

Abstract 11

An Analysis on Sinhalese Subtitling on the Movie “The Dictator”

Hasitha Kaushalya¹, Chamini Wickramasinghe², Thumeshi Gunawardhana³

The cinema is a captivating, if complex route to the cultural sphere where it is born, which makes it difficult for the spectators from another linguistic dimension to grasp the notion behind the screen. This is one of the areas in which translators are most visible with their work in subtitling. Subtitling is the bridge that links those two cultural spheres that appear as a textual version of dialogue, in a movie that are usually displayed at the bottom of the screen. It is generally agreed that subtitling via cultures is rather a difficult task. This study is based on the film “The Dictator” by Larry Charles where a dictator who dreams that democracy would never come to his country he so lovingly oppressed. It extends for a time duration of ninety minutes with constant dialogues. A Sinhalese version of subtitling has never been released. When analysed, several factors could be identified as the notion behind this. The biggest problem a translator would encounter during the process of subtitling the movie is the unique language style of the protagonist. He has such an absurd composition that he uses a lot of personal afflictions, swearing and slang from a language combination of Hebrew, Arabic and English. Transferring satire is the other complication a translator may encounter. Satire plays a major role in the movie but the sense of humour bounds with certain dialogues are vastly related to American culture and sexually explicit content that Sri Lankan spectatorship may not be familiarised with. Thus, it is problematic for a translator to utilise the content appropriately. Hence, if advanced with the above complications, the outcome would be unproductive. This results in a loss; partial or complete of the source film’s message.

Key words: code mixing, explicit content, satire, slang, subtitling

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- ¹ Translation Studies (Special) Second Year meflix@gmail.com
² Translation Studies (Special) Second Year chamini1991august@gmail.com
³ Translation Studies (Special) Second Year chathushkagunawardhana@gmail.com