Ideology in Translation of Animated Cartoon Titles: Peculiarities and Anomalies

Roya Monsefi* (Corresponding Author)

Assistant Professor of Translation Studies, Department of English Language and Literature, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran
Email: r.monsefi@azaruniv.ac.ir

Marziyeh Charkhtab

MA Student of Translation Studies, Department of English Language and Literature, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran
Email: marziyehcharkhtab@gmail.com

Abstract

In the field of multimedia translation, one of the trickiest challenges relates to translation of children's cartoons. Animated cartoons may appear puerile but they can play an essential role in child's mental and emotional development and education. Dubbing and subtitling are the main modes of animated cartoon translations. Each of them interferes into the original version to some extent in order to make it sound natural, educational and entertaining to the target audience. With the use of descriptive method, the present study investigates the translation of twelve animated cartoon titles from English into Persian in 1980s to early 2000s and compares them in terms of factual beliefs and evaluative beliefs which are proposed by van Dijk (1998). While the former refers to the shared knowledge of the society, the latter is concerned with judgments and values, which constitute ideologies. When a factual belief from source society is replaced by an evaluative belief or opinion in target society, it can be considered as a false factual belief. The results demonstrated that in translation of animated cartoons titles, Iranian translators frequently preferred free translation since they changed factual beliefs to false one or replaced them by evaluative ideologies. The effects of such changes on children are inevitable.

Keywords: Animated Cartoon, Cartoon Titles, Ideologies, Factual Beliefs, Evaluative Beliefs, Children

Introduction

"While titles are names, they are a good deal more than just names" (Fisher, 1984, p. 288). A title is the first para-textual element that a reader or audience confronts. It does not only summarize the whole work; but also communicates something that the receptor is seeking. It guides the audience to interpret the whole work without necessarily taking the medium of representation into account (Nsiah & Marfo, 2011). Hence, a title is the first point of contact between the author and the receptor (Haggan, 2004). Based on these assumptions, titles are highly significant and they need to be acknowledged in terms of value and relationship.

"Title is an integral part of a book" (Salehi & Falahati Qadimi Fumani, 2013, p. 199). Accordingly, translation of the title is as important as the title itself. However, there is a certain degree of difference in translation of a book title with a movie or a cartoon title. Although the translation of book titles may require some extent of creativity, in translation of movie titles, the original title should be translated in consonance with "the context of the movie, the acceptability of the audience in the target culture and cultural differences" (Salehi & Falahati Qadimi Fumani, 2013, p. 200). Consequently, diverging views arise in the title translation of the print media and broadcast media. This issue is highlighted when the target audience is children rather than adults.

The purpose of the present study is to determine whether the ideology of the translator in translating the titles of the animated cartoons affects the final product of translation or not. Additionally, this paper critically discusses the differences between knowledge and ideology in terms of Persian translations of the animated cartoon titles.

Newmark (1988) distinguished descriptive titles "which describe the topic of the text" from allusive titles "which have some kind of referential or figurative relationship to the topic" (p. 57). He argued that descriptive titles should be maintained, including those that are based on protagonist's names, and allusive titles shall be reworked only if necessary. Zatlin (2005, p. 95) believed that "many titles carry over easily" unless those with cultural references. He proposed *adaptation* as the best translation strategy for comic titles.

Lotfollahi and Moinzadeh (2012) examined the translation of Hollywood movie titles of 2010 from English into Persian in order to discover the different strategies that were used by the Iranian translators. They claimed that literal translation and transliteration were the mostly used strategies which could change the effect of the main titles. Yamazaki, Morita, Komiya and Kotani (2014) studied the different strategies of translation of titles of anime series from English into Japanese. The results revealed transliteration as the most frequent strategy for translation of titles.

With the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods, Nikitina (2016) analyzed the lexical components of titles and their translation strategies in English titles of animated movies with their Italian and Russian translations. The findings implied that most of the titles used zero translation, i.e., they were left unchanged. Thus, there was no clear-cut distinction between the authentic and inauthentic dimensions. Surdyk and Urban (2016) demonstrated the mistranslation of comedy film titles. The study drew a distinction between two related factors: fidelity and advertising. After discussing different translation strategies and procedures, the results confirmed that fidelity was sacrificed for commercial purposes.

Several other studies had the focus on translation of proper names which constitute the main part of a literary book or an audiovisual work. For instance, Köprülü (2016) highlighted the impact of cartoon on children's behavior and its onomastic effects on them. She declared that the names of imaginative characters or those characters that do not depend on cultural matters should be naturalized while the names of the characters in realist cartoons such as Heidi should not be translated. Sharei, Yazdanmehr, and Firooziyan Pour Esfahani (2017) raised several concerns about the translation of anthroponyms in children's animated cartoon series. They presented the translation strategies for the proper names in five popular cartoons from English into Persian. The research had been done according to Van Coillie's (2006) and Fernandes's (2006) model of translating proper names. Based on the results, Iranian translators mostly reproduced or copied the names and they were unaware about other strategies.

Translation of children's literature, including animated cartoons, is a particular type of translation that needs to consider the cognitive and linguistic abilities of its recipients, i.e. children (Klingberg, 1986). Van Coillie (2006) argued that names are holy but it is not the case in children's literature where there seems to be a great deal of adapting names to the target culture.

As mentioned above, the majority of the previous studies in the field aimed to determine the type of strategies in translating children's literature (e.g. Oittinen, 2000). Thus, attention due to ideologies of the translator in translation of titles, especially animated cartoon titles leaves room for investigation. Ideology can be defined as "the tacit assumptions, beliefs, and value systems which are shared collectively by social groups" (Hatim & Mason, 1997, p. 144). Hatim and Mason (1997, p. 146) were among the first translation scholars to highlight the fact that "the translator acts in a social context and is part of that context" to such an extent that acts of translation are seldom neutral. The translators' main goal is bridging the gap and reconciliation between cultures. This specific type of mediation cannot but leave traces of their individuality in the target product (Neubert, 1989).

The central role of the media in directing ideologies has been stressed in several studies. According to Naghy (2010), the public cannot reach the event

happenings directly, thus it gives the power to the media to make different ideologies available to the people. In the absence of contradictory ideologies, the dominant ideology represented and reproduced by the media will be pervasive. In addition to the undeniable role of the media on the reproduction and dissemination of government ideology to the people, Kazanoğlu (2015) evaluated the first Turkish cartoon series "*Pepee*" in relation to the Turkish ruling party AKP's ideology. The results revealed that "the Islamic motifs, the patriarchal values, the anti-westernization aspects and the heavy emphasis on motherhood and the concept of *holy family*, all of which underpin the AKP ideology are all largely embedded in *Pepee*." (p. 2226). Analyzing the factors which are involved in translating children's animated cartoons is also of importance. The institutional factor is the most important one "which refers to the institution's ideology and its policy towards texts directed to children" (Rishah, 2013, p. 21). This factor affects the translator's choices. Hence, Rishah (2013) claimed that translation institutions added their own ideas to the animated cartoon series before they were presented to the Arab children. As a result, ideology is a significant issue "when it comes to children's books and media" (Song, 2012, p. 126).

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Translating for children is a sensitive activity since the receptor does not have an adult's worldview (Köprülü, 2016). Accordingly, the present study aims to investigate the undeniable role of the ideology in translation of animated cartoon titles and the reason behind peculiarities and anomalies in their Persian translations. The method is descriptive and the theoretical framework is based on van Dijk (1998). Persian translations are investigated according to their degree of fidelity to the original titles and this fidelity or faithfulness is linked with van Dijk's (1998) concepts of *factual beliefs*, which contain true or false knowledge, and *evaluative beliefs,* which include opinions, attitudes and ideologies. Hence, he differentiates between knowledge and opinion. The definitions of these two concepts are the core part of the present study since the analysis will be done accordingly. While knowledge is supposed to be equal to socially shared factual beliefs, opinions are socially shared evaluative beliefs. In other words, social opinions are based on values and moral order of society and factual beliefs can be considered as epistemic order which is "the underlying system that features the basic truth criteria for beliefs about the world" (van Dijk, 1998, p. 34). Inasmuch as this distinction is profoundly rooted in our commonsense thinking and judgments about the world, it affects the translator's process of translating and decision-making.

In the present study, the titles of twelve following English and Persian cartoon series were under scrutiny. They were aired during the 1980s and early 2000s in Iranian TV channels.

Table 1: *Titles of Cartoons in English and their Translations in Persian*

Aesop's Fables	1983	قصه کوچولوها
Alfred J. Kwak	1989	اردک پرطلا
Count Duckula	2002	قلعه هزاراردک
Fables of the Green Forest	1973	موش کوهستان
Gibi and DoppiaW	1990	جیبی و پاکتی
Katri, Girl of the Meadows	1984	حنا، دختری در مزرعه
Lucy-May of the Southern Rainbow	1982	مهاجران
Marsupilami	2000	پلنگ دم دراز
School of Love: Heart's Story	1981	بچه های مدرسه والت
The Adventures of Little Prince	1978	مسافر کوچولو
The Magic School Bus	1994	سفرهای علمی
Touli the Dreamkeeper	1992	خواب های سلولوئیدی

There were two main criteria in choosing the above cartoon series; first, they are well-known and remarkably popular all around the world, especially, among Persian children. Second, conspicuous free translations according to the ideologies of the translators can be found in translation of cartoon titles in this time span. The components of the translations are compared to the original ones mostly in terms of social and cultural perspectives since the focus of the current study is on the ideologies, which deal with the beliefs of a group of people or translators. The comparison of these two sets determines whether the ideology of the source animated cartoon is similar to that of the target one or not. Finally, the effects of such changes in ideology with relation to the target culture children are discussed.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Recently, there have been several studies on children's literature and its translation. Several subjects of the kind as "Asymmetry", "Ambivalence" and "Manipulation and Censorship" were taken into account (Thomson-Wohlegmuth, 1998). However, the related debates to these topics have not been solved completely and almost most of the previous studies paid much attention to comics rather than audiovisual works such as animated cartoons. The core concept of the present research is the study of translation of animated cartoon titles according to van Dijk's theory of ideologies (1998) which will be examined in detail in the rest of the paper.

As van Dijk (2013) stated, in order to understand the concept of ideology, it is necessary to distinguish between knowledge and ideology. Whereas Knowledge is largely known "as socially shared beliefs that are justified within *epistemic communities,* and on the basis of special *knowledge criteria*" (p. 177), ideologies are accepted as "belief systems that are only *shared by specific (ideological) groups of people*, and are typically *not* shared and taken for granted by the whole sociocultural community." (p. 177). van Dijk (2013) admits that while knowledge is regarded as 'true' belief or belief about 'facts', ideologies most often characterize "beliefs that

are based on norms and values" (p. 177). In spite of this, he argues that there is no 'true' or 'false' ideologies. "Rather they represent the possibly partisan, self-serving 'truth' of a social group." (van Dijk, 1995, p. 246). In other words, they are approximately *relevant* or *efficient* frameworks of interpretation.

Unlike factual beliefs or knowledge, ideologies are essentially *evaluative*. That is to say, "they provide the basis for both judgments and guidelines for social perception and interaction" (van Dijk, 1995, p. 248). When in fact, "our socio-cultural knowledge consists of socially shared *factual beliefs* based on socially acknowledged truth criteria", "opinions, as evaluative beliefs, presuppose a judgment based on socially shared values and norms" (van Dijk, 1998, p. 34).

The title of the cartoon "Aesop's Fables" (1983) is changed to "قصه‌ی کوچولوها" /qesse-ye kučuluhâ/ in Persian. The factual belief is that the title presents an overall idea about the cartoon. It includes some fables from the famous Greek fabulist and storyteller, Aesop (c. 620 – 564 BCE). The Persian title for this cartoon is known as "The Story of Kids". According to the distinction of knowledge and opinion proposed by van Dijk (1998), this translation involves opinion not knowledge. The reason is that the name of *Aesop* is omitted from the title and the term *fables* is replaced by *stories*. While fable means "a short story that tells a general truth or is only partly based on fact, or literature of this type" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019), story refers to "a description, either true or imagined, of a connected series of events" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). As Ranua (2009) argues, "a translation should convey the ideas of the author of the source text and create the same effect in the target readers that the original text creates in the source readers" (p. 22). Hence, these two terms do not carry the equal value and they cannot produce the same effect on the audience. For instance, a child as an audience can never be acquainted with Aesop and s/he cannot perceive that these stories are belonged to such a great Greek fabulist.

Another similar example is the translation of "The Adventures of Little Prince" (1978). Since it is translated to "مسافر کوچولو" /mosâfer Kučulu/ which means "The Little Traveler", children usually cannot guess that this cartoon series is based on Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's famous book, *The Little Prince* (1943).

It is interesting to note that the animated cartoon entitled "Gibi and DoppiaW" (1990) is translated into Persian as "جیبی و پاکتی" /jibi va pâkati/. This cartoon has two main protagonists: Gibi and DoppiaW who are ready for creating happy moments for children. The main problem with the translated title is that since the word جیبی /jibi/ in Persian means *pocket*, the name of the other character is translated as پاکتی /pâkati/ that has approximately the similar meaning. Van Coillie (2006) notes that character names have several functions, and the most significant functions of them is to identify and introduce the characters to the audience. Inasmuch as the translated title identifies and introduces characters incorrectly to the children, it can be considered as "false factual beliefs or simply as opinions" (van

Dijk, 1998, p. 37). van Dijk assumes a relativist theory of knowledge, which is to be believed as shared knowledge within a group. Others can challenge this knowledge as false or as an opinion. However, concerning the foregoing example, *Jibi and Pakati* can be considered as a false opinion and while this false factual belief is transferred from the translator to the youngster as an audience, it makes him or her to be mixed-up with the relationship between the appearance of the main characters and the main theme of the cartoon.

One of the most challenging translations of cartoon titles is concerned with the French stop-motion animated series "Touli le Gardien des Rêves" (1992). It is known as "Touli the Dreamkeeper" in English-speaking countries which is not far from the original title. Touli, the protagonist of the cartoon, has magical powers. He keeps children's dreams in boxes and files them out on paper. The Persian title for this is "خواب‌های سلولوئیدی" /xâbhâ-ye selolo'idi/ which is neither clear nor exact translation of the original title. The ideology behind this translation is open to question. The term *selolo'idi* or *celluloid* is a foreign and unknown term not only for children but also for adults. Whereas the term *celluloid* means films or the cinema generally (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019), according to the official website of Pooya TV, Iranian children's television channel, this term refers to the lucid dreaming which is "the experience of achieving conscious awareness of dreaming while still asleep" (Voss, Holzmann, Tuin & Hobson, 2009, p. 1191). Considering van Dijk's (1998) classification of types of beliefs, this translation is lied in the category of true factual beliefs (knowledge) versus false factual beliefs (errors, illusions). It includes the opposite point of view because the intended theme and message of this cartoon is not lucid dreaming.

The famous cartoon series "Marsupilami" (2000) is usually known as "پلنگ دم دراز" /palang-e dom derâz/ in Iran, which means "The Long-tailed Leopard". Indeed, the marsupilami is a black-spotted yellow monkey-like creature with dog-like ears which is different from a leopard. It is worth noting that an actual leopard exists in the series that makes the children question the appearance and identity of a leopard, i.e. why there are two different types of a special species, how the true appearance of a leopard is and if it looks like Marsupilami or other leopard type. These are some of the probable questions which the children may be encountered as the receptors. Here, there is a stable conflict between true factual beliefs or knowledge of the source community and false factual beliefs or opinions and ideologies of the target community (van Dijk, 1998). As these ideologies "are belief systems that are only shared by specific (ideological) groups of people, and are typically not shared and taken for granted by the whole sociocultural community" (van Dijk, 2013, p. 3), they are mostly based on norms and values of the society. One of these values deals with the notion of domestication. Some of the Iranian cartoon translators prefer to domesticate the foreign works. Because of this reason, the translators select a familiar phrase instead of the imaginative foreign word. The similar example for this issue can be *"Alfred J. Kwak"* (1989) which is translated as "اردک پر طلا" /ordak-e par talâ/. The Persian title can be rendered as "The Golden-feathered

Duck/Duckling" which is a phrase instead of the name of the protagonist of the cartoon series.

Whereas the title of the Japanese anime television series "Ai no Gakko Cuore Monogatari" (1981) is translated into English as "The Story of Cuore, School of Love" or "School of Love: Heart's Story", it is translated into Persian as *"بچه‌های مدرسه والت"* */bačeha-ye madrase-ye vâlt/.* It means "Students of Walt School". This anime series is based on the novel *Cuore, Libro per i Ragazzi* or *Heart: An Italian Schoolboy's Journal* (1886) by Edmondo de Amicis. The characters of the anime meet a teacher of virtue who tells them heart-warming stories which make the students to realize what matters the most is to love others. The Persian translation has omitted the most important word of the title, i.e. *Heart* which is related to the main theme of the story. As mentioned above, a title is an integral part of a work and before reading a book or watching a movie, a receptor confronts with the title as a key to have some ideas about the whole work. At first glance, it seems that this anime is about romantic love stories. The dominant ideology behind this omission is an evaluative one since this word has been deleted in order to obviate the ambiguity of the title. van Dijk (1998) claims that "basic social opinions are constituted from values when applied to specific domains and issues in society" (p. 76).

Sometimes, the focus of the title is shifted to other subjects. For instance, in the case of "The Magic School Bus" (1994), while the original title of the cartoon emphasizes on the Magic School Bus, the translation i.e., *"سفرهای علمی"* */safar-hâ-ye elmi/* or "The Scientific Journeys", focuses on the journeys rather than the school bus. Another example for this problem can be "Lucy-May of the Southern Rainbow" (1982) translated as *"مهاجران"* */mohâjerân"* in Persian. The focus of the title is shifted from the main character of the anime to the whole family as immigrants.

Occasionally, translators "may add the name of a (famous) character, probably as a way to attract the reader" (Viezzi, 2013, p. 381). For instance, instead of the title "Fables of the Green Forest" (1973), Iranian translators have used *"موش کوهستان"* */muš-e kuhestân/,* the name of the protagonist of the story. In this sense, the knowledge of source group is replaced by the evaluative ideologies of the target culture. van Dijk (1998) mentioned that "evaluative beliefs lead to judgments and social practices that are not in the interest of the own group, and may be in the interest of a dominant group" (p. 97). This may be the most logical reason for these types of changes in translation because there is no guarantee that these are the choices and ideologies of the translators themselves without considering the role of institutional context of media.

According to Surdyk and Urban (2016), some of the titles include the proper names that give rise to one of the potential problems in translation. There is no definite agreement on translatability of such nouns; however, the ultimate decision about translation of the proper names is made by the translator himself and "once a decision has been made, the translator should be consistent" (Thomson-Wohlgemuth, 1998, p. 76). The animated television series "Katri, Girl of the Meadows" (1984) known as *"حنا، دختری در مزرعه"* */hanâ doxtari dar mazra?e/* in

Persian is an appropriate example for this strategy. The translator has preferred to translate the proper name *Katri* as *Hana*. Aguilera (2008) notes that "asking whether proper names have to be translated or not constitutes a useless debate, since it is clear that they are translated" (p. 8). On the contrary, the issue is that translation and localization of proper names can be regarded as a kind of false factual belief. Yamazaki (2002) indicates that "the change of names creates a false impression of a homogenous world, only to discourage children from learning about other possibilities, enhancing the feeling of strangeness when children actually come across foreign names in real life" (p. 60).

The last example entails a combination of the above mentioned issues. "Count Duckula" (2002) is a British animated comedy horror television series that is a loose parody of the story of Count Dracula. It is translated into Persian as *"قلعه‌ی هزار اردک"* */qal?e-ye hezâr ordak/.* The translated title not only shifts the emphasis from the main character to the castle, but also the proper name i.e. the name of the castle is translated. Moreover, the title is a free translation because it is not based on the original title and it conveys only the ideologies of the translator rather than the common shared knowledge. According to van Dijk (1998), ideologies exist on two ontological levels: as generalized context-free systems of beliefs that control and organize more specific mental representations of a group (types); so a free translation like this mostly deals with ideologies in that sense; and as particular instances of expression and reproduction in the social practices such as rituals, symbols or discourse (tokens). A comparison between ideology and natural language is instructive here: on the one hand, they both are conceptual systems located in the minds of the individuals, but are to a large extent shared by the groups of people; on the other hand, they both are manifested in behavior when used to accomplish everyday socially endorsed practices – acting and communicating.

Conclusion

Similar to the titles of children's books, the titles of animated cartoon series are one of the first items that attract the attention of a youngster as a receptor. Accordingly, translation of the titles becomes an important issue. Animated cartoons are loaded with cultural and ideological concepts and values. However, translation is often about the clash and conflict between worldviews – about cultural power and disempowerment. Translation embodies struggle not merely on language but also on politics and ideology. The present research investigated the translation of twelve animated cartoon titles from English into Persian. Based on the distinctions between factual beliefs and evaluative beliefs proposed by van Dijk (1998), there were some contradictions between the ideologies of the source titles and target titles. The results of the study implied that the differences often rooted in the concept of false factual beliefs. In other words, there were essential conflicts between true factual beliefs of the original title and false factual beliefs of the target title; however, it was argued that such translations could be of interests of the dominant groups rather than the translators' own interests. In addition, it was highlighted that suchlike translations could affect the mentality of the children in appropriately grasping the content value of the cartoon.

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Authors' Biographies

Roya Monsefi is an Assistant Professor of Translation Studies at Department of English Language and Literature, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran. She received her Ph.D. in Translation Studies from the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia. Her research interests include Legal Discourse, Rhetorics and Persuasion, Translation Quality Assessment, Translation and Linguistics, Translation and Media. Email: r.monsefi@azaruniv.ac.ir

Marziyeh Charkhtab is an MA student of Translation Studies at Department of English Language and Literature, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Tabriz, Iran. She gained a BA degree in 2018 in English Literature at the same university. Her research interests include Children Literature and its translation in terms of both books and animated cartoon series. Email: marziyehcharkhtab@gmail.com