

## A Study on Compensation Strategies of Subtitling Culture Bound Terms and the Intimate Register with Special Reference to Selected Sinhala Movies

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**Abstract:** Subtitling is one of the most significant sub-disciplines of Translation, yet, it is one of the under-researched and less discussed topics that hardly appears in researches in Sri Lanka. The amalgamation of technology and art of translation have made this field more fascinating, and the researchers decided to select this topic due to the urge to pay a better consideration to this sub discipline of translation in the academic field of Sri Lanka. The primary purpose of the research is to investigate the compensation strategies employed by subtitle writers when they were subtitling intimate registers and culture bound terms in Sinhalese films to English language. As per the methodology the researchers have used seven Sinhalese films rich in culture and diverse registers and then noted down the strategies that the subtitle writers have used to make the culture bound contexts and intimate registers comprehensible to the target audience to meet their expectations. The strategies were categorised under the 'six strategy method' of Diaz Cintas and Ramael (2007). The data analysis demonstrated that all six strategies have been used by the subtitle writers of the selected films. And they have used the strategy of transposition in most occasions. Furthermore, it was examined that subtitle writers of the selected films view cultural adaptations as the most popular strategy as it has been used in almost every selected film. As the conclusion, the research observes that subtitle writers use many compensation strategies when they confront difficulties in

making culture bound terms and intimate registers appealing to the target audience.

**Keywords:** Culture bound terms, Intimate registers, Strategies, Subtitling, Translation

### Introduction

Subtitling is one of the most significant areas lays under the discipline of translation. The concept belongs to the sub category of audio-visual translation; the other division being dubbing. In simple terms, subtitling refers to texts that appear in the same language of the audio visual work (Intra-lingual subtitling) or in another language (Inter-lingual subtitling). The research has only considered the inter-lingual subtitling of Sinhalese and English Languages. According to Baker and Hochel (2001) dubbing is an oral translation activity that makes use of acoustic channels in screen translation and subtitling is a visual translation activity that involves superimposition in a written text on to the screen. Gottlieb (2004), one of the pioneers in the subtitling discipline defines it as a process which entails technically transferring a Source Language (SL) movie or audio visual media to a Target Language (TL), synchronized with the original verbal message. Ivarson (1992) has expressed his views about the importance of subtitling and according to him, the subtitle writer is ought to pay his or her consideration to cultural awareness of the target audience in the process.

The process of subtitling demands cognitive process that is loaded with

problems which makes it intricate to employ. There are so many constraints that the subtitle writer has to overcome since the process is an amalgamation of Technology and Art of translation. Apart from addressing to the heart of the target audience, the subtitle writer should be able to deal with some technicalities as well. In subtitling, according to Gottlieb (1992), there should be only two lines with 35 characters. In general it is proven that the reading speed of the viewer is around 150-180 words per minute which may vary based on lexical density and linguistic information presented in the text.

The center of attention of the research is the way to manipulate culture – bound terms and intimate register in subtitling. Culture and Translation share an unbreakable bond. According to Newmark (1988) , “Culture is the way of life and its manifestation which are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression”. He further discusses about culture bound term as “Culture bound terms, whether single unit lexemes, phrases or collections are those which are particularly tied to the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression”. Many linguists have defined and classified registers in different ways. Registers can be generally defined as an area of subset of language used for a particular purpose or social setting and when considered about the classification of registers, the research has adopted Martin Joos’s classification of registers. He has divided registers into Frozen, Formal, Consultative, Informal and Intimate. The study is based on the intimate register which is associated with the language of intimates or and sexuality.

Though there are many linguistic and non-linguistic challenges that the subtitle writer has to overcome in the process, this area can be considered as one of the under

researched areas of translation. There are no recorded traces that a local researcher has done a study related to subtitling which bears the witness that it has not been practiced or developed as an academic discipline in Sri Lanka. However, many foreign researches have manifested their inclination towards subtitling. Noun Alwa (2011) has done her Master thesis regarding subtitling where he discusses about culture representation through culture. Naomi Ventria has done a research on “Subtitling Strategies based on “Real Steel” movie’. Rr. Gustin Zora’s (2015) research is also based on subtitling strategies and she further discusses about the connection between subtitling and translation readability with interference to Indonesia, subtitling of Maleficent movie. Bhilad Khalid (2016) has also done a study title “An Introduction to Subtitling; Challenges and Strategies” which have been supportive when doing the research.

Therefore, the research encourages to infuse that research shortage by investing the translation strategies employed by Sinhalese films when English subtitles are used for the films. The researcher’s ultimate emphasis is to detect the approaches the subtitle writers have taken to do justice to the culture bound terms and the intimate register that have appeared in those selected films. The researchers have accompanied seven Sinhalese films with English subtitles during the research and the strategies used in subtitling of those films will be broadly analyzed using the “six strategy method” provided by Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007).

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

Researchers have used a qualitative approach for the research since the research’s purpose is to describe the concept of subtitling which comes under audio-visual translation. Utterances where

culture bound terms or / and intimate register do appear have been taken as the data sampling. The research has taken seven Sinhala films with English subtitles to conduct their study. Data for the research were taken from seven selected movies ;*Akasa kusum, Surabi Dena , Machan, Anantha Rathriya, Deewara Diyani, Baddeama and Stuti Nawatha Enna* . Subtitles for the above movies were taken from online. The rationale behind selecting these films is that all of them are presumed to be rich in culture bound terms and intimate register. Data collection method of the research is watching films, collecting utterances with culture bound terms and or intimate register and comparing them with its English subtitles. So the data is collected through observation method and as the final step, the utterances found in the movies were classified as issues confronted by subtitle writers have faced and as the strategies they have used or could have used to entertain the target audience by providing an accurate and effective output.

## Discussion

In this core part of the research, the data gathered will be analyzed and results are broadly discussed. As it was mentioned, the data are categorized under six strategy method proposed by Diaz Cintas and Rymael (2007). The researchers have analyzed the strategies used in the selected subtitles of the selected seven films and categorized under the above mentioned strategy. The researchers observed that the subtitle writers were dealing with many issues regarding culture bound terms and intimate registers and however most of the subtitle writers have attempted the below six strategies to get rid of those issues. Thus under the discussion part those strategies employed will be discussed with examples taken from the selected films.

The first technique introduced by Diaz Cintas and Rymael (2007) is “Calque”. The

term calque or loan translation refers to the case where the translator imitates in his translation, the structure or manner of expression of the source text (ST). In the film “Deewara Diyani”(ඩීවර දියණි) which has fully focused on fisheries, the cultural phrase of the ST “*Atha Kaduna wage*”(අන කැඩුණා වගේ) has been replaced by the term “*crippled*”. Here the equivalent is not the same as the source subtitling, but carries the message. Similarly in the film “*Sthuthi Nawatha Enna*” (ස්තුති නැවත එන්න) the literary culture bound phrase “*Ahasa minissunta ochcham karanakota*”(අහස මිනිසුන්ට මව්වම් කරනකොට) is translated as “*when the sky ridicules people*”, “*katu attaka ellenna balanne*” (කටු අත්තක එල්ලෙන බලන්නේ) as “*try to cling to even a branch of thrones*” and “*Daivaya tawa dorak arinne na*” (දෙවය තව දොරක් අවින්නේ නෑ) as “*destiny won't open another door*”. Here though the taste of the ST phrase has loosen, the accuracy of the message is preserved. Here the target language borrows an expression but translates literally its elements. This way quite clears that the selected films have effectively used calque as one of their effective strategies.

Transposition or shift as Catford called reflects the grammatical change that occurs in translation from Source Language {SL} to Target Language (TL). In Transposition, the ST cultural items are subtitled into equivalent TT cultural concepts. The TT item may not be equivalent to the ST item, yet it sounds culturally acceptable in the TL. There are many transposition strategies employed in the subtitling of selected films. In the film “Machang” (මචං) the colloquial term “*hujja*” (හුජ්ජ) is translated as “*piss*” and the term “*sudda*” (සුද්දා) is translated as “*white man*”. In the film “*Akasa Kusum*” (අකාස කුසුම්) the term “*pataw*” (පැටව්) is translated as “*children*”. In “*Anantha Rathriya*” (අනන්ත රාත්‍රිය), the terms “*Appo*” (අප්පො) and “*keli*” (කෙලී) are

translated as master and daughter. Similarly in the film “Deewara Diyani”(ඩීවර දියණි), the terms “*Mariyawa*” (මාරියාව), a term in fisheries register is translated accurately as “*storm*”. In the film “Sthuthi Nawatha Enna”, the term “*Kiri sappaya*” (කිරි සප්පයා) and “*maddumaya*”(මද්දුමයා) are translated as “baby” and “second fellow”. So what the subtitle writers have done is since that culture bound terms and intimate registers do not have direct equivalents, they have been translated as culturally acceptable versions.

The next strategy is explication where the subtitle writer has made an effort to translate the untranslatable linguistic units comprehensible and accessible to the target audience by describing them. In the film “Sthuthi Nawatha Enna”(ස්තුතියි නැවත එන්න), the unique cultural and a term in folklore “*mahadana muttage katha*” (මහ දැන මුත්තාගේ කතා) is something which is familiar only to the target audience thus when replacing the phrase, the subtitle writer has used “*some interesting stories*” which describes or explains the terms. Similarly, the terms “*Wessanthara Jathaka*” (වෙස්සන්තර ජාතක) since it is only appealing to the target audience, they are replaced by “*theatre dramas*”. This is also considered as a good example for the strategy of generalization.

Cultural adaptation can be divided into three groups as, Limited Universalization Absolute Universalization and Cultural Substitution or Naturalization. In adaptation, the translator changes the content and form of the ST in a way that conforms to the rules of the target language and culture. In the selected seven films the above three types of adaptation can be seen. In Limited Universalization, a subtitle replaces an ST culture bound term with another term in the TT culture which is more common. In the film “Machang”(මචං), the phrase “*yana tanakata yamuko rattaran*”( යන තැනකට

යමුකො රත්තරන්) is translated as “*Can't live without you*”. When talking of Absolute Universalization, a subtitle replaces the SL culture bound term with a neutral term in the TL. For example in the film “Iramadiyama” (ඉරමැදියම), the term “*Bibila*” (බීබිල) is translated as “*far*” which is accessible to the target audience. In the last one, which is Cultural Substitution, a subtitle replaces the SL culture bound term with the TL culture bound term. For example in the film “Machang”(මචං) the terms “*kelawenawa*”(කෙලවෙනවා) is replaced by “*fucked up*” and in the film “Sthuthi Nawatha Enna”(ස්තුතියි නැවත එන්න), the colloquial phrase, “*sudhek wage inna thibunda*”(සුද්දෙක් වගේ ඉන්න තිබුණා) is replaced as “*can live like a king*” which is a familiar expression in the target culture

In using the strategy of Generalization,, the subtitle writer decides to use a hyponym. In the film “Sthuthi Nawatha Enna”(ස්තුතියි නැවත එන්න), the local symbol to show disgust “*tuu vitharak*” (තු වීතරක්) is subtitled as “*nonsense*” . The last strategy, loan is particularly used when SL names are translated in to the TL.. In the film “Sthuthi Nawatha enna”(ස්තුතියි නැවත එන්න) the culture bound terms like “*Nivan*”(නිවන්), “*Siddhartha*”(සිද්ධාර්ථ), “*Yatadola*”(යටදොළ) have been transliterated. So it is proved that in the selected films, six strategy method proposed by Diaz Cintas and Remael (2007) is used to tackle with culture bound terms and intimate register.

Though it is evident that the subtitle writers have used all the six strategies when translating culture bound terms and intimate registers, the frequency of using the six strategies vary. When subtitling the twenty six utterances, the strategy that has been mostly used is Transposition. The particular strategy has been used in 10 utterances. Calque, explication, cultural adaptation , generalization and loan

translation have appeared in 05,03,05,01 and 03 utterances respectfully.

### Conclusion

To conclude, in this study the researcher mainly aimed at examining the challenges the subtitle writers have confronted and the strategies they have used or could have used to overcome these challenges while subtitling the intimate registers and culture bound terms which appeared in these seven selected Sinhalese films. To analyse the strategies, the research has used Diaz Cintas and Ramael's 'six strategy method'(2007). The result of the study observed that the 'six strategies' proposed by Diaz Cintas and Ramael(2007) have been used in subtitling by the subtitle writers as strategies in order to overcome the challenges they confronted. Mostly in the selected films, when translating twenty seven utterances, the subtitle writers have used the strategy of transposition whereas only one utterance has been translated by using the technique of generalization. Further to this, besides successful subtitles, this study examined a number of serious errors and mistranslations subtitle writers have made while subtitling the intimate registers and culture bound contexts which made it difficult to meet the expectations of the target audience. The research further encourages executing more researches on the discipline of Subtitling to investigate more possible strategies that can be

employed to deal with the intimate registers and culture bound contexts appear in the films.

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