The history of translation techniques english language essay

Linguistics, English

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Chapter I

Indisputably, television is part of many people's daily life. This electronic device can be a useful tool of mass communication for humans, and it can also be helpful for several other purposes; entertainment is one of these purposes. People have been using television for entertainment for many decades. Here in Costa Rica, a large number of people watch television and sitcoms (situation comedies, a genre of comedy) to relax a little from work and stressful situations. It is also a well-known fact that most of the television series which national and cable channels broadcast are produced in foreign countries, the vast majority in the United States. Consequently, the characters of these TV shows speak English, and subtitles are required for its understanding, primarily for the non-English speaking population. But what consequences could there be if the subtitles are not accurate? Several matters are discussed throughout this chapter for the reader to have a clearer idea of the reason and purpose of this research. Among these matters are: the context, which provides a background of the history of subtitles; antecedents, which inform about previous works and studies related to this research; the problem statement; the description of the problem; the investigation questions; and the research objectives, which explain what the purposes of this project are.

1. 1 Context

Subtitling is a form of written translation; movies, television programs, and videogames employ subtitles. Most of the time, they are displayed on the lower part of the screen and are created for deaf people, people with hearing problems, and people who do not understand the original language of the show, film, or videogame. The use of subtitles (also called captioning) goes a long way back. The first subtitles were introduced in silent films in the early 1900's as intertitles (title cards) placed between sequences. Later on, filmmakers put subtitles in front of moving images to complement for audio. When audio was introduced in movies in 1927, filmmakers got rid of subtitles and used dubbing instead. Many movies were dubbed into several languages with the purpose of expanding the audience and making the business more profitable. Nonetheless, the producers realized how difficult and expensive this procedure was, so they reintroduced subtitlesNowadays, the usage of subtitles is vastly common. Not only movies, but also TV programs and videogames utilize them. The captioning labor has improved significantly compared with the one of the old days. Translators and people who work captioning have at their disposal modern devices and equipment to better assist in the creation of subtitles. Captioning is useful for eliminating language barriers and helping people better understand other cultures. Subtitles are used in many television programs like news bulletins, sports events, soap operas, talk-shows, sitcoms, etc. However, this research focuses only on sitcoms. A sitcom (short for situation comedy) is a television genre. Their characters usually share the same work place or living environments and often face everyday situations. Jokes and stereotypes are

always present. Some examples of famous American sitcoms broadcasted in Costa Rica and watched by many of its inhabitants are Seinfeld, Friends, Two and a Half Men, and The Big Bang Theory.

1. 2 Antecedents

There are various books and studies that serve as antecedents for this investigation. These antecedents can be used to orientate and guide the course of the research, and, at the same time, to render a better understanding and development of the project. For instance, Professor Newmark in " A Textbook of Translation" (1988) and Vázquez-Ayora in " Introducción a la Traductología" (1977) extensively explain the translation methods and procedures, and how to achieve fidelity within a translation. Also, approaching the field of subtitling, Ivarsson published " Subtitling for the Media - A Handbook of an Art" in 1992. It was the first book that studied and analyzed the art of captioning, and it became an essential handbook for everyone working in the field. In 2003, Jorge Diaz Cintas published " Teoría y Práctica de la Subtitulación : Inglés-Español", which is an unique project in this branch and focuses almost exclusively on subtitling for audiovisual programs from English to Spanish.

1. 3 Problem Statement

When translating, professionals can come across a wide variety of problems and issues; in the captioning field, this is not an exception. In this section, the investigator describes the problems he has found and also formulates the investigation questions with the purpose of aiding with the identification and solution of the problems.

1. 3. 1 Description of the problem.

The investigator, who is fond of watching movies and television shows, has observed that the accuracy of the subtitles is not always the best or most appropriate. He has detected that what is said in the show does not match the subtitles; sometimes the real meaning is completely lost. Therefore, the investigator, being sure these issues can be solved through good application of translation procedures, has proposed this research to solve the problems found in captioning.

1. 3. 2 Investigation questions.

A. Main question. Now aware of some problems subtitles have, the main question arises: What can be done to improve the fidelity levels in sitcoms? B. Subordinate Questions. 1. How can the captioning problems be identified? 2. How can the translating procedures be employed to raise quality and accuracy? 3. How can the subtitles with errors be corrected?

1. 4 Research Objectives.

A. General Objective. 1. To describe how sometimes subtitles fail to convey actual meaning in order to fix this problem. B. Specific Objectives. 1. To identify the problems developed from the creation of subtitles. 2. To employ translating procedures in order to raise fidelity levels and accuracy. 3. To correct subtitles with errors through translation procedures.

1. 5 Research Hypothesis

If the investigator identifies the problems by watching, comparing, and analyzing thoroughly several sitcoms that use Spanish subtitles, then he will

be able to correct subtitles with errors and raise the fidelity levels in them through the application of the translation methods and procedures.

1. 6 Justification

This research is important because it will help to solve specific problems found in the captioning field, like poor fidelity levels and actual loss of meaning. This project is relevant to the Spanish speaking population who needs subtitles to understand English-spoken television programs (sitcoms). It has advantages because subtitles without mistakes and with high fidelity levels mean a better understanding of the show from the Spanish speaking viewer. The translation procedures published by Professor Newark and Vazquez- Ayora are of extreme importance to this research since they are the foundation of it, and through them is how the purpose of the research will be achieved.

1. 7 Benefits

This project will deliver several contributions and benefits. For example, the research will help to improve the subtitling field. Moreover, the audience will be more satisfied with quality and more accurate subtitles. Also, good fidelity levels will eliminate misunderstandings.

1. 8 Scope and limitations

1. 8. 1 Scope. This research is not intended to be a breakthrough on the field of translation or subtitling. It extends only to the point of the improvement of poor and low quality subtitles by employing translation methods correctly. It focusses only on sitcoms and the subtitles employed in these. 1. 8. 2

Limitations. Time and little experience of the researcher on the subtitling field are two obstacles the researcher can come across throughout the investigation. The researcher can overcome these obstacles by dedicating a specific amount of time to the project each day and by studying and getting deeper into the subtitling field and theories.

1. 9 Definition of variables

Translation procedures: What is translation? According to Merriam-Webster online Dictionary(2013), translation is the act of rendering from one language to another, which is exactly what subtitles do. What are translation procedures? The Translation procedures are a series of techniques and strategies applied in the translation field. According to Professor Newmark (1988), the procedures are used in sentences and smaller units of language. The procedures are of are important to the research since the correction and higher fidelity levels of subtitles will be achieved through them. Fidelity Theories: Guralnik (1979) describes " faithfulness/fidelity" as " the quality of being accurate, reliable, and exact." In the translation field, fidelity means transferring a message from a source language to a target language with the same effect that the massage has in the source language. Hurtado-Albir (1990: 118) says that fidelity is related to three aspects: what the author means to say, the target language, and the reader. According to her, if one remains faithful to only one of these parameters and betrays the remaining ones, fidelity fails. These theories are also extremely important to the research since improving fidelity levels is the main objective of it. Subtitling theories: According to Diaz Cintas (2003), subtitling is a linguistic practice

which is based on three main components: the utterance, the image, and the subtitles. He says that in audiovisual programs there are always two codes: image and sound. These two codes must always be in perfect synchronization, both in space and time, with the subtitles. These theories, and others presented by several experts on the field, will help this research with the creation of quality subtitles.

Chapter II

2. 1 Translation Techniques

In this section, the translation techniques published by Professor Newmark and Vazquez- Ayora will be explained with more detail. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, these techniques are of extreme importance since the objectives of the research will be achieved through them. Their theories will be used as a tool in this research due to the fact that both men are main figures in the translation field, and they are both well-known and respected by professional translators. In addition, their theories are taught to translation students all over the world. 2. 1. 2 TranspositionAccording to Vazquez-Ayora (1977), a transposition is a procedure in which a part of speech of the source language text is replaced by a different part of speech which carries in the target language text the main semantic content of the first one, and it is done in order to achieve naturalness of expression in all its levels, that is, in vocabulary, structure and wording. There are several types of transpositions; these can be from adverb to verb, adverb to noun, adverb to adjective, verb to noun, adjective to noun and so on. In other words, a transposition occurs whenever there is a morphological change within a

translation. Here is an example of an adverb to verb transposition: I know Carl will be here late → Sé que Carl tardará en llegar. 2. 1. 2 ModulationVazquez-Ayora (1977) states that a modulation is a concept of compared stylistic, and it consists in a change of the conceptual basis in the interior of a preposition, but not changing the meaning of the latter. This brings a " modified point of view" or a different metaphoric basis. There are also different types of modulation; for example, from abstract to concrete, from active voice to passive voice, term reversal, negative contrast and change of symbol, among others. In other terms, a modulation is using different symbols in the target language but conveying the exact same meaning. Here is an example of a negative contrast modulation: Mark, make sure you call me every night → Mark, no olvide llamarme todas las noches. 2. 1. 3 Addition and OmissionAs stated by Vazquez-Ayora (1977), an addition is a procedure in which more morphemes and lexemes are employed in the target language than in the source language to express the same idea. There is a variety of additions; adverb, verb, adjective, and preposition additions, for example. To put it in another way, an addition takes place when more words are added in the target language text but the meaning remains the same. Consider the following verb addition example: Oil spills endanger marine wildlife → Los derrames de petróleo ponen en peligro la vida salvaje marítima. An omission, on the other hand, is the opposite of an addition. According to Vazquez-Ayora (1977), the omission obeys to the linguistic principle of " economy" and to the requirement of " naturalness" of the equivalence that has to be found in the target language. There are different kinds of omissions; for example, omissions of redundancies and repetitions.

It can be said that an omission occurs when the target languages loses or saves words but the meaning in not lost. One example of an omitted repetition is the following: He wrote a novel, and it was not really such a bad novel as the critics called it, although it was a really poor novel → Escribió una novela que en realidad no era tan mala como los críticos la catalogaban, aunque era una obra muy deficiente. 2. 1. 4 ExplicitationVazquez-Ayora (1977) says that an explicitation is another form of expansion that primarily obeys to semantic reasons. In this procedure, the target language text expresses what is implicit in the source language context. The process is done because, frequently, there are important semantic and metalinguistic signs which are implied in the English language but must be explicit in Spanish. In other words, an explicitation is explaining in the target language what it is not stated in the source language but it is already understood. Here are some examples of this technique: He shook his head → Movió la cabeza afirmativamente; They roared over La Guardia → Sobrevolaron con estrepito el aeropuerto de la Guardia; A need for specific skills → Necesidad de personal especializado en ramos específicos. 2. 1. 5 Literal TranslationLiteral translation may be the simplest of the translation techniques; it occurs when there is an accurate connection of structure and meaning between two sentences—one in English and the other in Spanish— and the equivalence is achieved morpheme by morpheme, according to Vazquez -Ayora (1977). Regarding literal translation, Newmark(1988) said: " I believe literal translation to be the basic translation procedure, both in communicative and semantic translation, in that translation starts from there. However, above the word level, literal translation becomes

increasingly difficult" (p. 70). Literal translation is translating from one language to another word-for-word, in other terms. Two examples of this type of translation are the following: She is reading → Ella está leyendo; I've left my book on the table → He dejado mi libro sobre la mesa. 2. 1. 6 False CognatesAccording to Orellana (1987), false cognates are words that have the same form but different meaning; they can derive from a common root and physically look alike, but the meaning is not the same. She says is important to be attentive to them, since false cognates are tricky and usually lead to errors in translation. In other words, just because a word looks and sounds alike in English and Spanish, it doesn't mean they share the same meaning. Consider the following example: A simple question. One would say the Spanish equivalent is una pregunta simple. In Spanish, however, " simple " means without composition (opposite of multiple). In this case, the correct translation would be una pregunta sencilla. The same happens with the word " actual ". In Spanish, actual means " real" or " efectivo" not " actual," e. g. the actual meaning → el significado real (not el significado actual)

2. 2 Topic theory

Fidelity: It is essential to achieve fidelity in order to have an accurate and successful translation. The main purpose of this research is to accomplish higher levels of fidelity; therefore, the concept of fidelity is determining in this investigation. Translation demands a high degree of exactness in order to have an efficient communication and avoid misunderstandings. The concept of fidelity has been perceived in different ways by different translators. For example, Guralnik (1979) describes " faithfulness/fidelity" as

" the quality of being accurate, reliable, and exact." Hurtado-Albir (1990) defines fidelity in relation to three things: what the author means to say, the target language and the reader. Hurtado-Albir(1990) said: " Fidelity is three-fold relationship to the author's intentions, to the target language and to the reader of the translation is indissociable. If one remains faithful to only one of these parameters and betrays the remaining ones, he cannot be faithful to the sense." Kolawole, and Salawu, (2008) said that" Fidelity in translation is passing of the message from one language into another by producing the same effect in the other language, (in sense and in form), in a way that the reader of the translation would react exactly as the reader of the original text" (" Concept of Fidelity," para. 2). They also stated that " Faithfulness to the original means faithfulness not only at the level of words, the content, and the period, but also at the level of the author and the genesis of the meaning (sense) he is transmitting. To understand the sense of a text, therefore, the translator must grasp the intent of the author" (" Concept of Fidelity," para. 4). According to them, having linguistic and extra- linguist familiarity to the authors and works is helpful to achieve a higher degree of fidelity. Subtitling: Since this research is based on subtitles, it is important to understand what they are and how they work. According to the Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies (1998), subtitles are transcriptions of movies or TV shows dialogues presented at the same time on the screen. Most of the times, they are composed of one or two lines, having 35 characters as the average maximum length. Subtitles must be – as a rule– inserted underneath the picture. There are two factors that establish subtitling: time and duration, and semiotic composition. The Routledge

Encyclopedia of Translation Studies (1998) says about semiotic composition that " Any translated text must function within a specific communicative situation" (p. 245). On time and duration, the Encyclopedia mentions that " The notion of time cover two phenomena: time of text production, and time of text presentation to the target language audience. In this context, time is seen as a point in the continuum from the past to the present" (p. 245). On the pragmatic dimension, the Encyclopedia explains that: In subtitling, the speech act is always in focus; intentions and effects are more important than isolated lexical elements. This pragmatic dimension leaves the subtitler free to take certain linguistic liberties (…) most television broadcasters demand a two-line subtitle of 60-70 characters to stay on the screen for 5-6 seconds, and presentation rates of more than 12 characters per second (cps) are not acceptable. Given that the speech tempo on the screen, as in normal conversation, is usually higher than the equivalent of 12cps, a quantitative dialogue reduction is necessary. Due to lexical and syntactic differences between languages, this average measure of reduction may vary, but in television subtitling the text volume is usually reduced by one third(2008, p. 247). There are several types of subtitles; for example, intralingual, interlingual, open, and closed.

2. 3 Glossaries

A glossary is a collection of textual glosses or of specialized terms with their meanings, according to Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2013). Commonly, a glossary is placed at the end of the investigation, and it includes new, specialized, and not common words. It is made to explain

terms that need a definition. A glossary of terms is usually synchronic and descriptive. All glossaries have a delimited body, since they must cover all the terms used in a specific area or subarea. In order to create a glossary one must follow the next steps: First, read carefully the written texts. Second, pinpoint and transcribe the new terms. Third, order the new terms alphabetically. Finally, provide a definition for each term; the definition must be real and accurate.