An Investigation of Subtitle Translation: A Case Study of

Charlotte's Web (2006)

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Abstract

This study examined movie subtitle translation methods. Thai entertainment has increasingly used English-to-Thai subtitles. Thus, subtitle translation methods must be examined. The study used 1,467 *Charlotte's Web* (2006) words, phrases, and sentences. This study followed Vinay and Darbelnet's (2000) translation methods. A comparative analysis of English and Thai subtitles quantified their translation approaches to determine how words, phrases, and sentences were translated. Data analysis showed that *Charlotte's Web* (2006) subtitles were mostly obliquely translated. Translation methods occurred 1,001 times, or 51.81%. Rewriting, an adaptation within oblique translation, produced most of the film's subtitles. Rewriting was used 716 times, or 37.06% of the time.

Keywords: Charlotte's web, subtitle translation, translation methods

Introduction

This section introduces the background, research questions, objectives, scope, limitations, term definitions, anticipated benefits, and application.

Technology has bonded the world. Global English (Smokotin, Alekseyenko, & Petrova, 2014). Dubbed English-subtitled films show globalization's new languages and cultures (Khalaff, 2016). Another popular Thai science is translation. Foreign knowledge, media, books, and entertainment must be translated into Thai to expand Thais' horizons since most do not speak English. Hollywood dominates digital (Silver, 2007). Thai English-language films flood due to demand. Foreign data must be translated into Thai, and filmmaking requires subtitles. Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, and Surrathani Rajabhat universities teach subtitle translation. Thai and top universities like UCL, Essex, and Roehampton offer subtitle translation courses. English-speaking universities offer audiovisual translation courses that include subtitle translation, proving that theoretical subtitling knowledge is needed before entering the industry.

The 2006 film *Charlotte's Web* was chosen to be investigated in the current study because it is a well-known and classic children's story adapted from E. B. White's well-known children's literature, *Charlotte's Web.* The film was a global sensation. It won numerous awards, such as the 2006 *Phoenix Film Critics Society Award* for Best Family Film and the 2006 *Las Vegas Film Critics Society Awards* for Best Song and Best Family Film, to mention a few (Wikipedia, 2023).

Research questions

1. What translation methods did the translator use to translate dialogues in the 2006 film *Charlotte's Web*?

2. Which translation method is most frequently used when translating film dialogues?

Objectives

1. To gain an understanding of the translation methods used by a professional translator when translating film subtitles

2. To ascertain the most frequently used translation method for film subtitle translation.

Scope of the research

This study examined the 2006 film Charlotte's Web's subtitle translation methods. It had 1,467 words, phrases, and sentences. Vinay and Darbelnet's (2000) translation methods were used to analyze the data. The research revealed the most common methods for translating movie subtitles.

Limitations

This study examined 1,467 phrases and sentences in the film's subtitles to compare translation methods. The study's findings cannot be applied to all children's literature subtitles, but they can aid translation instruction.

Definitions of key terms

5.1. *Source text (ST)* or *source language* refers to the original text.

5.2 *Target text (TT)* or *receptor language* refers to the final translated text.

Expected benefits and application

All English Program and English for Careers Program translation modules will learn subtitle translator techniques from the study. Rajabhat and other Thai university translation modules can use the findings.

Literature Review

This section reviews study-related literature. Audiovisual translation, Charlotte's Web (2006), and related research are covered in this review.

1. Audiovisual translation

Audiovisual translation converts multimedia to another language and culture. Since the 1970s, audiovisual translation research has included software and videogames. After television became mass media, 'film and television translation' (Delabastita, 1989) and 'media translation' (Baker & Saldanha, 2009) gained prominence in the literature. '*Subtitling* is described as the translation of an audiovisual product's spoken (or written) source text into written target text that is superimposed on the original product's images, typically at the bottom of the screen (Karamitroglou, 1998).'

The present study focuses on subtitling as it aims to examine the translation methods used in the Thai subtitles of the *Charlotte's Web* (2006) film.Baker and Saldanha (2009) divide subtitling into three types: 1) Intralingual subtitles are in the source language. Intralingual subtitles aimed at minority audiences, including immigrants learning the host country's language or those using non-standard vernaculars at home. As accessibility becomes more important in the audiovisual industry, intralingual subtitling seems like deaf and hard-of-hearing.

2) Interlingual subtitles provide localized versions of the ST's dialogue.

3) In bilingual subtitles, the source fragment appears in both lines.

2. Methodology in Translation

Vinay and Darbelnet (2000) proposed two translation methods: direct or literal translation and oblique translation. The first one consists of three methods:

borrowing, calque, and literal translation, and the latter include transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation.

Borrowings: using SL terms to flavor a translation. Thai uses English words like 'menu,' 'party,' 'internet,' and 'computer.'

Calque: calques are borrowed words. Beardsmore (1986) calls calques loan shifts or loan translations. The Thai term for 'brainwash' is 'ล้างสมอง (Back translation: wash brain)', imported from English.

Literal translation: for instance, 'I eat bread' can be translated straight into 'ฉันกินขนมปัง' (Back translation: I eat bread) in Thai.

Transposition: this method involves replacing a one-word class with another without changing the meaning of the message such as 'that house is beautiful' and 'บ้านนั้นสวย' (Back translation: *house that beautiful*), the word 'สวย' (*beautiful*) becomes a verb in Thai.

Modulation: translating the source text (ST) into the target language changes its perspective to make it more natural in the TT context, such as making a positive sentence negative.

According to Munday (2016), modulation can be:

- **obligatory**: e.g., *the time when* translates as *le moment où* [lit. 'the moment where']
- **optional**, though linked to preferred structures of the two languages: e.g., the reversal of point of view in *it is not difficult to show > il est facile de démontrer* [lit. 'it is easy to show'].

When a translation results in a grammatically correct utterance that is regarded as inappropriate, unidiomatic, or awkward in the target language, modulation is employed. Modulation at the message level is classified according to the following categories (Vinay & Darbelnet, 2000): **abstract< >concrete**, or

particular< >general: *She can do no other > She cannot act differently*; *Give a pint of blood > Give a little blood*; **explicative modulation**, or **effect< >cause**: *You're quite a stranger > We don't see you anymore*; **whole< >part**: *He shut the door in my face > He shut the door in my nose*; **part< >another part**: *He cleared his throat > He cleared his voice*; **reversal of terms**: *You can have it > I'll give it to you*; **negation of opposite**: *It does not seem unusual > It is very normal*; **active< >passive**: *We are not allowed to access the internet > they don't allow us to access the internet*; **rethinking of intervals and limits in space and time**: *No parking between signs > Limit of* parking; **change of symbol** (including fixed and new metaphors): Fr. *La moutarde lui monta au nez* ['The mustard rose up to his nose'] > En. *He saw red* ['he became very angry'].

Equivalence, or idiomatic translation, is defined by Vinay and Darbelnet (2000) as when languages express the same situation using different stylistic or morphological methods. Equivalence helps translate idioms and proverbs. Cultures differ in this English-Thai study. Equivalence is crucial in translation. English says 'dumb as a donkey'; Thai says 'dumb as a buffalo.' Many exclamations, onomatopoeias, and idioms use this method, which varies by language and culture. For instance, a cry of pain in English is 'Ouch!'; in Thai, it is โอ๊ย (*Oy!*).

Adaptation: adaptation occurs when the TL culture does not comprehend the SL message (Vinay and Darbelnet, 2000). The translator must create an equivalent situation when the TL culture does not know the SL. Translation involves cultural and semiotic transfers. Adaptation (Baker & Saldanha, 2020) can refer to *appropriation* - the incorporation and adoption of foreign and other signs into one's own cultural environment to expand and reinforce it in the oscillation between production and consumption (Saglia, 2002), *domestication* - the translation, which is

oriented to the target culture and changes unusual expressions into familiar ones to make the text easy to understand (Wang, 2014), *imitation* - to break free from the source language's wording and meaning (Elmgrab, 2015), and *rewriting* - any literature created on the basis of another with the goal of adapting it to a particular ideology or poetics, and typically to both (Lefevere, 1992).

The Thai play 'บุษบาริมทาง,' adapted from Alan Jay Lerner's 1964 musical comedy-drama 'My Fair Lady,' employed appropriation, domestication, imitation, and rewriting. The Thai play showed the actress' northeastern Thai lower-class accent. The audience did not know the play was in English, so this is an adaptation. Foreign signs mimicked audience symbols. Also, Vinay and Darbelnet (2000) offer alternative methods. Translation theory has maintained currency with the following procedures (Munday, 2016).

Amplification: the TL employs more words, which is frequently due to syntactic expansion, e.g., *the charge against him > the charge brought against him*.

Economy: Economy is the opposite of amplification.

False friend: users think SL and TL words mean the same because they are structurally similar. False friends can also result from divergent polysemy, partial semantic overlap, or loan terms from English words with similar meanings. Sometimes meanings differ (in Thai, *serious = stressed*).

Loss, gain, and compensation: the film made 'Lost in Translation' a cliche. Translating ST to TT is difficult and loses meaning and structure. TT may add a gain at the same or different places in the text. English may omit the character's given name (Professor Munday > Jeremy) if the SL is a *tu/vous* language that switches from formal to informal address (e.g., French *vous to tu*).

Generalization: it is the utilization of a more generic term in the TT. Examples include ST *textbook* vs. TT *book* and ST *joyful* vs. TT *happy*. Again, it has been proposed that generalization is another property of translation.

The current study adopted translation methods proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (2000), as they are the methods widely used to investigate translation procedures by many recent researchers such as Sharei (2017), Sutarno et al. (2017), Azar (2018), Nago (2017), Herman (2018), UÇAR (2019), Asriana (2019), Shabani (2019), Alqunaibet (2019), and Fitria (2020).

Additionally, the researcher would like to include transliteration (Changprachak, 2016) among the translation methods in the present study. Transliteration is a form of translation that cannot be avoided if English proper names are not changed into Thai names.

Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design and the data collection.

1. Research design

Document analysis dominated this qualitative descriptive study. Data is collected from records, reports, photographs, and documents in qualitative descriptive studies to determine the events being investigated (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). This qualitative descriptive study examined 2006's Charlotte's Web movie. Words, phrases, and sentences were data. Charlotte's Web (2006) subtitle translation was classified using Vinay and Darbelnet's methods.

2. Data

Charlotte's Web (2006) was directed by Jordan Kerner. A 1952 E. B. White novel was adapted into a film. Karey Kirkpatrick and Susannah Grant scripted the

film. Netflix presented the Thai-subtitled film, but the translator was unknown (Netflix: Overview and Profile, 2021). Netflix had 214 million paid subscribers in 190 countries. This document had 1,467 words, phrases, and clauses. Phrase by phrase, the researcher collected study data from the English and Thai films. Tabulated data from both languages. The table had three columns; the first, second, and third columns were English, Thai, and translation methods.

Vinay and Darbelnet's (2000) translation procedures were followed in the translator's descriptive analysis. After comparing the 2006 Charlotte's Web English and Thai subtitles, the research examined Vinay and Darbelnet's (2000) translation methods.

Results

This section is to present the translation methods discovered in the study, along with the percentage for each of these methods.

This study examined 1,467 words, phrases, and sentences from Charlotte's Web (2006) subtitles. After data analysis, 1,932 translation methods were found. That is, not every clause, phrase, or sentence used the same translation strategy, which is why there were more strategies than data.

The findings revealed that oblige translation was utilized to translate 1,001 times this movie's subtitles, which represents 51.81 percent of all possible translations. The method that was used the most frequently was adaptation, and the subcategory that was used the most frequently was rewriting. There was a total of 716 tokens found, making up 37.06 percent of the total. The number found for the imitation strategy within the adaptation category was 98, indicating that it was used quite frequently. This demonstrates that in order to make the Thai subtitles

understandable and produce the same results for both the target audience and the source audience, the translator used different statements from the English scripts.

Take this, for instance, which is a sentence from *Charlotte's Web* subtitles.

Table 1

A sentence from Charlotte's Web subtitles

Class, these are some of the questions that you're likely to be asked in the exam this week.	นักเรียน ทั้งหมดนี้จะเป็นคำถามที่ครูจะออกสอบในสัปดาห์นี้	1. Modulation-whole< >part 2. Modulation-active< >passive 3. Adaptation-rewriting

This is a complete sentence. The word 'class' in Thai means 'ห้องเรียน'. It was translated into 'นักเรียน', which was practically part of the class, so it fell into the oblique translation method's 'modulation-whole >part' category. Plus, '...you're likely to be asked...' used the passive voice in the English subtitle but the active voice in the Thai translation. The translation was modulation-active > passive. Rewriting the sentence made it sound natural in the target language. As shown, a sentence used three translation methods.

Here are some other examples of other methods used in translating the subtitles of the film *Charlotte's Web* (2006).

Table 2

Examples of the methods used in translating the subtitles of the film *Charlotte's Web*
(2006)

Translation methods			ST	TT
Direct translation	**Borrowing**		<u>Okay</u>, it's morning!	<u>โอเค</u> เช้าแล้ว
	Literal translation		Lightning, typhoon, cholera, dysentery	ฟ้าผ่า พายุ อหิวาต์ โรคท้องร่วง
	Transposition			
		abstract<>concrete	We'll have to find another word, a really <u>good </u>one.	เราต้องหาคำใหม่ อีกคำ คำที่<u>ฉลาด</u>มาก ๆ
	Modulation	general -> particular	Are we even seeing the same ruddy <u>creature</u>?	เธอกำลังดู<u>แมงมุม</u> ตัวเดียวกันหรือ เปล่า
		explicative modulation, or effect<>cause	Yeah, <u>loud things</u>	ใช่ <u>หนวกหู</u>
Oblique translation		whole<>part	<u>Class,</u> these are some of the questions…	<u>นักเรียน</u> ทั้งหมดนี้ จะเป็นคำถาม
		reversal of terms	Fern was up before dawn <u>ridding the world injustice</u>	เฟิร์นตื่นก่อนไก่โห่ <u>สร้างความเป็น ธรรมคู่โลก</u>

Table 2 (Continue)

Table		negation of opposite	Isn't that great?	ดีใช่ไหม
		active<>passive	A pig who <u>was born</u> in the spring.	หมูที่<u>เกิด</u>ในฤดูใบไม้ผลิ
		rethinking of intervals and limits in space and time	Coming through! Coming through!	ขอทาง ๆ
	Equivalence		Ew!	อึ๊ย!
	Adaptation	Domestication	There's a real tiebreaker.	งั้นก็ต้องชิงดำกัน
		Imitation	She is!	เด็กผู้ชาย
		Rewriting	This guy ain't real!	มันไม่ใช่คนนี่หว่า
Amplification			Fern! Your books!	เฟิร์น <u>ลูกลืม</u>หนังสือแน่ะ
Economy			<s>For that</s>, this barn needed a pig.	โรงนาแห่งนี้จึงต้องการหมูสักตัว
Loss, gain, and compensation			Oh, hold that thought, <u>please</u>.	อ๊ะ หยุดไว้ก่อน<u>นะ</u>
Generalization			Fainted like a <u>girl</u>.	เป็นลมอย่างกับ<u>ผู้หญิง</u>
Transliteration			I'm <u>Wilbur</u>.	ฉันชื่อ<u>วิลเบอร์</u>

Discussion

Research question 1: What translation methods did the translator use to translate dialogues in the 2006 film *Charlotte's web*?

This study investigated how Charlotte's Web (2006) was translated using Vinay and Darbelnet's (2000) methods. The study found seven main translation methods, excluding the change of symbol subcategory under modulation, the appropriation method under adaptation of oblique translation, and false friends. Transliteration was needed to translate proper names, so the researcher added it to the category (Table 2).

Research question 2: Which translation method is most frequently used when translating film dialogues?

In analyzing 1,467 words, phrases, and sentences from Charlotte's Web (2006), 1,932 translation techniques were used. Oblique translation was found 1,001 times and made up 51.81% of all translation methods. Next were economy (420 tokens, 21.73%), direct translation (239, 12.37%), amplification (105, 5.43%), and transliteration (99, 5.12%). Six times (0.31%) and eight times (0.41%) were loss, gain, compensation, and generalization the least used methods.

Rewriting (716 times, or 37.06%), imitation (989 times, or 5.07%), and domestication (46 times, or 2.38%) were the most used options in oblique translation.

According to Section 3, researchers used Vinay and Darbelnet's translation methods (2000) which were used in many studies. In the study of *English Vinglish* subtitles from English to Indonesian, Fitria (2020) found that literal translation was used most of the time. This matched Sharei's 2017 comparison of The Old Man and the Sea's English and Persian translations. Another version used modulation more than the first. Herman (2018) found that transposition was the most common

Indonesian-to-English translation strategy for the film *Tanah Air Beta*'s subtitle, while Asriana (2019) examined the process of translating Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*'s dialogue from English to Indonesian. The results showed transposition was the most popular method. The translation of *The Old Man and the Sea* from English to Persian was examined by Shabani et al. (2019) and Sharei (2017). One of the two translations examined in the second study used modulation techniques, which fell under oblique translation, the most. Results showed the same methods were used even when translated in opposite directions. Due to the same language pair and results, the results were intriguing.

The current study examined English-to-Thai translation using Vinay and Darbelnet's (2000) methods. There has been no research on translating English-Thai subtitles using Vinay and Darbelnet's (2000) methods. This study can be a starting point for further research into English and Thai translation in both directions to determine whether the outcomes would be comparable to those of the English-Persian and English-Indonesian language pairs.

The present study also found that Thai translators used pro-drop language and resumptive pronouns when translating the film.

Pro-drop language

Another characteristic of Thai that was frequently found in the translation of subtitles for *Charlotte's Web* (2006) was that it was a pro-drop language. Laisattryklai (2017) states that Thai is a pro-drop language. That is, it is common in Thai to omit the subject, whereas the subject cannot be omitted in English. For example: *ทานข้าวเที่ยงกันหรือยัง* ➔ *Have you had lunch yet?*

This aspect was frequently observed in the analysis of the *Charlotte's Web* (2006) subtitle translation. This instance falls under the category of economy, as the words were omitted. Here are some examples of pro-drop language.

Table 3

Examples of translation using a pro-drop language

~~I~~ love you.	รักแกนะ
And ~~you~~'re back in.	ยังจะกลับมาอีก
~~Anyone~~ want to play?	มาเล่นกันไหม
Oh, little itty-bitty pig, could ~~you~~ come here, please?	เจ้าหมูน้อย เข้ามานี่ได้ไหม

Resumptive pronouns

The researcher found that Thai had resumptive pronouns while translating subtitles for Charlotte's Web (2006), supporting Laisattryklai (2017). A pronoun followed the sentence's subject noun; for example, *อาจารย์**ท่าน**ไม่สบาย* (Back translation*: teacher **he/she** is sick), ค่าน้ำมัน**มัน**แพงมากเลย* (Back translation*: The gas **it** is expensive.*). Here are some examples of translation using resumptive pronouns.

Table 4

Examples of the translation using resumptive pronouns (2006 *Charlotte's Web*)

Humans love pigs.	คน<u>เขา</u>รักหมูนะ
Maybe an animal said something to me and I didn't hear it because I wasn't paying attention.	บางที่สัตว์<u>มัน</u>พูดแต่เราไม่ได้ยิน เพราะเราไม่ได้ตั้งใจฟัง

      To sum up, *Charlotte's Web* subtitles were translated using most of Vinay and Darbelnet's (2000) methods. More than half of the study's translation techniques were oblique. Thai pro-drop and resumptive pronouns were also used. The above methods helped target audiences understand *Charlotte's Web* (2006)'s subtitles.

Recommendations

      1. For implication

      English majors taking translation courses can learn subtitle translation from this research. From the findings, student translators can learn how professional subtitle translators translate children's movies.

      2. For further studies

      Translation methods in subtitles from other film genres should be explored.

Acknowledgements

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