Borrowing as a technique of translating fantasy nomenclature in audiovisual translation: A comparative study

Amaya Nanayakkara[1]

Nomenclature is a system of devising names for things in a particular field of arts or sciences by an individual or a community. The genre of fantasy films in audiovisual translation (AVT) is generally rich with unique nomenclature specific to various fictitious fantasy cultures that are far from the real world. Borrowing is a technique of translation that refers to the utilisation of the same word in the target text as it is found in the source text when equivalent terms are not available in the target language (TL). With the unavailability of corresponding terms for such fictitious nomenclature in a TL, borrowing becomes a befitting translation technique for such terms. The present study investigates the extent to which borrowing is utilised in translating nomenclature in fantasy films in the two most prominent approaches of AVT; Subtitling and Dubbing, and assesses the acceptability of using borrowing for the translation of such terms in each approach. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are followed in the present study. The English source script and Sinhala subtitled and dubbed scripts of the film trilogy, The Lord of the Rings, were chosen as sample material for the study. The nomenclature that appears on the films referring to people and places were selected for the analysis. From the relevant nomenclature, the terms translated through the technique of borrowing were first identified. The translation quality assessment model by Nababan et al., which allows a third party to rate the acceptability of translations was employed in the present study as a tool of analysis where a group of five AVT experts were asked to assess the acceptability of the utilisation of borrowing as a translation technique. It was identified that, out of the total 157 nomenclature in the English source scripts referring to people and places, 125 terms (79.62%) in the subtitled version and 101 terms (64.33%) in the dubbed version had been translated through the technique of borrowing thereby suggesting that both approaches follow the technique of borrowing in translating most of the nomenclature. In assessing the acceptability of the utilisation of borrowing in translating nomenclature, the ratings of the experts have demonstrated that, out of the 125 borrowed terms in the subtitled version referring to people and places, 54 terms (43.2%) were less acceptable, and 71 terms (56.8%) were not acceptable. Out of the 101 borrowed terms in the dubbing translation, 74 terms (73.27%) were marked acceptable, and 27 terms (26.73%) were marked less acceptable. It was observed through the qualitative analysis that the borrowed terms which are marked as not acceptable in the subtitled version were directly borrowed and displayed in English spellings in the form of pure borrowings, thereby affecting the standard Sinhala language norms. Even though the terms are also directly borrowed in the dubbed version, they are adapted towards the TL through Sinhala spellings in the dubbing script, thus making them naturalised borrowings. In contrast to subtitled borrowings that are expected to be read, dubbed borrowings are only heard by the audience without influencing the readability factor. The study concludes that in translating nomenclature, borrowings in the form of naturalised borrowing are much likely to be acceptable in AVT than pure borrowings.

Keywords: Audiovisual translation; Borrowing; Dubbing; Nomenclature; Subtitling

[1] *Department of Linguistics, University of Kelaniya, Dalugama, Sri Lanka*
 amaya95d@gmail.com