

ADDING TEXT TO IMAGE: OVERCOMING AND CONFRONTING CURRENT CHALLENGES IN SUBTITLING

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Being a form of an audiovisual translation, subtitling is currently one of the translation activities with the most rapidly growing volume of work present in our daily lives. However, the process of translating the spoken word, whose sociocultural and geographic varieties have no exact target language equivalent, into the written form of another national language, indeniably poses numerous challenges. Thus, producing quality subtitles is not without obstacles. Studies have shown that a large number of subtitles were found to be flawed, suggesting that the quality of subtitling is often less than satisfactory. This article highlights the current challenges inherent in the practice of subtitling, focusing on several reasons behind this state of affairs. It then presents appropriate subtitling strategies for current subtitlists in order to deal with these challenges.

Keywords: subtitles, subtitling challenges, strategies for subtitlists, high quality subtitles, audiovisual translation

1. INTRODUCTION

Subtitling is a form of translation that can normally be found every day on television. Thus, subtitles are considered as one of the most popular methods of translation because it can be read and evaluated by audiences each time they watch foreign language programmes. The demand for subtitling is snowballing, especially with the increase of TV productions in DVD versions. In Malaysia, for instance, most TV shows broadcasted by TV stations here can be found in DVD versions and subtitle services are also available for this version. Hence, subtitles are commonly found in everyday lives and receive the attention of audiences. In fact, subtitles have always been the target of criticism by viewers who do not know much about subtitles and do not understand the obstacles encountered in producing the subtitles. This paper aims at studying the problems that arise in subtitling field and

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discussing the solutions to confront challenges in the audio visual language transfer highlighting the criteria needed by the subtitlists. This is a qualitative study which highly based on previous studies that discuss the challenges and problems in subtitling. Library search is the main source and reference in this study.

2. DEFINITION OF SUBTITLES

Luyken *et al.* (1991: p. 31) gave a specific definition for subtitles namely,

Condensed written translations of original dialogue which appear as lines of text, usually positioned towards the foot of the screen. Subtitles appear and disappear to coincide in time with the corresponding portion of the original dialogue. (The summarized translated original dialogue appears as a line of text which is usually placed at the foot of the screen. The subtitle is inserted and released to coincide with the time of exposure to the original dialogue).

Subtitling process is defined by Ahmed Al-Abbasi (2009: p. 181) as,

The process of transferring the meaning of a piece of speech in a movie or TV series by means of written translation usually placed at the bottom of the screen. The source language spoken form is reproduced simultaneously in the target language to enable the viewing audience to understand the story. (The process of transferring the meaning of dialogue from films or TV series into writing, usually displayed at the bottom of the screen. The sources of dialogue are simultaneously copied into the target language that enables target audiences to understand the story).

Based on the definitions presented, it can be concluded that subtitling involves two transfers; the transfer of oral expression in audio-visual materials to written text which is then displayed simultaneously with its verbal expressions on the screen, and the transfer of source language to the target language. It can be deduced here that subtitle means dialogue or script, which is premiered simultaneously with audiovisuals at the bottom of the TV screen, and has been extracted as concise as possible through editing processes in order to meet the constraints of space and time. State why the problem deserves new research. For basic research, the statement about importance might involve the need to resolve any inconsistency in results of past work and/or extend the reach of a theoretical formulation. For applied research, this might involve the need to solve a social problem or treat a psychological disorder. When research is driven by the desire to resolve controversial issues, all sides in the debate should be represented in balanced measure in the introduction. Avoid animosity and ad hominem arguments in presenting the controversy. Conclude the statement of the problem in the introduction with a brief but formal statement of the purpose of the research that summarizes the material preceding it. For literature reviews as well as theoretical and methodological articles, also clearly state the reasons that the reported content is important and how the article fits into the cumulative understanding of the field.

3. CURRENT CHALLENGES IN SUBTITLING

Subtitling is undeniably imperative to most foreign film audiences. The impact of subtitles to the community is immense due to the extremely high numbers of audio visual viewers. In addition, the number of broadcasted products such as movies, news, documentaries and TV drama series to be translated for target audiences is flourishing. Inevitably, subtitling is a form of translation that is commonly encountered and is in fact ranked as the most popular form of translation by readers compared to other translated materials such as books, articles, magazines and so on.

However, life is never free from challenges. Subtitling in fact faces taxing situations too. Such challenges encountered are seen from two aspects, namely; the subtitlists and the viewers. The challenges are:

3.1. Subtitlists' weaknesses in mastering language and cultural resources

In the field of translation, mastering language resources is the main criterion that needs to be acquired by translators or subtitlists. Lacking this will lead to poor quality of subtitles, thus leading to many errors found in the subtitles. Dodd (2007: p. 129) stated that the broadcasted Malay subtitles were found to be of low quality because of the high number of errors in them. According to Karthigesu (1994: p. 149), the main contributing problem to this phenomenon is that the translators are not so familiar with English proverbs and dialects which can be found in programmes that are abundantly imported.

The subtitles' quality problems are not only due to the subtitlists' weaknesses in mastering the source language, but also stems from the lack of knowledge of cultural elements. Maserah (2005: p.7) pointed out that the translation of socio-cultural elements is very complicated, complex and requires knowledge and skills beforehand in order to translate these elements into the target culture. Furthermore, specific techniques to translate dialogues are vital as the subtitling process faces space and time constraints.

TV viewers and newspaper readers often criticize Television Malaysia for errors in subtitles. One glaring example is an expression of 'fire' meant as directions given by the US military commanders to soldiers during the Second World War, which was subtitled as 'fuel'. In The Malay Mail newspaper dated October 12, 1977, it mentioned 'yellow' expression as something voiced out to a person with intent to accuse him of being a coward, yet was translated as 'yellow person'. Such translation problems showcase subtitlists' failures in understanding linguistic resources. Subtitlists who are unable to comprehend dialogue resources would not be able to convey the exact meaning of words, and thus fail to convey the intended message to target audiences. Hence, the need to be proficient in the source language and to possess knowledge of cultural resources has become major challenges to subtitlists.

3.2. Subtitlists' tactless approach to the quality of subtitles, and its impact on society

Wan Amizah (1998: 21) stated that problems in audio visual translations are due to the subtitlists' negligence on the quality of subtitles, as frequent errors are often noticed in them. The quality of subtitles shows when the subtitles are translated successfully without any mistakes, thus are able to convey the intended messages to target audiences. In addition to the factors of language mastery and cultural resources, the attitude of subtitlists as being tactless or less attentive to the quality of subtitles is often a problem to this field as a whole. In this case, the subtitlists may be able to master the source language well, but sometimes, they only pay attention to important dialogues and ignore the less important words. They may successfully transfer the message from main dialogues to the target audience, but there are some relatively unimportant words which are inaccurately translated. This condition usually occurs due to time constraints for subtitlists to refer to the dictionary. For example, in the drama of Qamar Bani Hashim, the word **قدور** which means pot, was translated as cottage, and the word **الغبط** which means anger was translated as sadness. In one drama, Flag of Truth, **مزرقتة** which means javelin was translated as spear and the phrase **الرفيق الأعلى** that refers to Allah was translated as the highest heaven.

Making errors in translation does not only give impact on the quality of subtitles and the audiences' understanding of the message. The more worrying concern is the effect of these errors on people's lives. It becomes even worse if the error involves matters relating to religion or sensitive issues for a particular community. In Utusan Malaysia dated August 28, 2001, for example, a former student in Japan commented on the subtitles in a Japanese drama entitled Challenger on Fire aired on NTV7 every Monday to Friday at 7pm. In the subtitles, pork was translated as mutton. He expressed his concern that Malay audiences who subsequently go to Japan will assume the translated term actually means mutton.

This situation had happened due to the subtitlists' tactlessness towards the subtitles produced. Such problems should be addressed seriously by parties involved with the audio visual translation. The aspect of accuracy should be emphasized on intended words, particularly those related to religious sensitivities. Besides, the implications of these translated words should also not be underestimated. In certain circumstances, subtitlists will try to leave out words that are taboo to target communities, and instead use words that are more appropriate to the culture and traditions of the community. Unfortunately, most viewers do not comprehend this situation. Therefore, subtitlists must not only be concerned with the quality of subtitles alone, but the impact that the subtitles produced towards the sensitivity of society too should be discerned.

3.3. Viewers are increasingly concerned and are highly educated

The increase of mastery in foreign language among people has also become a challenge to subtitlists. Wan Amizah (1998: p. 21) further explained, that as more and more Malaysians understand and become skilled in foreign languages, there is definitely more and more readers who will be sensitive and meticulous towards subtitles. They will monitor errors that occur in the subtitles. Audiences today do not only know and accept the displayed subtitles on TV; they even know how to evaluate the quality of the subtitles.

The tendency to evaluate the quality of subtitles encourages viewers to criticize subtitles and condemn subtitlists. They are not only criticizing the constructed subtitles, in fact they even slam and question the credibility of the subtitlists. Radhiah and Hasuria (2009: p. 542) cited a comment from the audience addressed to Astro, dated December 3, 2006. The comment refers to the word boxer which should mean a 'person who involves in physical contests of strength and endurance' but was translated as 'the boxed man'. Among other criticisms: That is so silly, hilarious and unprofessional. Does the person who translates have any credentials in translating English to Malay? I think I could be a better translator than that since I always get distinctions in English language. Maybe Astro should hire me instead...

3.4. Audience unawareness towards the constraints in subtitling

Even though the subtitling field has long existed, not many are willing to study or explore the processes and existing problems in the production of a subtitled audio visual program. The community or audience in particular only evaluates and criticizes the subtitlist's lack of output in the subtitles. As such, negative feedback is commonly uttered by the public about the subtitles. The quality of generated subtitles in TV is always seen as unsatisfactory, although the total percentage of dissatisfaction is only small (Hasuria 2007: p. ix). Subtitlists often become victims of criticism and condemnation from the society over the lack of subtitles' quality.

The poor quality of subtitles is not just due to the subtitlists' weaknesses in mastering language and cultural resources, but it also involves some technical problems. According to Dodd (2007), most of the problems in subtitles are not due to the negligence of translators alone, but due to the immense pressure placed on translators to generate subtitles quickly and at a rather cheap cost. Only short periods of time are allocated for subtitlists to prepare subtitles and they are expected to abide with the rules involving limitations of time and space. This has made the subtitlists' tasks more strenuous. Therefore, a study on subtitles is important to provide comprehension, especially for the audience about the problems, constraints and challenges that exist in the subtitling processes so that they do not continue to point fingers at subtitlists when it comes to issues involving the quality of subtitles.

4. PROBLEMS IN SUBTITLING

Subtitles have a special feature that distinguishes them from ordinary translation, where it starts from drama scripts, then changes to oral dialogue and eventually turns into written form on the display screen. This various transmissions concept leads to different subtitling translation approaches and becomes even more specific than other forms of translation. Similarly, the difficulties and obstacles that have to be endured by subtitlists are higher when compared to ordinary translations. In brief, there are challenges in this field in general, focusing on the problems faced by subtitlists in particular.

Hatim and Mason (2000: p. 430-431) highlighted in general how the subtitling process encounters difficulties, namely:

- (a) This process involves changing forms of communication, which is from speech to writing. Some features of speech, such as a non-standard dialects, intonations, changes of code, changes in speech style and taking turns cannot be automatically reflected in the written target language which results from this process.
- (b) Physical factors also exist as barriers for the medium used, which is audio-visual communication. The subtitles have to appear in a predetermined number of characters per line within limited time.
- (c) There are cases of deficiency, misses and losses of meaning in subtitle texts which are due to the effects of physical requirements that need to be complied with.
- (d) The need to accommodate the accompanying visual images with the prepared subtitles.

According to Mariam (2007: p. 14), subtitling problems can be divided into two main aspects, namely linguistic aspects and technical aspects. This paper will present issues that concern both these aspects.

4.1. Language and Linguistics

In terms of language, indeed there are many translating complications of words related to cultural elements; namely figurative language and grammatical aspects of a language. Among problems of translating a culturally related word that are faced by subtitlists are ecology, material, social and linguistics. The culture of one nation is certainly different with other nations. For example, in the Arab culture, there are clothes and customs of marriage which are difficult to be translated into other languages such as *الغرملة* (clothes that cover the chest) and *الصغيرة الحقة* (ritual of beautifying the bride) (Maheram 2008: p. 287).

Subtitlists also encounter problems in translating figurative language, such as idioms, metaphors, personifications, and so on. Figurative language is one of the many linguistically cultural aspects of a nation. It is usually closely related to the

culture, myths or history of a community. Some examples of figurative language in Arabic which is difficult to translate to other languages are *الصيف ضيعت اللين* (Anzaruddin 2005: p. 464) and *أقتلوني ومالكا* (Mohd Sukki 2005: p. 500). Although the Arab and Malay communities share the same faith and religion, there are cultural differences existing between the two communities which pose complications in translating socio-cultural elements.

Cultural differences also create differences in expressing certain metaphors or proverbs. This is because the lifestyle, everyday experiences or how a certain nation perceives its surroundings affect how figurative language is interpreted. Puteri Roslina and Maryani (2011: p. 294) described the problems that often arise in interpreting figurative language. For instance, there are metaphors that use the same images but are different in their meanings, and also different images but have the same meanings. The first example of this problem can be seen in the Arab figurative language found in the hadith narrated by A'ishah r.a and authenticated by al-Sheikh Nasir al-Din al-Albani in *Sahih al-jamic al-saghir wa ziyadatuh* (1988: p. 1/226), namely: *أسرعكن لحاقا بي أطولكن بيذا*, which means 'The wife which is the earliest who will follow me among you all is the one with the longest arms'. In Arabic, *أطولكن بيذا* means long arm. However, in the Arab culture, it is a metaphor that refers to a person who likes to do charity. Meanwhile in the Malay culture, 'long arm' refers to someone who likes to steal (Anzaruddin 2008: p. 271).

The second problem involves different images or words used, but have the same meaning. An example of this problem is reflected in a metaphor that refers to something that should not be regretted as it has already happened. The figures used by the Arab community are *نشم الغيث فقد أودى النعدلا* which means you will not smell the rain, indeed the kids have died. The word goat or kid is synonymous with the Arab society because they are known as a nation that breeds goats. In fact, the diversity of cuisine which is based on goat meat is a privilege for the Arabs. On the other hand, the Malay community uses the proverb *Nasi sudah menjadi bubur / Rice has turned into porridge* to show the same meaning as the metaphor above. The word rice and porridge is synonymous with the Malay community because it is their staple food (Mohd Sukki 2005: 505). In short, the environment and cultural differences between two nations disclose the differences in the use of figurative language and thus, pose challenges to translators in addressing both the elements of culture and language in its metaphors.

4.2. Technicalities

- i) Time constraints in obtaining materials: The subtitling process starts in the Programme Department, which is responsible for obtaining programmes or shows from suppliers to be broadcasted. The programmes received will go through processes of refining and editing before being submitted to the

subtitling unit (Mariam 2007: p. 12). The delays in obtaining materials from suppliers will lead to shorter allotted times for the completion of subtitles, hence resulting in a hasty preparation process. This situation usually occurs when there are last minute alterations of the programme titles due to unsuitable storylines, changes in sponsorship, or changes in the subtitlists' schedules.

Wan Amizah (2007: p. 57) also mentioned that subtitlists must watch themselves the scheduled TV programme before doing its subtitles. However, a problem that often arises is the absence of the programme tape in libraries or the tape arrives rather late at the respective TV stations for some unavoidable reasons. Such conditions lead to time constraints for subtitlists. For example, a programme's late tape submission will definitely be evaluated much later by the Film Censorship Board (LPF), thus the filtering results will be known later. This causes subtitlists to watch the programme at a later date than planned. Due to time constraints, it is unlikely for a subtitlist to produce quality subtitles. Therefore, subtitlists should be given adequate time and any changes at the last minute must be avoided so that the work planned is not affected.

ii) Unclear or Unsupplied Scripts

The script is an important aspect to subtitlists, as it is required in order to begin the translation. Subtitlists cannot make any translation solely via audio or by watching the programme, because such methods are prone to producing errors in translation. According to Wan Amizah (2007), the use of scripts allows subtitlists to make references in terms of dialogue, name of characters, name of places, and so on. Sometimes, subtitlists are provided with the original script, but the scenes and dialogues published are different from what is pictured in the script due to editing changes. A good script is a script that records all dialogues and scenes in accordance with the scenes and time aired on television.

In this case, Taylor (2009) stated that subtitlists must use the transcribed dialogue (reproductions of dialogue uttered), and not depending on the original script only. This is because the spoken dialogues by actors come with certain expressions and intonations that can help subtitlists to produce more precise and effective translations. Therefore, subtitlists must replicate the spoken dialogues by the actors and make the original script as a reference. There are occasions where scripts are not produced for a TV programme. In situations like this, subtitlists have to listen to the accompanying audio carefully, and then transcribe the dialogues before doing the translation. Some problems arise when determining the proper names to be used, names of places and so on. Subtitlists will have to spend relatively longer periods of time to complete the subtitles (Hasuria, 2006).

iii) Timing and Space Constraints of Subtitles: Subtitling process is a process that is constrained by space and time. When doing translations, subtitlists must

take into account physical factors that affect the medium or audio-visual communication channels, such as the characters or number of characters in subtitle per line and the time of subtitles insertions. According to Luyken et al. (1991) the space provided for subtitles is very limited due to physical limitations of the screen. This limitation is due to the requirements for subtitles not to block the view of the pictures on the screen and restrictions in providing subtitles in line which is in accordance with a specified time. At the same time, the subtitles must be able to be read by the audience.

Addressing the issue of timing, Luyken *et al.* (1991) explained that the time allocated to display subtitles on the TV screen is influenced by three factors; the amount of text, the average speed of reading by the audience and the minimum interval fixed time between subtitles. The maximum estimation for the two-line subtitles is often referred to as 'Regulation six seconds'. This regulation is made to allow viewers to read the full text and to avoid reading texts that occur repeatedly. In addition, the time set for inserting and removing subtitles from the screen is also taken into account. Normally, subtitles are immediately inserted after a speech has begun. There are also subtitles that are inserted earlier or a little slower than its speech. If subtitles are retained on the screen during the changing of scenes, overlapping will occur and affect the aesthetic value and eloquence of the subtitles. Therefore, subtitles should be removed at least two frames before the scene changes and the next subtitle should be inserted at least two frames after so that the messages are perfectly interconnected with its story (Hasuria 2006).

Due to these time and space constraints, subtitlists often opt for word-reduction strategies while doing translations. Reduction of words is also not a simple process, as subtitlists will have to determine the reduction techniques by considering the speed of the dialogue and the differences and similarities between the source language and the target language.

- iv) Shortage of Reference Materials: Subtitlists often deal with insufficient references for translated programmes, especially for documentary programmes. Hence, it is entirely up to the subtitlists' credibility and wisdom in addressing this problem. Subtitlists should seek more appropriate references, consult experts or obtain information through the internet (Hasuria: 2006).

The issues presented reveal that the process of producing subtitles is indeed a strenuous task. It is a complicated process, as it is more complex than usual translation work. Seemingly, there are more consumers for subtitling products as compared to ordinary translations, so subtitles are more exposed to criticism and critique. Nonetheless, producing a quality product that fulfils everyone's satisfaction is not as easy as giving criticism and comments, as it requires skill, meticulousness and patience.

5. CRITERIA OF A SUBTITLIST

Many people assume that the task of translating scripts or movie dialogues is easier than translating any written text, as this type of translation is supported by visual and audio elements shown simultaneously with the subtitles. In reality, the task of subtitlists is not as simple as it seems. Many constraints and obstacles must be faced by most subtitlists. A good subtitlist should be aware of the basic principles of translation and meet the requirements to be a good translator. Before examining in more detail about the needed features to be acquired by subtitlists, this article will reveal a preview of the principles and conditions required from translators as described by Believers (2004: p. 9) and Kaur (2005: p. 62), namely:

- i) Have adequate competence in the source language and target language.
- ii) Specializes in the field of translation. A translator needs to have the knowledge of translation that covers the theories, methods, and strategies of translation.
- iii) Knowledgeable in the topic or field of a given translated text and masters the terms used in the field.
- iv) Applies an appropriate language style that matches the source text so that readers can experience the effects from the translated text as if they are reading the original text.
- v) Honest in transferring the ideas and intentions of the source text.
- vi) Have patience in doing translations. A translator cannot be in a hurry to complete the task of translating. A translator should use references and dictionaries.
- vii) Have extensive vocabulary in both languages in order to make the right choice of words and corresponding terms of the context and structure of sentences in the target language.
- viii) Have extensive knowledge about the original culture and the target culture.

Thus, what are the features that can equip a translator to be competent in the field of audio visual translation? Skuggevik (2009: p. 198) in his study entitled: *Teaching Screen Translation: The Role of Pragmatics in Subtitling* outlined four elements that must be possessed by a subtitlist, namely:

- i) Competent in technical aspects and is able to manage the demands of practical tasks such as controlling computer software, determining the position of subtitles on the screen, understanding the limitations of time and space for subtitles and so on.
- ii) Proficient in the source language and target language.
- iii) Has broad knowledge of the culture and way of life of the community.
- iv) Good comprehension of the psychological and emotional dimensions that exist in both verbal acts and spoken dialogue.

This paper discusses in detail the features that are needed to be possessed by subtitlists. Such features are:

5.1. Proficient in both source language and target language and have the writing skills to write in the target language

Mastering the source language and target language is a prerequisite for any translator who does either conventional translation or subtitling. An interpreter does not only need to be acquainted with many meanings of words in both languages; he too must be able to write using the correct targeted language style. Besides, he needs to avoid making grammatical errors that can cause confusion on its meaning, thus hindering the right messages to be sent across to the readers (Isma's'il: 2003).

The requirement for proficiency in writing skills and speech synthesis is higher while doing scripts translation for TV programmes. This is because the translation, known as the subtitles is published in a very short time and in a very limited space. Subtitlists must transmit the dialogue resource message accurately using the target language within the limited time and space. According to Wan Amizah (2007), at the stage of speech synthesizing, frequently there are errors in the construction of sentences and selection of appropriate words. Sometimes, the structure of the Malay language in subtitles looks too English. In fact, any structure and wordings in the original language do not conform to the sentence structure of the targeted language. Hence, skills and expertise in arranging words according to the targeted language's sentences and correct grammatical structure are needed to ensure the translation is not influenced by the style and sentence structure of the source language. Subtitlists also need to enhance themselves with vast knowledge of vocabulary as they will encounter different contextual sentences, and having an extensive vocabulary will not only assist in getting the most accurate translations but also expedites the task (Noor Khairiah 2007; Kamariah *et al.*, 2016).

5.2. Have broad general knowledge

Apart from the ability to speak, subtitlists also need to equip themselves with comprehensive information in a variety of fields and disciplines. Noor Khairiah (2007) stated that subtitlists should have broad general knowledge because they are given programmes that comprise of a variety of genres and disciplines. General knowledge is essential to prepare subtitlists for work on documentary programmes. Normally, documentary programmes contain issues in more identifiable fields such as historical events, animal life, flora and fauna, sports and so on. Having knowledge in the particular fields is very helpful for easy understanding. A subtitlist may not be able to become an expert in all fields, but to have general knowledge in these fields will definitely lessen the process of finding the meaning of a particular word or concept.

Wan Amizah (2007) also clarified another pitfall or glitch faced by subtitlists, which is to analyse the meanings of science terms and abstract concepts in the

source language. The latest developments in science and technology are among the elements commonly shown in documentaries. If subtitlists have no knowledge of these fields, messages contained in these programmes definitely cannot be transferred effectively into the target language. In the medical field for instance, terminologies such as arthritisdeformans, Paget's disease, lumbago and patella (Ali Akbar *et al.*, 2010) are challenging words to be translated, should the subtitlist do not understand the concepts and terms discussed above. Similar cases happen in translating any sports programme, like cricket, equestrian, or golf. Again, if the subtitlist is uncertain of the rules and terms used in the particular sport, he may not be able to analyse the original text satisfactorily.

It is imperative to have prior knowledge of the language resources of speaking cultures in non-documentary programmes. According to Noor Khairiah (2007), translating a language in which the culture is quite similar to the subtitlists' own culture is much easier than using a different culture. For example, when creating subtitles for Tagalog and Thai-speaking dramas, subtitlists will face less stress in understanding the context, characters, figurative language and dialogue structures because the original culture is quite similar to the subtitlists' own culture. It is vastly different from preparing subtitles for Spanish-speaking dramas from Brazil, Colombia and Mexico as well as Portuguese-speaking dramas from Portugal.

5.3. Experienced in the techniques and methods of reduction in translation

The task of extracting a word or providing subtitles for a foreign programme involves the process of extracting sentences. Sentence extraction means that a paragraph must be extracted or shortened as much as possible. This situation happens because of the constraints of space and time for the display of subtitles. According to Wan Ida Rahimah (2007) space constraints allows the number of letters in each line to be limited to only 35 characters which can only be displayed for 3.5 seconds. Such constraints should be made to ensure the display do not interrupt the reading process of the target audience. Because of these constraints, subtitlists must extract sentences as short as possible and rewrite its translated version, while maintaining the intended message. Among the techniques that can be done is:

- i) Deliberate the use of synonymous words that have shorter spellings (Abdullah & Aion, 2001). The examples include view, watch and see. See is the most appropriate word to be used because its spelling is the shortest. However, the selection of words must also fit the context and situation.
- ii) Prioritize the use of root words and affixes. For example, use the root word meet instead of meeting, feel instead of feeling, and so on.
- iii) Replace a phrase with an appropriate word (Abdullah & Aion, 2001). For example, the phrase tie the knot is replaced with marry, and the phrase passed away is substituted with died/gone.

- iv) Modify words and sentences to make subtitles similar to normal conversation. An example as described by Wan Amizah (2007: p. 64) is the sentence, *Apa yang telah terjadi kepada kau?* (what has happened to you?) (34 characters). This text can be extracted as *Apa dah jadi pada kau?* (What happened?) (22 characters). When comparison is made, the second sentence is much shorter and more similar to normal conversations.

In addition, subtitlists must wisely choose words that need to be retained or dropped in translation. Based on the TV Subtitle Guidelines prepared by Mr Markus bin Miod (n.d.: p. 12-13) for RTM, there are three categories of linguistic elements that can be dropped from subtitles:

- i) Padding. This expression does not usually contain a certain meaning and is only being expressed to complement the continuity of an utterance. For example, the expression *you know, well and as I say*. According to Siti Afifah and Hasuria (2011: 447-448), padding refers to the use of unnecessary words or information and aims at making writings or speeches longer. Like *ah, oh, woo, haa, and so on*.
- ii) Responsive expression. It is expressions or words that are well known and understood by the majority of audience when uttered clearly, like *OK, hello, thank you, yes, and so on*.
- iii) Verbs or adjectives in multiple forms, like *great big, super extra and teeny weeny*, which can be replaced with one word, such as *huge, extremely and tiny*.

5.4. Possess a thorough knowledge of figurative language found in the source language

Figurative languages are expressions whose definition cannot be inferred from the meaning of the word itself or from its grammatical structure. In Malay, figurative language is divided into two types, namely idioms and non-idioms. Figures of speech included are idioms, proverbs and allegories. Non-figurative idioms are personifications, hyperboles and metaphors (Abdullah & Ainon, 2001: p. i). In Arabic, the language of metaphor is called *al-majaz al-lughawi*, which means the word used is not in the original meaning given, but instead is used for another purpose, provided that there is a connection between the original meaning and what it really means. In addition, there are markers that prevent the use of the original meaning (*Mucjam al-mustalahat al-cArabiyyah fi l-lughah wa al-adab*, 1984: p. 334).

According to Noor Khairiah (2007), subtitlists should know the language of metaphor used in the source language such as proverbs, idioms, expressions and so on to ensure the accuracy of meaning in translation. Sometimes the form of figurative language can fit the target language, but at times there is a need to use

some other translation techniques. Many of these figurative language expressions bring meaning that can be offensive, sensitive or have sexual connotations. In translating these words, subtitlists must be wise in translating or finding sensible matching words so that viewers will not feel offended or displeased with the subtitles.

5.5. Know the techniques and methods of editing

Editing in subtitling is an important feature to ensure readability and high intelligibility for each subtitle displayed. Subtitlists must be proficient in both aspects of editing, namely in technical aspects and language or linguistics (Wan Ida Rahimah 2007).

Noor Khairiah (2007) mentioned that editing is necessary to ensure that there are no errors in the subtitling final product. Moreover, it can help overcome some of the space and time constraints in the displayed subtitles. Time taken for spoken dialogue is usually much shorter than the time taken in the form of speech writing. Thus subtitlists must edit the dialogue in such a way that subtitles are not overflowing and running slower than the spoken dialogue.

Another challenge is when many speakers are speaking simultaneously and their discourse is seen as important to the plot or storyline. In this situation, subtitlists must be wise in editing if they want to include all the information. Hasuria (2007) mentioned that distinctive considerations must be made between the essential information and additional information in order for audiences to understand the programme aired. In addition, subtitlists must be wise to deliver the additional information so it looks part of the translated dialogue.

Visual screen acting and subtitles are the two facets that must be emphasized for the viewers. Audience often grumble on the duration of subtitles displayed. Sometimes subtitles are still displayed even after the act has changed. This has caused time wasted reading the same subtitles, which make the audience miss watching the displayed visuals. Consequently, the audience cannot enjoy watching the programme. According to Mason (1989), to ensure that the subtitles are well presented, subtitlists should compile subtitles according to the continuity of the dialogue. Georgakopoulou (2009) noted that there are three rules that can help viewers to balance reading subtitles while watching the visuals. The rules are:

- i) When visuals are aired, it is important for the audience to understand the context; subsequently subtitles should be kept simple to allow the audience to enjoy the visuals.
- ii) Conversely, when important information is not visually featured, but is evident in the soundtrack, subtitlists must provide complete subtitles.
- iii) Subtitles' presentation and structure of words on the screen must be emphasized because it can help the audiences' reading abilities.

Moreover, the constraints of space and time are expected to be encountered due to certain limitations in the software as well as the subtitles displayed by certain channels or TV stations. Most software sets both the minimum time and maximum time for a subtitle to be aired and also the minimum time difference between each subtitle. Technical errors are expected to take place, should these requirements are not complied with. The subtitles then cannot be displayed. Hatim and Mason (2000) mentioned that the common number of characters in a line is usually 33 characters and sometimes up to 40 characters. The displayed subtitles must not be more than two lines at one time. This condition is certainly a challenge to subtitlists to ensure the translation is done in accordance with the time and space allocated.

5.6. Have good hearing

Among the many problems faced by subtitlists is receiving TV programmes without scripts. Therefore, they have to listen to the accompanying audio carefully, transcribe it and then translate the dialogue (Hasuria 2006). In this situation, subtitlists have to rely heavily on the audio and visuals of the programme. This process may take some time, especially if the audio quality is poor.

According to Wan Amizah (2007), at this stage, problems at listening to audio tapes often take place. Occasionally, there are programmes that are difficult to understand in terms of dialogue due to noise disturbance from the surroundings, e. g. the sound of waves for recordings done at the seaside, conversations in a frenzied market, the sound of gunfire at war fields and scenes at the construction site or the airport. One of the ways to overcome this problem is to ask colleagues to hear the programme and try to understand the same dialogue together.

In addition, dialogues that use variations of dialect, slang or references also affect the subtitlists' perception of the word. A strong dialect, accent or pronunciation by Irish or Scottish actors on certain English words for example can cause difficulties in understanding their speech if they are not helped with the accompanying script. Slang has similar confusions, for example African Americans speech which is frequently used in scripts. When dealing with dialogues that use dialect, subtitlists must have experience in communicating with people who speak the language and understand the culture.

In conclusion, the task of word extraction is undeniably not an easy task to be taken lightly. Mastering both the source language and target language has always been the first condition in order to do translations and subtitling. Mastery of the source language requires subtitlists to not only understand the original meaning of each word to be translated, but also to understand the meaning of words in its suitable context and scope of the topic. In addition, subtitlists must also understand the grammatical structure of the source language, as grammar also plays a role in determining meaning. For example, in Arabic, past tense verbs are different with present-tense verbs. Therefore, knowledge on the form of the verb really helps

subtitlists to determine whether an act has occurred or otherwise. Subtitlists also need to understand the language resources linguistically in terms of cultural background, as language is closely related to culture. Being proficient in the cultural resources helps subtitlists in understanding figurative language that exists in the source language.

Mastering the target language also means that subtitlists must be wise in selecting words and replacing them in the target language to ensure that the original message can be delivered clearly and precisely to target audiences. Matching such words includes greeting systems, addressing calls and personal pronouns used in the target language. Subtitlists must also be competent in writing skills, structuring sentences and synthesizing speech so that the produced translation looks more similar and in accordance with the programme. Moreover, in providing subtitles, subtitlists should know the subtitle display pattern and timing system for each displayed subtitles. All of these statutes are the necessary requirements for subtitlists in editing the generated subtitles. It becomes a big challenge for subtitlists as they should do editing in compliance with the rules and constraints while ensuring the translation of messages are maintained. Moreover, the subtitling task also stresses on perfection in the sense of hearing so that dialogue resources can be handled smoothly and perfectly.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion presented, indeed there are a lot of knowledge, information, skills and patience that must be equipped within subtitlists as preparation to confront challenges in this audio visual language transfer. Subtitlists should possess the skills and basic knowledge on methods to translate and understand the various theories or approaches to translation. They must always learn and gain information in various fields to enhance skills in all related aspects to translation and subtitles. This is to produce quality subtitles, thus meeting the audience's satisfaction. For the audience, they should be more open minded in accepting errors that exist in the texts of the subtitles. Viewers should not only learn to appreciate subtitlists and understand their problems, but also help improve the quality of subtitles by submitting constructive criticism directly to the TV station concerned and not doing it openly in the news. There must be understanding between subtitlists and audience to ensure enhancements in producing high quality subtitles, hence making the subtitling field more harmonious.

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