

Tackling Bad Language Portrayal in Children's Dubbed Animated Series Dialogues

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ABSTRACT

The study of translation has transformed from its conventional method of written translation to a modern and complex process as a result of the expansion of information and communication technology, in addition to the globalisation of the media. The emergence of new translation field involves multimedia translation such as localisation, fansubbing, subtitling, surtitling, dubbing, to name but a few. In another perspective, translating for a specific audience, for example, children, is a communication between the audience as young viewers, and the adult as the translator. The goal of this study is to look into the approaches employed by the dubbing translator in tackling culturally linguistic references of sarcastic remarks, obscene/vulgar words, curse/abusive language, as well as negative visuals (obscene or violating) found in Malaysian children's dubbed animated series (English-Malay). Three foreign children's animated series, Detective Conan and Crayon Shin Chan (Japan), and Spongebob SquarePants (US), dubbed into Malay, were chosen for the discussion, while Shavit's theory of children's translation rules and norms (1986) was selected to build the basis of the investigation and steer this descriptive-based study. The result demonstrated that sarcastic remarks, curse/abusive language, and violating images had occurred in the Detective Conan series while instilling the elements of politeness and suitability in translating and adapting the inappropriate dialogues. Obscene/vulgar words and images were mostly found in Crayon Shin Chan series, while curse/abusive/disgusting language and visuals were observed in SpongeBob SquarePants. However, text manipulation by means of domestication method had occurred in the Shin Chan's dubbed dialogues, adding the flavour of local setting to the text. This paper came to the vital conclusion that it might be customary in some cultures to use direct language, while in other cultures this might be regarded offensive and obscene language, resulting in dominant and evident role of translators, in particular with children's text translators.

Keywords: bad language, children's dubbing, politeness

INTRODUCTION

Through the years, the world has become a planetary space linked by economic, social, technological and cultural factors. The significant role of media in the globalised world and global communication era becomes unquestionable. With the increasing capacity of international movement of people and goods via the use of electronic devices, globalisation as a vision of emphasising a firm interconnection and intercommunication between people has enhanced this form of interaction and communication. One of the vital communication channels among humans nowadays is translators, in which their main roles are to provide an effective

means of communication as well as to send the message across without any form of distortion or emphasis.

Due to the advancement of computers, television, cinema and video, the power of screen has taken over society, while the purpose of translation has shifted from the arts, literary and religious matters to those of culture, media, science, and law, hence demanding for multimedia translation (Chiaro, 2013). Additionally, more people have been exploring media and audiovisual genres, for instance, newspapers, films, television series, news and documentary programmes in order to seek knowledge and information besides its function as a leisurely form of entertainment. Following such evolution, the exploration of media, translation and culture has been largely developed and become innovative in the last century. As a result, the field of translation studies namely audiovisual translation was born and dedicated to screen translation. Cinema screens, television sets, computers, and video game consoles are examples of such equipments, and they are usually taken up in order to make use of the audiovisual technology.

Multilingual transfer in the field of audiovisual translation comprises subtitling, surtitling, dubbing, voice-over, audio description, narration, interpreting, just to name a few. In the case of children's dubbing, which is the focus of this paper, there is no doubt that it is the preferred audiovisual translation method used for translating children's animated movies or series. Children who watch a subtitled television programme take more mental effort than watching a dubbed programme. With 5 or 6 seconds allowed for each caption, they have no second chance to come back to the text in case they misunderstood or failed to understand the plot. Furthermore, children have not yet learned to read or cannot quickly read the subtitles while watching the show, resulting in low reading speed or rate to comprehend the message of the story plot. Therefore, dubbing mode will benefit them greatly as the discourse is homogenous and they are not distracted by the constant effort of following the subtitles.

In the Malaysian context, animated series from the US, UK and Japan have been dubbed into Malay by local media companies. In fact, it is a commendable effort by the Walt Disney Animation, Pixar Studio, SONY Pictures Animation and some other foreign productions to market their films in non-English countries, as such films have a very high rate of children audience ratings and that the studios always ensure that the productions are easily enjoyed by kids and adults alike.

It is also crucial to note that dubbing translators of children's television series and films must consider a powerful and constructive message for the viewers to interpret. Translating for children gives us the vital fact that the child's way of speaking, thinking and acting changes from one culture to another and that the target texts need to be adapted to this audience that can neither see, nor hear, nor understand the same things as adults (Lorenzo, 2014). When children enter the picture, bad influence, for instance, obscene or vulgar words, abusive language, or negative visuals becomes a major problem, hence a basis for censorship is required in media and educational settings. Bad language covers a wide range of concepts - offensive, obscene, crude, blue, dirty, foul-mouthed and X-rated (www.macmillandictionary.com). It also refers to any word or phrase, not necessary lengthy or short, which is likely to cause offence when it is or is supposed to be used in a polite conversation, thus offending emotional state, social class and race, religious beliefs, moral and political power (McEneary, 2005).

In the Malaysian context in general, and in Malay cultural context in particular, language appropriateness is a root anchoring Malaysian life. Despite different practices, religious rituals and ideologies, Malaysians still pay close attention to being appropriate and polite in communication to respect each other's differences which is a vital concern for those living in a multicultural country. The display of alcohol consumption, tobacco smoking, violence (including depictions of death, the characters being threatened, as well as the depictions of suicide), gambling, blood, offensive language, offensive hand gestures, sexual content in films and television programmes are all unacceptable as well as other situations unsuitable to a

younger audience. Moreover, Malaysians cannot accept the notion of bad language, for instance, *pukimak* (motherfucker) *babi/celaka/anak haram* (shit/bastard), or *bodoh* (dumb) that come to children's notice, not even a bad word from a good child. Children really pick up swear words like 'vacuum cleaners' when they overhear them from all over the place.

Hence, in order to overcome this problem, dubbing translators, in the case of children's reading materials and audiovisual texts, may consider a bleep censor method via beeping sound which is sometimes accompanied by a digital blur or box over the speaker's mouth. In cases where the removed speech may still be easily understood by lip reading, text replacement or adjustment methods may be used with regard to offensive and obscene dialogues, yet the dubbed dialogues are still correlated to the storyline. For instance, alcohol is a negative value and therefore will be replaced by, say, fruit, honey, or milk in accordance with the suitability of similar "positive food". Any information that is considered unsuitable for children is either omitted or revised to make it acceptable, avoiding both the violent scene and any possible "nasty" information.

The authors also observed children's cartoon shows, for example 'Hagemaru', a Japanese manga series aired on local Astro Ceria Channel 611 a few years back, and 'The Pink Panther's Show' on Disney Channel Asia 615, upon which both were prudently dealt with by the local television channels when it came to obscene or violating visuals by blurring women's sexy images and the visuals of weapons, cigarettes, and liquor. In fact, scenes involving the use or portrayal of sharp weapons were blurred, black dotted, mosaic form, or omitted to avoid the adverse effects that the children might imitate. However, violence and bad language in *Dragonball Z* is no exception. Detailing the adventures of *Goku* and his son *Gohan*, the general message it conveys is that when some characters die, they come back to life stronger and thirsty for vengeance against their enemies, resulting in the concept of revenge among children. As a result, the dialogues have to be creatively changed or manipulated by the dubbing translator to avoid bad model for young viewers.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

In this paper, the authors analyse the dubbed dialogues of the selected children's animated series in the following ways:

2.1 analysing the translation strategies employed by the dubbing translator in translating sarcastic remarks, obscene/vulgar words, curse/abusive language, and bad visuals in children's animated series;

2.2 investigating the dubbing norms adhered by the dubbing translator in handling the challenge of rendering sarcastic remarks, obscene/vulgar words, curse/abusive language, and bad visuals in children's animated series.

RESEARCH QUESTION

For the goal of this paper, the following questions are addressed:

3.1 What are the translation strategies employed by the dubbing translator in translating sarcastic remarks, obscene/vulgar words, curse/abusive language, and bad visuals in children's animated series?

3.2 In what ways does the dubbing translator adhere to the dubbing norms in handling the challenge of rendering sarcastic remarks, obscene/vulgar words, curse/abusive language, and bad visuals in children's animated series?

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This paper is more significant for dubbing translators, in particular with the translation of children's texts, for the following reasons:

4.1 Translators become aware of polite translation strategies in rendering sarcastic remarks, obscene/vulgar words, curse/abusive language, as well as obscene, violating, and revolting dialogues and images of foreign animated series into Malay;

4.2 A benchmark relating to children's translation norms could be set up to the local translators of children's texts with regard to the notions of correctness or appropriateness in their translation tasks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The main purpose of this section is to provide a background on dubbing mode in general, and dubbing for children and its norms in particular. All the variables are vital in a sense that translating for children is not the issue of text unity, rather it recreates and deviates from its source text, turning the original into a new form to suitably cater for children's level of acceptance and comprehension.

Leech (1983) emphasises the concept of politeness as "minimising the expression of impolite beliefs, and maximising the expression of polite beliefs". His theory proposes how to produce and understand language based on politeness, and focuses on the process of interpretation that centres the effect of the hearer rather than the speaker.

Shavit (1986) focuses on unacceptable scenarios in children's texts in which some translators are happy to delete the entire scene, primarily because it constitutes a violation of the taboo in children's texts as well as violating the characterisation of the 'superheroes' in the plot. In fact, it can even be formulated as a primary rule that any information that is considered unsuitable for children is either omitted or revised to make it acceptable and is parallel with what society regards as educationally "good for the children". Translators may manipulate the text in various ways - changing, enlarging, or abridging the text or by deleting or adding the text, in order to adjust the original text and make it educationally appropriate for the children according to the target language society's standard of values.

O'Connell (2003) came up with her study focusing on several things that the translators of children's television programmes could learn from the translators of children's books. The study found that norms determined what was translated, when and where and they changed continually. Furthermore, the norms might vary from language to language, culture to culture, text type to text type, and from generation to generation. Specific norms exist in different cultures for the writing and translation of children's literature. Illustrated children's books and children's television animations had a great deal in common in the way of how they combine words and images and, indeed, both had much to offer children from an entertainment and educational point of view.

McEnery (2005) pointed out that bad language refers to any word or phrase, not necessary lengthy or short, which is likely to cause offence when it is or is supposed to be used in a polite

conversation and offends emotional state, social class and race, religious belief, moral and political power. It has clearly been subjected to a successful process of distinction, fuelled by moral panic about bad language for centuries. Swearing is one example of bad language, yet blasphemous, homophobic, racist and sexist language may cause offence in a certain society.

Bruti (2009) conducted a study on language aspect in a 1970 Disney classic film entitled “The Aristocats” which was dubbed into Italian version. The study analysed the relationship between the original version and the dubbed version in Italian. It aimed to highlight the differences between the sociolinguistic and pragmatic meanings conveyed by the original and those expressed by the dubbed version, relating them to the parameters of the target and source culture, audience and language. Evidently, the study found that the dubbed version seemed richer in accent and dialect variation compared to the original one which also exploited voice and language variation.

Bonsignori et al. (2012) conducted their study on dubbed language. The present work built on the premises of previous research (Bonsignori, Bruti & Masi 2011) and described translating trends for greetings and leave-takings in film language and translation coherence of register across turns and between characters. The findings demonstrated that the choice of types and their translation were strongly influenced by the film genre. Additionally, a tendency towards greater accuracy in translation had been noticed in more recent films, especially in terms of coherence in the register and the characters’ portrayal.

In the Malaysian context, however, the authors observe that the dubbing mode is a neglected area of research. Unlike subtitling in particular, and interpreting in general, studies on dubbing and children’s dubbing are very few. The authors managed to find a study on dubbing which also focused on children viewers and employed *Upin & Ipin* series as a study sample. Majdi & Fudzla (2018) demonstrated the concept of dubbing in *Upin & Ipin*. With language pair Malay-Arabic, this study compared the original dialogue and its translation in order to explain addition and omission approaches in the dubbing process. Employing comparative and analytical methods, the study aimed to analyse the addition and omission methods that had been employed by the dubbing translator of *Upin & Ipin*. The findings revealed that addition and omission approaches were frequently used in children’s dubbing. In fact, the study observed that the dubbing translator had no option but to apply the two approaches in order to explain difficult phrases that did not exist in the Arab culture and omit what could not be rendered in the target version.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employed text analysis as its research methodology which mostly applied a qualitative description by subjective report, explanation, and interpretation. The corpus of this study consisted of the dialogues and images of sarcastic, obscene/vulgar, curse/abusive forms, extracted from the three samples of Japanese and the US cartoon series respectively - *Detective Conan* and *Crayon Shin Chan*, and *SpongeBob SquarePants*. Next, the dubbed items were analysed by looking into the suitability of the Malay translation according to Shavit’s theory of text adjustment and manipulation.

The theory evidently elaborated both rules and norms of translating children’s text and children’s dubbing language, in particular, with the translation of cartoons and animation. Shavit suggests the adjustment of the text to the children’s level of comprehension, which concerns with the adjustment of the text by translators in various ways, for instance, changing, enlarging, or abridging it or by deleting or adding to it provided that the adjustment of the text is to make it appropriate and useful to the child. In addition, the bleep censor method via beeping sound

could always be employed as a means of censoring television programmes to remove content not deemed suitable for "family" or "daytime" viewing.

Translators might also make different choices to create a certain emotional impact on the reader. In this context, they have to take into consideration what is acceptable and good for the children as well as plot adjusting to the children's comprehension. Therefore, the simplest adjustment is by deleting undesirable elements, for instance, sarcastic remarks, taboo words, satirical language, negative values (drinking alcohol in a scene, for instance, can be replaced with a good one, i.e. drinking juice or milk) or deleting the entire paragraphs. In fact, it can even be formulated as a rule that when it is possible to delete undesirable scenes without damaging the basic plot or characterisations, translators will not hesitate to do so.

It is also worth noting that the actual decision of what to omit or delete is the result of the need to revise the text in accordance with the norms of morality that are accepted and demanded by the children's system, as well as the assumed level of children's comprehension. Hence, a translator's decision to manipulate the text to the children's assumed level invariably means that he/she will have to change or shorten it and make it less complicated at the same time. By following this norm, the dubbing translator strives to produce a text acceptable for the target community by negotiating, controlling, or influencing the target audience cleverly, skilfully, or deviously. As a result, the rewriting process can introduce new concepts, new genres, and new history of children's translation. Ultimately, the manipulation would generate another type of norm in translating children's text, namely domestication concept which was coined by Venuti in 1995 which brings the text closer to the target audience by the use of idiomatic and colloquial language, as well as recreating new cultural references in the text.

Finally, the argument should always lead back to the basic concept of dubbing i.e. dubbing mode is unknown to the target viewers and totally removes the original spoken text. In other words, there is no way of checking the translation of the dubbed programmes on the basis of the original soundtrack. In fact, when an original joke is untranslatable or a negative source dialogue needs to be uttered due to the story plot, a whole new substitute joke or dialogue can be made up. Thus, it provides the possibility to give unnoticed explanations when part of the content of the programme is unknown or inappropriate to the new target group. Hence, the Malaysian institution of censorship is responsible for the second transformation of the script which, after the translation had taken place, could be totally banned or partially mutilated or transformed by the authorities.

For the purpose of this study, English transcripts of Detective Conan, Crayon Shin Chan, and SpongeBob SquarePants were extracted from three sources, namely www.detectiveconanworld.com, www.youtube.com, and spongebob.wikia.com/wiki/List_of_transcripts, respectively. The data were marked according to the name of the series, followed by data sequential numbers (e.g. DCd1=1st example of Detective Conan dialogue; CSCi3=3rd example of Crayon Shin Chan image).

DISCUSSION & FINDINGS

DETECTIVE CONAN

The series portrays *Shinichi Kudō*, a prodigious young detective who was inadvertently transformed into a child after being poisoned by two men in black. Detective Conan is a Japanese detective manga series with a wonderful combination of mystery, humour, suspense, action, trickery and mind games genres. In Malaysia, this series was first released in early 2000 via NTV7 channel and ASTRO CERIA Channel 611, while up to 2019, a total of 932 episodes

have been released in 40 countries around the world. The sample was selected for the reason that one of the main characters, *Kogouro Mouri* is unprofessional in his work, frequently making sarcastic and blunt comments about suspects, his clients and even to Conan Edogawa. Therefore, the authors investigated the positive side of *Kogouro Mouri*'s dialogues.

CRAYON SHIN CHAN

Crayon Shin Chan is a Japanese manga series written and illustrated by Yoshito Usui. It portrays the adventures of the five-year-old Shinnosuke "Shin" Nohara and his parents, baby sister, dog, neighbours, and friends. The series has been dubbed into nearly 30 foreign languages, including Malay language, and is popular in many countries, particularly in East Asia. The character was first introduced in Malaysia in the mid-1990s, adapting from the comic which was then translated into Malay and Mandarin. *Crayon Shin Chan* was first broadcast in 2002 via NTV7 channel. Many of the jokes in the series stem from *Shin Chan*'s occasionally weird, unnatural and inappropriate use of language, as well as from his mischievous behaviour.

SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS

Created by former marine biologist and animator Stephen Hillenburg, *SpongeBob SquarePants* is an American animated television series, broadcast on the American cable network, Nickelodeon. Since its debut on May 1, 1999, the series has aired over 200 episodes and is currently in its twelfth season, which premiered on November 11, 2018. In the Malaysian context, *SpongeBob Square Pants* is broadcast via ASTRO Nickelodeon Channel 612 and TV9 channel. The series follows the adventures of the title character and his ocean friends in the fictional underwater city of Bikini Bottom. SpongeBob itself is rated TV-Y, which, stated by the Federal Communications Commission that SpongeBob "is designed for 6 to 11-year-olds", according to the Nickelodeon Network.

FINDINGS

DETECTIVE CONAN (MALAY VERSION)

Language register in the Detective Conan series suits the concept of detective mystery drama by the use of forensic, medical, law and policing language registers, in addition to the technical and forthright statements in the dialogues. However, the negative images portrayed by the Private Investigator *Kogouro Mouri* such as ferocious temper, heavy smoker and alcoholic, with a cigarette always seen in his mouth while his office is littered with empty beer cans, unprofessional in his work, frequently making sarcastic and blunt comments about suspects, clients, his ex-wife and Conan, have resulted in vicious and savage dialogues and character portrayal to suit the real appearance of *Kogouro Mouri*.

DCd1 [dialogue]

The use of a polite term of address "Pakcik" for 'uncle' or 'the elders' by *Conan* in addressing Private Investigator *Kogouro Mouri* (despite the latter's irascibility) indicated that the dubbing translator made his effort in creating *Conan*'s dignified appearance towards elders regardless of their attitude or action.

DCd2 [dialogue]

The use of a polite term of address “Kak” (lit. “sister”) by *Conan* in addressing his childhood friend *Ran* (or *Kak Ran*) despite the same age*, proved that the dubbing translator managed in fomenting politeness towards others.

* Conan was shrunk into a child after being forced to take a poison, called APTX 4869 by the Black Organisation

[Episode 232]

DCd3 [dialogue]

Kogorou Mouri: *Tak lah! Kamu ada bukti ke?* (setting: in a paroxysm of rage)
(dubbed from the English version That’s nonsense! Do you have any proof?)

The dubbing translator avoided direct translation of “That’s nonsense!” as a result of bad connotation when uttered in a paroxysm of rage as if it considers to be untrue or silly. Therefore, a polite alternative by **abridging** the text was employed. As a result, the short phrase “*Tak lah!*” (lit. “No”) with particle ‘lah’, a salient feature of colloquial Malay to convey lightheartedness, was selected. The particle basically adds polite emphasis in Malay. However, it has a variety of effects depending on the context - command, prohibition, emphatic, ameliorating a command, making it sound pleading, or more polite, or less brusque.

DCd4 [dialogue]

.....while murmuring “Hmphh..a brat is a brat”, which was not dubbed into Malay, rather the dubbing translator **omitted** the whole expression, producing only the sound of the sigh “Hmphh..”. In this context, the authors hold firm to the basic concept of dubbing i.e. unknown to the target viewers, dubbing totally removes the original spoken text. In other words, there is no way of checking the translation of the dubbed programmes on the basis of the original soundtrack. In fact, when an original joke is untranslatable or a negative source dialogue needs to be uttered due to the story plot, a whole new substitute joke or dialogue can be made up. Thus, it provides the possibility to give unnoticed explanations when part of the content of the programme is unknown or inappropriate to the new target group. Finally, dialogues can be adapted easily by means of changing, altering, omitting or manipulating them.

DCi1 [image]

Conan also tried to investigate and solve a case. However, Kogorou Mouri was angry as Conan intervened the investigation and suddenly hit him. Unfortunately, the image of hitting (DCi1) was not blurred. The authors stand firm against this kind of image portrayal as the series is meant for children and teenagers. Extensive viewing of television violence by children causes greater aggressiveness. Children who view shows in which violence is very realistic and is frequently repeated are more likely to imitate what they see. Unless the audiences perform the role as some sort of witnesses or commentators, it is a need to record the images. However, in the case of television series targeted on youngsters as its viewers, it would be appropriate for the dubbing translator to request the television station to ‘black dot’, mosaic form, or blur the indecent or disturbing images as the ethics of broadcasting.

The character is a hit among children and adults in Japan for his irreverent behaviour and his use of inappropriate language (obscene and vulgar). He is mischievous in ways similar to the American character, Bart Simpson. However, it was taken off the air in India in 2008 after the broadcasting ministry objected to its nudity and profanity (www.theguardian.com).

As for the authors, it is not the matter of Shin Chan's exhibitionism that makes this series X-rated, it is when the scriptwriters re-write the script for the purpose of global television channels, in which they modify the dialogues or plots to be dirtier than it actually was in its original version in Japan. As a result, the dubbing translators should make their effort in modifying and re-creating the new version of the dialogues to paper over the cracks, as well as create politeness in the dubbed dialogues. As for the bad images, scenes revealing indecent images in Crayon Shin Chan series are clearly noticeable. Further explanation is presented below:

[2014 episode: *Menjalani Kehidupan Yang Miskin*]

CSCi1 [image]

Shin Chan's dog *Shiro* cocked its leg and urinated in the garden.

The image was not blurred. Unless the scene is important to the story plot, and blurring or black dotting method could be applied on the indecent negative image, it is the authors' opinion that it would be appropriate for the dubbing translator to request the television station to remove any indecent or disturbing images of the supplementary or trivial scenes that do not contribute to the actual plot of the story.

[2013 episode: *Datuk Datang - Grandpa Came To Visit*]

CSCi2 [image]

Shin Chan's grandfather drinking Japanese rice wine *sake* was clearly portrayed.

CSCd1 [dialogue]

Atuk: *Saya nak minum minuman baru ni* / Grandpa: I'd like to try this new drink.

Shin Chan: *Saya pun nak minum juga* / Shin Chan: Me too. Me too

[Setting: with a deadpan expression on the grandfather's face, referring to his action of drinking *sake*]:
Atuk: *Ambil aje la. Tapi kalau nak minum, sikit aje sebab kalau budak-budak minum air ni, bahaya dan akan pening dan pengsan. Kamu nak minum juga ke?*

Grandpa: Here you go. A quick one. It's dangerous for kids. It'll make you feel woozy and faint. You still want it?

With regard to Shin Chan's grandfather's act of consuming *sake*, the source dialogue and the dubbing translator employed **manipulation** method of reverse psychology. It was when Shin Chan requested for a glass of *sake*, and the method was used to drop subtle hints to Shin Chan that he may drink *sake* but in small quantity and be prepared to feel woozy and faint. The idea here was to make Shin Chan think that he was making his own right decision. However, the scene ended in a positive act in which Shin Chan had rebuffed his request.

CSCi3 [image]

The portrayal of undressed Shin Chan ready for his bath.

The image was not blurred. Unless the scene is important to the story plot, and blurring, black dotting or applying mosaic form on the negative image is the only option, it is the authors' opinion that it would be appropriate for the dubbing translator to request the television station to remove any disturbing images of supplementary or trivial scenes that do not contribute to the actual plot of the story.

CSCi4 [image]

A scene in which Shin Chan was showing his private part to a young woman.

The image was not censored. As previously mentioned, it is the authors' opinion that it would be appropriate for the dubbing translator to request the television station to remove any disturbing images of supplementary or trivial scenes that do not contribute to the actual plot of the story, unless the scene is important to the plot, and blurring or black dotting method on the negative image is the only option.

[2013 episode: *Mama dan Kolam Mandi - Mom and Her Bath Tub*]

CSCi5 [image]

A shot taken from Shin Chan's back position was not censored or blurred. The dubbing translator should have decided to remove any disturbing images of supplementary or trivial scenes that do not contribute to the actual plot of the story, unless the scene is important to the plot and blurring, black dotting or applying mosaic form on the negative image is the only option.

CSCd2 [dialogue]

Shin Chan: *Mama, kenapa lelaki dan wanita tak sama?* / Shin Chan: Mom, why are man and woman different? (glancing at his genital part)

Both dialogues did not imply the inner meaning of rude or bad remark, while the visual of glancing at the private part did not obviously display Shin Chan's act of obscenity due to his position in the bath-tub filled with water and soap bubbles.

CSCd3 [dialogue]

Shin Chan: *Mama, saya nak kencing* / Shin Chan: Mom, I must have a pee.

In the first place, the Malay word "kencing" is an impolite word referring to "urinating". Therefore, in order to paper over the flaw, a polite way to convey the word "kencing" in Malay culture should be employed: "buang air" or "buang air kecil". In this regard, the authors also hold firm to the basic concept of dubbing i.e. unknown to the target viewers, dubbing totally removes the original spoken text. In other words, there is no way of checking the translation of the dubbed programmes on the basis of the original soundtrack. In fact, when an original joke is untranslatable or a negative source dialogue needs to be uttered due to the story plot, a whole

new substitute joke or dialogue can be made up. Thus, it provides the possibility to give unnoticed explanations when part of the content of the programme is unknown or inappropriate to the new target group.

CSCd4 [dialogue]

Mama: *Apa?? Kamu dah buang air dalam kolam ni ke?* / Mom: Whaat?? You're passing water inside this tub?

The Malay dialogue indicates a polite way to rectify the word “urinating” or ‘pee’.

CSCd5 [dialogue]

Shin Chan: *Nasib baik tak buang air besar* / Shin Chan: It's a good thing I didn't defecate.

”Buang air besar” refers to “to defecate”. Therefore, the Malay dialogue was a polite way to rectify “to defecate”, rather than using the rude word ‘berak’.

[2016 episode: *Mama Lari Dari Rumah - Mom Ran Away From Home*]

CSCd6 [dialogue]

Shin Chan: *Ini berita yang baru kami terima. Seorang suri rumah yang pemalas telah lari dari rumah.*

Shin Chan: This is the latest breaking news. A lazy housewife has run away from home.

Shin Chan's mimetic action of a newsreader, referring to his own mother as ‘a lazy housewife’ was regarded as rude. The authors hold firm to the basic concept of dubbing i.e. unknown to the target viewers, dubbing totally removes the original spoken text. In other words, there is no way of checking the translation of the dubbed programmes on the basis of the original soundtrack. In fact, when an original joke is untranslatable or a negative source dialogue needs to be uttered due to the story plot, a whole new substitute joke or dialogue can be made up. Thus, it provides the possibility to give unnoticed explanations when part of the content of the programme is unknown or inappropriate to the new target group. Finally, dialogues can be adapted easily by means of changing, altering, omitting or manipulating them. Therefore, in tackling this ‘crucify joke’, the dubbing translator may ignore and omit the word ‘lazy’ considering that the dialogue has already conveyed its key meaning (‘A housewife’ - ‘run away’).

CSCd7 [dialogue]

Papa: *Mula-mula kita potong buluh dulu* / Father: First, we cut the bamboo.

Shin Chan: *Buluh Betong ke, papa?* / Shin Chan: The bamboo?
(uttering in jest)

Buluh Betong is a species of big bamboo, *Dendrocalamus asper*. Additionally, it was a coincidence that “Buluh Betong” was a myth and legend of Malay classic film “Puteri Buluh Betong” (lit. Princess *Buluh Betong*). With regard to Shin Chan's Malay dialogue, the dubbing translator, despite the joke played by Shin Chan on his father, had creatively introduced the element of domestication, which is also **text enlargement** or **adding** method, providing the atmosphere of the Malay setting in the Crayon Shin Chan's plot, as well as adding the local flavour to the target audience. At the very least, the dubbed dialogue could instil an illusion of

the source version (Japanese) in Malaysian children viewers with the ‘new’ type of Japanese bamboo.

CSCd8

Shin Chan: *Lepas makan nasi goreng biasa, makan nasi goreng kampung pulak ke?*

Shin Chan: Next, we gonna have another menu of fried rice?

The dubbing translator **changed** and **manipulated** the text by means of domestication strategy. In this sense, the dubbing translator introduced a type of famous local fried rice, *nasi goreng kampung* (lit. ‘village fried rice’), adding the Malaysian atmosphere to the story. At the very least, the dubbed dialogue could instil an illusion of the source version (Japanese) in Malaysian children viewers with the ‘new’ type of Japanese fried rice.

SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS (MALAY VERSION)

The essence of the show is that SpongeBob is an innocent in a world of jaded characters. It is full of jokes, visual enough to appeal to children but brainy enough to appeal to adults, making this series an animation designed for older children. To the best of the authors’ beliefs, SpongeBob SquarePants, as compared to the Crayon Shin Chan in each of its episodes, does not give much bad impression or influence on children. Seldom have we seen taboo remarks or vulgar depiction in each episode of this series. Nevertheless, certain characters, particularly Patrick Star with his prominent character trait of low intelligence, Squidward Tentacles, SpongeBob’s next-door neighbour with a dry, sarcastic sense of humour, and Mr. Krabs, a self-content and cunning crab, and obsessed with the value and essence of money, occasionally resulting in inappropriate scenes and dialogues (curse and shitty). Most of the Malay dialogues were literally rendered from the original version of the series. Further explanation can be referred below:

[Season 2: I’m With Stupid]

Synopsis

SpongeBob pretended to be stupid to make Patrick look smart in front of his parents.

SSd1

SpongeBob: Patrick, *boleh kita bincang kat dapur?* / SpongeBob: Patrick, meet me in the kitchen!

Patrick: *Ooo...inilah si bodoh yang mahukan perbincangan rahsia tu ye. Si bodoh!*

(Patrick: Oh, I guess the dummy wants to have a private conversation. A dumb one)

In the first place, the Malay word ‘bodoh’ is one of the harsh words. In dubbing context, the dubbing translator has the exclusive right to make up or substitute an appropriate term for the impolite word, seeing that this method provides the possibility to give unnoticed explanations when part of the content of the programme is unknown or inappropriate to the new target group. Therefore, there is no harm in creating a polite conversation, with a touch of creativity and manipulation in the dubbed dialogue, say, “*Ooo...inilah orangnya yang mahukan perbincangan rahsia tu ye. Awak la ye!* (lit. “Oh, I guess you’re the one who_wants to have a private conversation. It’s you!)

[Season 3: Rock-A-Bye Bivalve]

Synopsis

SpongeBob and Patrick found an abandoned baby scallop, later to be named Junior, and quickly decided to become its adoptive parents. Their relationship started well enough, with both parents accepting equal responsibility for their newfound baby. Patrick started going to “work,” while SpongeBob was taking care of Junior all day and all night, cleaning the house, and apparently stuffing diapers everywhere that he possibly could.

SSd2

SpongeBob: [nada marah] *Jadi ini yang dipanggil kerja ya?* / SpongeBob: [angrily] So, this is work?

Patrick: *Tak semudah yang awak lihat, Spongebob. Adakalanya saya kena betulkan antena, saya hilangkan alat kawalan TV, [sambil menoleh ke arah punggungnya]...dan kadang-kadang punggung saya gatal sangat [sambil menggaru punggungnya].*

Patrick: You know, it's not as easy as it looks. Sometimes, I gotta move the antenna, sometimes, I lose the remote, [looks at his rear] and sometimes, my butt itches real bad! [scratching his butt].

It is the authors' opinion that the underlined dialogue is not perceived as being too harsh. However, considering that dubbing totally removes the original spoken text, the dubbing translator may replace the word ‘punggung’ by choice, say, “*dan kadang-kadang belakang saya gatal sangat* (lit. “and sometimes, my back itches real bad”).

Nevertheless, a shot taken from Patrick's back position (his butt) was not censored or blurred. The dubbing translator should have decided to censor or blur or black dot the indecent or disturbing image of the important scene that contributes to the actual plot of the story.

[Season 3: Nasty Patty]

Synopsis

A television report revealed that someone was passing Mr Krabs off as a health inspector to obtain free food. Outraged at the thought of giving away free food, Mr. Krabs believed that the health inspector that was on their premises was the impostor, and thus he and SpongeBob created a "Nasty Patty", a Krabby Patty that had been made with Volcano Sauce, seahorse radish, toenail clippings, then dropped into the toilet and dried with Mr. Krabs' gym socks. Just before the health inspector ate it, a fly went into his mouth, choked him, and knocked him out.

SSd3

Mr. Krabs: *Cuba tengok. Saya pasti dia tak pernah tukar seluar dalamnya.*

Mr. Krabs: Look at him. I bet he never changes his underpants (pointing at the health inspector's underwear)

SSd4

Mr. Krabs: *Tunggu...Di pejabat saya ada banyak kuku kaki yang dikerat.*

Mr. Krabs: Ohh, hold on, I've got a ton of toenail clippings in my office! (referring to the image of the dirty toenail clippings).

The uncut visual was disturbing as the viewers could clearly see the condition of the dirty toenail clippings, creating an unpleasant sight to the viewers, hence demanding the blurring or black dotting methods or applying mosaic form on the image. Nevertheless, the authors believe that the dubbed dialogue is acceptable if the related visual is censored by means of black dot or mosaic forms.

SSi1

[runs off as SpongeBob drops the patty in the toilet]

SSd5

SpongeBob: *Alamak! Krabby patty terjatuh dalam tandas!* / SpongeBob: Oops, I dropped it in the toilet!

SSi2

[scene cuts to showing a disgusting krabby patty with what appears to be pimples and green meat]

The uncut visuals were disturbing as the viewers could clearly see the condition of the krabby patty and pimples, creating an unpleasant sight to the viewers. Therefore, the scene demands the blurring, black dotting or mosaic form methods on the images.

[Season 5: The Battle of Bikini Bottom]

Synopsis

SpongeBob and Patrick battled over a cleanliness issue.

SSi3

[Patrick took SpongeBob's eyes]

SSd6

Patrick: *Haa..dah dapat biji mata awak!* / Patrick: I got your eyeballs!

It is the authors' opinion that the underlined dialogue is not perceived as being too harsh. However, considering that dubbing totally removes the original spoken text, the dubbing translator may replace the word 'biji mata' by choice, say, "*Haa..dah dapat mata awak !* (lit. "I got your eyes!")"

SSi4

[giggled as he ran with them, but he soon saw that they were bombs, which squirt water out. SpongeBob got his eyeballs back and laughed.]

SSi5

[cut to scene where Patrick formed into a cannon and he blasted his brain at SpongeBob like a cannonball]

SSd7

SpongeBob: *Eeeuw...jus otak!* / SpongeBob: [screamed] Eww, brain juice!

The uncut visual was disturbing as the viewers could clearly see the condition of what Spongebob claimed as 'jus otak' (brain juice), creating an unpleasant sight to the viewers. Therefore, the scene demands the blurring, black dotting or mosaic form methods on the images. In terms of the dubbed dialogue, the authors believe that the dubbing translator could fabricate an

alternative dialogue by not specifically mentioning “juice made from the brain” as well as the exclamation ‘*Eeeuw...*’ which indicates a feeling of nausea.
Option: SpongeBob: *Tengok!...jus ajaib!* (lit. “Look!...the magic juice)

CONCLUSION

From the critical analysis and explanation, the authors have come to a conclusion that dubbing translators of children’s animated series must be aware of tackling the texts containing sarcastic remarks, obscene/vulgar words, curse/abusive language, as well as negative visuals (obscene or violating).

Detective Conan is a Japanese detective manga series with a combination of mystery, suspense, action, trickery and mind games genres, resulting in sarcastic remarks, curse/abusive language, and violating images in most of its dialogues. Obscene or vulgar words and images were mostly found in Crayon Shin Chan series as a result of the dominant characteristic of 5-year old mischievous Shin Chan who makes the US cartoon character, Dennis the Menace look benign by comparison. The authors judged it is normal for growing children to have natural curiosity about human body, surroundings, and things around them, while curse/abusive/disgusting language and visuals were observed in SpongeBob SquarePants as a result of creating weird things. SpongeBob SquarePants is a fast-paced children’s cartoon comedy for dual audience, in which every comedy needs some stupid characters to fully entertain the young viewers.

Another critical point to highlight is that conventional translation probably is not enough for translated text to be successful in local markets. Translators need to localise or domesticate the content of the text to gain the trust of the target audience, meaning that they must go beyond translation and come up with creative skills by localising or domesticating the text, specially made for each local audience or setting.

In terms of censorship in the Malaysian context, the actual censorship documents that were issued at the time confirm the fact that the local authorities were responsible for determining what films were shown or not shown on television, and what information was appropriate or not, to be carried over from the original to the translated scripts, hence from the original productions to the dubbed versions of the films.

This paper came to the vital conclusion that it might be customary in some cultures to use direct language, while in other cultures this might be regarded as offensive or obscene language, given the role of translators nowadays more dominant and evident.

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