtitler faced the correct solution; using Dalabastita's strategy of translating 'pun' into 'non pun' in which a pun is rendered simply by a phrase, retaining one or both meanings of wordplay.

Example (2): A cop calling Harry to stop:

2) [state trooper:] Pull over

[Harry:] No, it's a cardigan! But thanks for noticing.

[پلیس:] نگه دار.

[هری:] نه این یک ژاکت کشفافه. ولی از توجهت

متشکرم.

What makes the remark humorous is the facts that Harry misunderstood the word 'pull over' with 'pullover'.

In this example, subtitler used the same strategy as Example (1) and once again, the wordplay with sound is lost in the TL.

In Example (3) Lloyd is telling Marry that being a limo driver is not his real job and he and his friend are saving money to open their own pet store; he goes on as:

3) [Lloyd:] I got worms.

[Marry:] I beg your pardon?

[Lloyd:] That's what we're gonna call it: I Got Worms. We're gonna specialize in selling worm farms – you know, like ant farms.

[لوید:] من کرم دارم.

[مری:] بله؟

[لوید:] خیال داریم به این اسم صدایش کنیم (من

کرم دارم). تخصص ما فروش کرم خواهد بود.

In this example, the subtitler used literal translation for rendering the wordplay. The humorous essence is conveyed since it is changed to an idiom in Persian. In Example (3), the translator used transfer strategy.

Example (4) is an instance of slip of tongue:

4) [Lloyd:] I desperately want to make love to a schoolboy.

[Marry:] Maybe I should be going now.

[لوید:] من دلم می خواهد به یک رؤیا در مدرسه عشق بورزم.

[مری:] شاید بهتره من بروم.

It is an instance of slip of tongue because Lloyd's intention is to say 'a schoolboy who desperately wants to make love.' In this example, the subtitler substitute the utterance with a neutral cultural solution because of some moral and ethical problem in TL culture. Therefore, in Example (4) due to cultural implications the translator used substitution strategy.

Overall, in the analysis it is understood that in translating wordplays the strategies employed are target language oriented.

Swearwords

One of the most difficult areas in subtitling film is the use of bad language or swearwords. Once the subtitler has established the type of expression and the degree of obscenity, he can then try to find an equivalent. As the swearwords are connected to taboo areas, this will differ substantially from culture to culture (Schwartz, 2002, p. 39).

Example (1):

1) [Driver:] What's your problem schmuck?

[راننده:] لعنتی، خیلی بی شعوری.

Example (2): Fletcher talking to himself:

2) [Fletcher:] Oh, I'm such a shit.

[فلچر:] آه، من عجب اشتباهی کردم.

In Example (2), the swearwords are deleted and a neutral solution is used. In Example (1), the strategy of substitution is used i.e. the swearword is substituted with another swearword in target culture but with a less negative meaning.

To sum up the strategies used for translating swearwords are substitution and condensation.

After analyzing all the instances the analysis showed that in translating language-based humours, the subtitler used strategies that are mostly target language oriented like condensation, transfer, substitution, and explicitation. Here are some examples:

Cultural humour

Much of the humour in these two films is cultural, so it requires an audience that recognizes it in the first place. Communicating the connotative load associated with some of those cultural items is by no means an easy task.

In cultural humour, sometimes the audience is aware of the cultural reference as in Examples (1) and (2). It is an indirect reference to Jim Carrey himself:

- 1) *[Max:] If I keep making this face will it get stuck that way?*
[Fletcher:] As a matter of fact, some people make a very good living that way.

[مکس:] اگر این ادا را در بیارم. آیا صورتم
همونطور میمونه؟
[فلچر:] در حقیقت بعضی مردم از این راه پول هم
در میارن.

It is humorous since it is a reference to Jim Carrey's profession and the visual feedback presented will help the viewer to understand the reference. The subtitler used communicative translation in rendering the humour and transferred it to the TL audience.

Example (2) is a cultural reference to a cosmetic product brand name.

2) *[Fletcher:] Absolutely, Maxfactor.*

[فلچر:] حتماً مکسفکتور.

This is undoubtedly one of the cultural staples that can be understood easily and the subtitler used literal translation.

Let's look at examples that are highly culturally and socially bound.

First an instance of social and cultural humour:

3) *[Fletcher:] Sue someone for everything they've done. Or send a fax for one of your girlfriend.*

[فلچر:] شاید بتوانی یک فکس برای یکی از دوستانهت بفرستی.

The first sentence that is a social humour is over sighted due to unknown reason for the researchers that may be intentional or unintentional. The subtitler omitted the sentence and in this way the viewer became deprived of understanding the social humour; i.e. in that country you can sue everyone for doing everything. In the second sentence, the word 'girlfriend' is changed to a culturally neutral solution in the TL due to target culture norms.

In some cases as in Examples (4) and (5), the humorous instance has a contextual reference in other parts of film that are censored because of ethical and moral problems in target culture. In translating these instances the subtitler usually will face with problem but here, the subtitler used literal translation and left the burden on the viewer to understand the utterance and humour.

4) *[Fletcher:] I've had better? (Fletcher incapable of lying)*

[فلچر:] بهترش رو هم داشتم.

The subtitler used literal translation so a humorous sentence is changed to a non-humorous one. If the subtitler used other strategies like explicitation, the humour may be conveyed.

5) *[Virginia:] Mr. Reid, you remember Kennet Falk, the man from the tape?*

[Fletcher:] How can I forget?

[ویرجینیا:] آقای رید شما کنت فالک را بخاطر
می‌آورید یکی از همکاران من؟
[فلچر:] چطور می‌توانم فراموش کنم؟

In this example, there is also a contextual feedback that is censored from the film, but this time the subtitler used another strategy and substitutes the sentence with another choice that did not confuse the viewer of the subtitler like the previous example. Of course, still a humorous utterance is changed to a non-humorous.

To sum up majority of the culture specific humours are from the film 'Liar Liar' and the subtitler has most of the time substituted the SL cultural problematic elements with a neutral target culture solution. Most of the instances are translated literally. The strategies used are mostly substitution and neutralization like in Examples (3) and (5). In Examples (1) and (2), the subtitler used transfer and naturalization strategies; in Example (4), the subtitler used literal translation and condensation strategy. The most important result after analyzing them is that after using substitution strategy most of the humour in SL became non-humour in TL. Moreover, after analyzing this type of humour the researchers become sure that the study hypothesis is confirmed by the findings.

Universal humour

This type includes humours that are obtained mainly from the context and the general function of the world. Universal humours are understood by every culture and in every society and there is normally no special problem in translating them.

Examples (1), (2) and (4) are almost the same in all societies.

In Example (1) a publicist asked Fletcher for a moment time but Fletcher lied to her and passed by,

1) [Publicist:] Because a couple of reporters want to interview you about your big win today.
[Fletcher:] How's my hair jerry?

[مدیر تبلیغات:] چند تا از گزارشگرها می‌خواهند
راجع به پیروزی بزرگ شما با شما مصاحبه کنند.
[فلچر:] جری موهای چطور است؟

It is a social attitude that is also the same in most of the cultures and societies. As Schmitz (2002) says this kind of humour can be translated without major problems and since there is, also a visual feedback the audience can easily understand the humour.

The subtitler used a communicative translation and transferred the meaning exactly.

Example (2): A cop stops Fletcher and asks him if he knows why he has stopped him, Fletcher incapable of lying says:

2) *[Fletcher:] Here goes, I sped, I followed too closely, I ran a stop sign, I almost hit a Chevy, I sped some more. I failed to yield at a crosswalk. I changed lanes at an intersection; I changed lanes without signaling while running a red light and speeding.*

[Cop:] Is that all?

[Fletcher:] No... I have unpaid parking tickets.

[فلچر:] من سرعت داشتم ماشینها رو گلگیر به گلگیر دنبال می‌کردم از تابلو ایست رد شدم، نزدیک بود با یک شورت برخورد کنم، یک خرده دیگه سرعت گرفتم و موفق نشدم پشت خط عابر پیاده بایستم. بدون اینکه علامت بدهم در حالیکه از چراغ قرمز عبور می‌کردم خطم را عوض کردم.

[پلیس:] همه اش همین بود؟

[فلچر:] نه، جریمه‌های پارکینگ را هم پرداخت نکرده‌ام.

Example (2) is a universal concept and understandable in every society. The subtitler used communicative translation and rendered the exact meaning in the TL.

Example (3) is a social attitude that is the same among every cultures and societies. A way of thinking that is mostly conveyed by the younger

generation to the older generation when the older ones are talking about the risks of doing adventurous tasks.

3) [Lloyd:] *It's really nothing to worry about, Mary. Statistically, they say you're more likely to get killed on the way to the airport. You know, like in a head-on crash, or flying off a cliff, get trapped under a gas tuck; that's the worst.*

[لوید:] نگران نباش مری. طبق آمار احتمال کشته شدن شما در راه فرودگاه برابر است با کشته شدن بر اثر با سر تصادف کردن، سقوط از صخره و گیر کردن زیر یک کامیون گاز. این بدترینشه.

The subtitler used communicative translation adapting a ST to target culture norms and transferred the meaning.

To sum up, the majority of universal humour instances in these two are composed of social attitudes, behaviors, thinking and universal beliefs. The subtitler used communicative translation except in Examples (1), (2) and (3) and transfer strategy. On the whole in translating instances of universal humour, the translator faced with no special problem and used a target-oriented approach.

4. Discussing the findings

Translation strategies in Persian subtitled versions of 'Dumb & Dumber' and 'Liar Liar'

Based on the findings of the analysis and with the help of Jaskanen classification, the following table of strategies was formulated:

| SL | SL-TL | TL |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Exoticization | Neutralization | Naturalization |
| Omission | Substitution | Transfer |
| Resignation | | Transcription |
| | | Condensation |
| | | Explicitation |

Percentage and frequency of the strategies are presented in the following tables:

| Source | f. | rf. | p. |
|---------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Omission | 2 | 0.05 | 5 |
| Resignation | 2 | 0.05 | 5 |
| Substitution | 11 | 0.3055 | 30.55 |
| Transfer | 14 | 0.3888 | 38.88 |
| Transcription | 1 | 0.02 | 2 |
| Condensation | 5 | 0.1388 | 13.88 |
| Explicitation | 1 | 0.02 | 2 |

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of the Different Strategies Used

| Source | f. | Rf. | p. |
|---------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| SL | 4 | 0.1111 | 11.11 |
| SL-TL | 11 | 0.3055 | 30.55 |
| TL | 21 | 0.5833 | 58.33 |

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage of the Strategies, Based on SL-TL Continuum

As it induced from the analysis the strategies used in 'Dumb and Dumber' and 'Liar Liar' are similar to some extent. 'Dumb and Dumber' and 'Liar Liar' subtitlers' approaches are mostly TL-oriented (naturalization) and occasionally even on the SL-TL continuum (neutralization); of course in some instances 'Liar Liar' subtitler also used SL- oriented (exoticization) strategy.

On the whole, the findings suggest that the subtitlers have used TL oriented strategies. It is a surprising move, since the films have both audio and visual cues pointing towards the source culture. Indeed, the strategy may have been chosen precisely because it passes for the TL culture, even if it invites the viewers, as it were, to suspend their disbelief.

It is also induced that censorship i.e. intentional omission of scene leads to establishment of TL norms and the strategies used in this instances are mostly TL oriented.

4.1 Other Findings

According to the findings of the research, it can be inferred that subtitlers used both communicative and literal types of translation. Literal translation is mostly used for translating wordplay and humorous instances that are highly socially and culturally bound. It is because the subtitlers have thought that a literal translation strategy functions adequately for the audience or that they may

have missed them in the first place. But on the whole, whenever the subtitler used the literal translation the humorous instance becomes non-humorous in the TL. The communicative translation is mostly used for universal humours or humours where the subtitler renders the exact meaning of ST to the TT.

It can also be induced that breaking textual norms can also result from a conscious choice made by the subtitlers. The subtitlers then ignore negative contextual feedback and adjust the original to the target culture because they feel that a SL oriented rendering can not communicate the humour of the original. It is extremely difficult to assess that whether certain patterns of behavior on the part of the translator are due to personal taste and/or skill or target culture norms or some thing in between. What is obvious is that the subtitlers observed the moral and ethical norms through their work.

5. Conclusions

The theoretical discussions and the findings of the study approved the hypotheses underlying the study that translating humour in subtitling is target language/culture oriented and that there are certain types of strategies employed by subtitlers in translating humour in subtitling.

Moreover, the research found answers to the questions as follows:

1. Can a SL oriented translation communicate the humour of the original to the target audience without breaking norms?

Based on the findings obtained from the study, answer to the first question is negative. Instances were observed where the subtitler used the source culture oriented translation by using a literal or minimum change strategy; this solution did not communicate the humour of the original to the target audience.

2. Are there any special strategies employed by subtitlers in translating humour in subtitling?

This question is fully answered and discussed. The strategies used are mostly TL culture oriented, though in some instances SL culture oriented

strategies have been observed. On the whole, the intention of the subtitlers is mostly towards TL culture oriented strategies with observing TL culture norms.

6. Final Words

Due to the increase in mass communication in more recent times, translation for the screen has become more prevalent and more important. It should be noted that many inhabitants of smaller countries, such as Holland, Switzerland or Denmark, may read more subtitled films than translated books or magazines. The interest in translation for the screen has also been reflected by the fact that some universities (Université de Lille, France and University of Copenhagen, Denmark) have introduced specialized courses (Gottlieb 1998).

In Iran, too, there is a recent move towards screening subtitled films in cinemas, showing documentary programs in television and producing subtitled films in CD formats. Therefore, this movement intensifies the need to accept and emphasize audiovisual translation as a course of study in our universities.

At the end, it is clear that the present study is, in fact, a starting point in researches on translation studies in Iran and a means to pave the way for further studies in AVT in Iran.

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