

**Localizing English Cartoons: An analysis of the impact of translation  
localization on certain cultural values in the Arab family**

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### Abstract

No one doubts that cartoons have a great influence on children since they are attractive and lovable. However, cartoons might affect the cultural values and beliefs of Arab children as they involve globalized culture. Thus, there was a need to localize English cartoons and adapt them to the target audience's culture. The present research paper analyzed the way English cartoons are localized to suite the Arabic culture and it discussed the types of localization in cartoons with some examples to make the idea clear to the reader. It also examined the impact of English cartoons on Arab children by involving mothers on a survey that asked them several questions to evaluate how much Arab children are influenced by cartoons and to know how much there is a need to localize cartoons. In addition, this study identified some values that are attached to localization. It is worthy to mention that the researcher compared the translations of the original version and the localized one for the same cartoon to highlight and analyze types of localization.

Keywords: Localization, Cultural values, Target audience.

## 1. Introduction

Children are the pillar of a society, they are definitely the rising and the vivid generation, and they are the future responsible parents, teachers and educators. Thus, raising children properly is a very important yet complicated milestone. Children absorb -literally- anything like a sponge and creatively imitate, they are so smart that they catch everything as fast as a blink of an eye. Studies showed that the Arab child spends about sixteen hours weekly on television. Therefore, parents should be very wise and well instructive when it comes to the environments that surround their beloved children and one of these huge surroundings is what being presented and reflected in children cartoons. As a Muslim and an Arabic society, we have values and principles that shape and form our society as well as our personality, in addition, we have our unique culture and restricted language usage especially when it comes to the use of language in public. In fact, cartoons are competing the family's role as well as the school's in teaching and educating children. Thus, raising our own children with the globalization of cartoons is now hardly to be controlled and it causes a challenge to the parents as these globalized cartoons are effecting and twisting the cultural values that we were been raised upon. Because of these controversial values i.e. the values presented in the globalized cartoons and our own values, there is definitely a necessity to accommodate these cartoons that are being presented to our children to fit our society's values. From that perspective, companies and centers for dubbing and translating children cartoons in different Arab regions are heading towards *localizing children cartoon*.

### 1.2. Localizing Children Cartoons

The localization industry first became popular in the 1990s in the field of software localization. In addition to this, the concept of website localization developed in line with the wider use of the Internet, and various forms of game localization have emerged in line with the remarkable levels reached by computer technologies and graphic processors, especially since the 2000s( Mehemet Cem, 2017)

Localization is a broad term that involve many senses, for example; it could be related to website localization and translation. For instance, "Position of the Translator as an Agent in Website Localization" is a research done by (Alkan, 2017) when he presented the differences between translation

and localization, he said that the term website localization is used to refer to the process of modifying a website in order to facilitate its use for target receivers. He also said that the term localization has been in use since the early 1980s and its definition has been made by various scholars of Translation Studies (TS) like; Pym, 2004; Pym, 2010; Alkan, 2013; Cronin, 2003 and others. Localization process is not only about translating texts, figures, colors and buttons, for example, which guide the users, may also need to be adapted for the new audience (target group/local group) (Cyr, 2003: 2). According to Cyr, localization is the process of adapting the products, services and related content to different cultures and cultural choices. Localization also can be defined as the adaptation of a product to meet the needs of a particular language. Others defined Localization as a process in which source texts are recreated in the target language according to product specifications. On the other hand, the other sense related to the present study's subject which means adapting the source product culture and language to the target product's culture and language. For instance, Kleinen-von Königsłow conducted a study on how the Heute show, based on The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, has been adapted to the German political, media, and journalistic culture and how the local context and the foreign role model both inhibit into the localized show. The present study will focus on localizing English cartoons and will discuss the impact of translation localization on certain cultural values in Arab society. In addition, the study will analyze the major influences of localized cartoons over Arab children.

### **1.3. The impact of globalized children cartoons on Arab children**

Smiha Alaiout mentioned in her paper ‘‘The effect of cartoon movies on a child's personality and behavior’’ in 2018 that western cartoons had greatly affected the personality and the behavior of a child. She said that children when they are watching cartoons they also are watching and absorbing the western civilization, which include wester cultures, habits, attitude etc. The traditions and customs that are presented in these cartoons include western culture and habits in worshipping, dressing, living, decoration, eating, language of insulting and relationship with the other sex, such habits are definitely contradicting what the Arab and Muslim children were raised upon. Thus, these scenes and scenario are making the child's thoughts go into conflict in a difficult battle of moral and identity. Globalized cartoon actually weakens the child's belonging to his/her environment and society as these programs come to reflect the values of the other -perhaps- dominant country. This contributes to the child's psychological

conflict between what they learn among the family and the school, and what they are being offered. For example, the Scooby Doo cartoon for William and Joseph Barbera, when Scooby met a magician who used the black magic and wanted to transfer Scooby into a monkey. This scene is definitely opposed the Muslim's creed and culture, so this scene should be localized by either changing the dialogue as if Scooby is playing with his friend or can be deleted by the producer. Therefore, there is a necessary need to increase local production of child-oriented programs as well as localizing the globalized ones.

After reviewing the above-mentioned facts related to the globalization of cartoons, and observing their negative effects and impact on children, the reader or even the parents will notice the importance of localizing children cartoons. It is worthy to mention that this study is one of its kind in the field, to our knowledge, there is no other study has focused on studying the impact of localizing children cartoon on certain values. Therefore, the present paper will shed a light on some examples of localized expressions on multiple kids' oriented channels like, Spacetoon, Basma as well as some cartoons channels on YouTube.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature review for this study showed there is no specific study that focuses on localization of English cartoons and its impact on values of Arab children. However, there are significant studies that nurture our knowledge in this subject. (Iako, 2012) discussed in his paper the ways in which localization, translation and other associated concepts are related to one another. He also said that localization is a process that cannot be done without going through the globalization and internationalization processes first. Another study for (Cristian, 2013) He look at website localization practices of several important websites and to look at the similarities and differences between two approaches to text localization through translation and copywriting. In his article, he stated that Website localization is necessary for any company that wants to offer its products and services globally to an international market. He also said that most localizers consider translation part of the localization but there are examples that translation is not the only way to localize content. (Esselink, 2000) comprised his book 'a practical guide to localization'. This book was written for technical translators, localization engineers, testing engineers, desktop publishers, project managers, and anyone else who may be involved in the release of

multilingual products. (ODACIOĞLU, 2017) Integrated Localization Theory of Translation Studies1 this study intends to build a bridge between translation studies and the theory of localization, which has emerged as an industrial discourse. He believed as many scholar that localization theory should be included under the umbrella of translation studies in the belief that it would be a gain for translation studies, requires a new translation theory. A similar study for (Pym, 2010) called (Localization from the Perspective of Translation Studies: Overlaps in the Digital Divide) where he discussed the ways in which the findings of Translation Studies might help one understand not just the linguistic aspects of localization, but also the power of localization to influence the development of languages and cultures. There are some significant studies that discussed the role of cartoons in influencing children behavior and values, yet it seems that Arab researchers are the most interested ones toward this topic, therefore, here are some studied were done in Arabic to show the impact of children cartoons on the child's personality. A study for (Aliouat, 2018) entitled (تأثير الرسوم المتحركة على شخصية الطفل وسلوكه) she discussed in her article the importance of studying the impact of animation on the personality and behavior of the child as well as the positive and negative effects of watching the animation, she finally gave suggestions for a more beneficial and less risky view. Another Arabic study for (Alhamami, 2015) Dr. Hashem Alhamami called (التلفزيون وتأثيراته المحتملة على جمهور الأطفال) where he discussed the potential effects of television on children as well as the issue of children's culture, and the ways in which they acquire knowledge and how children are affected by what they see on TV. A study called (Combating the Elsa gate Phenomenon: Deep Learning Architectures for Disturbing Cartoons) for (Ishikawa, 2019) where he brings up the discussion around Elsagate phenomenon and he tried to stimulate the development of better disturbing content filtering solutions. A book for Chen Milton (Chen, 1994) entitled (The Smart Parent's Guide to Kids' TV). The book discussed how parents could take control of family viewing through a family TV diet and connect educational shows with other learning experiences. It also contains views on parenting in general and some background on television commercial content and messages.

## 2. Methodology

The methodology of the research will cover three topics and how they were conducted and analyzed. The first topic is the impact of localized cartoons on Arab children which was measured and analyzed

according to the findings of a survey that was shared through some of social media applications where mothers are always active and enthusiastic. The survey contained five questions with four multiple choices and targeted twenty three Arab mothers from different levels of society and from age group 25- 40 years old, mothers were varied in term of educational, social, and cultural levels, and they have children between 3-11 years old. The questions of the survey were related to the impact of localized cartoons on their children, and the impact of globalized cartoons as well, and whether they felt the need of localizing cartoons and what are the main effects of cartoons they noticed on their children. The second topic is discussing the way of localizing expressions that were used in dialogues and conversations through the cartoon. The researcher divided the localized expressions in cartoons into verbal and non-verbal expressions. She analyzed the translations of two versions for the same cartoons- the foreign language version and the Arabic version- that were displayed by the two kids' famous channels, Spacetoon and Basma. In this part, the researcher used content analysis as an instrument to analyze the content of children cartoons. It is worthy to mention that the verbal expressions is the spoken language in cartoons and the non-verbal expression is the language used in different forms other than the spoken language and that might include pictures, way of dressing, way of living, body movement etc.

The third topic to be discussed is the values that are strongly related to the concepts of localization. In fact, values are the main purpose of localizing children cartoons according to the researcher's point of view as they are imposed implicitly or explicitly by the localized expression. After analyzing the localized expressions in cartoons, the researcher found that every localized expression carries a value that represents the culture, beliefs and identity of the Arab society.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1. Analysis of the survey**

After conducting a survey that investigates how Arab children are influenced by localized cartoons, the results of the survey clarify several points. An important question was asked to mothers whether they feel that globalized cartoons have a great impact on their children e.g. the children are imitating the cartoons' songs, dances, language and the way the heroes dressing as globalization is the major move that led to the importance and the emergence of localizing English cartoons. Results show that about



82% strongly agree that their children are highly being influenced by the globalized cartoons; on the other hand, 13% percent declared that they sometimes observed their children imitating cartoons; however, only 4% percent said that children generally could not be influenced by cartoons as cartoons only for entertaining and not shaping personality. Adapting or changing culture- bound scenes like the relationship between a girl and a boy, indecent dressing, and religious rites like Christianity and Buddhism are the main concerns of localization. Thus, mothers were asked if they prefer the adapted version than the original one, 67% strongly agreed, 13% said they are trying to control the content and 17% said they have not noticed the difference between the original and the adapted versions. The researcher finds that insisting on watching the localized cartoons that contain Islamic identity as’’ asslamualikum, bismillah, Alhamdulillah’’ would be a great consideration to preserve our values and beliefs.

Thus, mothers were asked if they prefer for their children to watch the Arabic localized version, and it was about 52% who said they try to do so as the content is hardly to be controlled, and about 26% who strongly preferred the localized version for their children, and about 17% who said their children just watch the available cartoons on TV.

#### **4.2. Localizing verbal and non-verbal expressions in children cartoons**

The core of this study is to shed a light and analyze some chosen expressions imbedded in a western version and were localized to suite the target audience (Arab children). After analyzing and comparing the translations of two versions (the English and the Arabic one) of some cartoons, the researcher found out several major differences between the original context and the localized context. Firstly, the analysis of localized verbal language in cartoons are illustrated in some examples. The obvious usage of asslamualikum instead of hi! In addition, bismillah instead of bon appetite in some cartoons are sort of localization. The alteration of foreign names of the cartoon’s characters is also way of localizing content, for example, Detective Conan is Detective Kamal in Basma channel, Doraemon, a cat robot

from the 22nd century is Abkoo in Spacetoon version, however, the name turned to its original "Doraemon" due to copyrights issues.

Another type of verbal language localization is changing the names of certain food to suite the target language preference. For instance, Hua Mulan- the Chinese legendary female warrior, when she went to the military camp with other warriors they used to eat pork for lunch, however the localized version

alternated pork with chicken and rice. Mulan also has a puppy, she calls it (little brother) yet in the localized version, the dog was given a name instead of little brother, as it is not common in Arab culture to have dogs living with people in their houses. Another example of adapting food to the target culture- not related to Arabic culture but a good example- is a scene from the cartoon Inside Out where the American kid Riley refuses to eat broccoli, but this did not make sense to Japanese viewers, as Japanese kids usually like eating this type of veggies. Thus Pixar studios replaced broccoli with green bell peppers that is apparently hated by kids in Japan, see figure1. It is worthy to mention that localizing verbal expressions is very common in children cartoon, therefore the researcher recommends analyzing localizing idioms in cartoons in separate research paper but here are a few examples. When someone blames someone else over something s\he does not know the real reason behind, a person might say” من يعرف يعرف، ومن لا يعرف يقول كف عدس” this Arabic proverb was used by Mori Kogoro in one of Detective Conan episodes. Another example of using idioms or perhaps Quranic extract is the use of the Ayah” سلام قولا من رب رحيم” when a brother wanted to wake his brother but he did not respond, the other brother said this extract to refer to his brother’s ignorance to him. The second type to be analyzed is localizing the non-verbal expressions. The non-verbal expression is behavior and elements of speech aside from the words themselves that transmit meaning ,which might include gestures and facial expressions, body posture, stance, dress and appearance. If you look attentively to how Spacetoon channel deals with the way the characters dress, you will notice that it covers what shows part of the body, see figure 2. Another way of localizing non-verbal expression is making the drunk man to be as sleepy due to the forbiddance of drinking wine in Islam see figure3. Similarly, the localized version substitutes the wine glass with a juice. It was remembered that before about twenty years, putting a picture of a pig on a video tape cover was not acceptable in Saudi Arabia, therefore, Pumbaa, a major character in Disney feature film The Lion King, was removed from the video tapes covers, see figure 4.



Figure1, Riley refuses to eat broccoli in the US version, but this would not make sense in the Japanese version, as they love to eat broccoli, thus it was changed to green peppers which is apparently hated by Japanese kids.



Figure2. Ran Mouri in the localized version.



Ran Mouri in the original version.



Figure3, the localized version of a drunk man face would be understood from the dialogue that the man is sleepy.



Figure4, Pumbaa was removed from the videotape's cover in Saudi Arabia before about 20 years ago.

#### **4.3. Highlighting some values attached with localization**

The main purpose of localizing children cartoon is to preserve the target audience's culture, values and identity besides making the cartoon understandable, explicit and coherent. It is assumed that children learn- unconsciously- through these cartoons, as they are attractive, lovable and effective. Therefore, mentioning some Islamic manners and including them in the cartoon like Islamic greetings or the Islamic supplication before eating or entering toilet would be very helpful to teach children these Islamic rules and manners, so children could imitate these manners out of awareness while they are watching the cartoon. Changing the foreign name of the characters and substituting them with Arabic names would reassure the Arabic identity as well as attach the child to a common context with common names. Localizing the way a character dresses by covering the revealed parts of the skin is a great lesson of modesty and dignity; it also would make it lovable and desirable by children especially for girls. In addition, deleting the Islamic forbidden food or beverages like pork and wine will assert the importance of respecting Islamic Sharia and rules.

#### **5. Conclusion and recommendation**

In conclusion, it is agreed by mothers that localizing cartoons is an important step to be done by the translator to eliminate the negative impact of the globalized cartoons and to preserve the target audience's values and identity. In the resent study, localized expressions in cartoons were analyzed by the researcher and it is divided into two kinds, localizing verbal language expressions and non-verbal language expressions. The research also focused on the values that are presents through localization which included, teaching children Islamic rules and manners, reassure the Arabic identity, make cartoons understandable and real to children as cartoons are presenting related context, as well as localization teaches children some values of dignity and modesty. It is recommended to extend this study to cover other important examples of localization as well as localizing idioms in cartoons. It is worthy to mention that there are some great Arabic efforts regarding producing Arabic cartoons that are strongly attached to our culture like Mansour, Seraj, Dania, Amona and other nice examples of Arabic cartoons with 100% Arabic efforts.

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