

AN ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING DISNEY'S ANIMATED TITLES FROM ENGLISH TO THAI

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Abstract.

The objective of this research is to analyze strategies for translating Disney's animated titles from English to Thai. We examined a total of 83 titles. The study revealed six distinct translation strategies. The findings are as follows: 1) Transliteration without enhancing the Thai language, total 26 titles (31.33%) 2) Transliteration with enhancement of the Thai language, total 17 titles (20.48%) 3) Literal translation without enhancing the Thai language - no instances found. 4) Literal translation with enhancement of the Thai language, total 5 titles (6.02%). 5) Renaming with relation to original meanings, total 11 titles (13.25%) 6) Renaming without relation to original titles, total 18 titles (21.69%). Furthermore, the study identified instances in which a total of 6 titles (7.23%) used more than one translation method. The research found that transliteration without enhancing the Thai language was the most employed translation method.

Keywords: Translation strategies, movie titles, animation movies

1. Introduction

Translation is an important tool for cross-cultural communication. Translation helps create understanding among people who speak different languages. Translation involves communicating the message from the original sender to the receiver. Translating movie titles is one aspect of cross-cultural communication. Translating movie titles provides some clues about the storyline of the movies. The viewers decide to watch a movie based on the title of a movie. Therefore, translating movie titles need to convey significant messages from the sender to the receiver. Movie titles should attract viewers both in the original one and the translation version. Therefore, translating movie titles requires specific translation strategies. If there are errors in the translated message, it may lead to misunderstandings. Animated movies are a film genre that is popular among Thai viewers because of their entertaining content, ease of understanding, and beautiful visuals (Ratchada Sriwisan, 2011). Disney is a leading global entertainment company known for producing high-quality animated movies that are widely known. The translation of movie titles varies depending on the target audience. Disney animations primarily target children, so the titles must be appealing, easy to remember, catchy, and spark children's imagination, allowing them to connect emotionally with the film.

Research Objective

The study aims to analyze the translation strategies of Disney animated movie titles specifically from English to Thai during 1937-2023.

2. Research Methodology

3.1 Data collection

The data of this study consists of the titles of Disney animated movies from 1937-2023. A total of 87 titles are collected from <https://movies.disney.co.th/> and the Disney+ Hotstar application.

3.2 Data Analysis

The data from the titles of Disney animated movies are collected by comparing the original English movie titles with the translated Thai version. In this study, the researcher presents translation analysis technique by technique and these data are analyzed according to Thirarat Boongkongsan (2000).

3. Results

From the analysis of the translation strategies used in translating the titles of Disney animated films during the year 1937 to 2023, a total of 83 titles were analyzed. The results reveal three groups of translation strategies. Table 1 below shows translation strategies that found in the titles of Disney animated films.

Table 1: Translation strategies in the titles of Disney animated movies

Translation strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1. Transliteration	43	51.81
1.1 Transliteration without the addition of Thai language	26	31.33
1.2 Transliteration with the addition of Thai language	17	20.48
2. Literal translation	5	6.02
2.1 Literal translation without the addition of Thai language	0	0
2.2 Literal translation with the addition of Thai language	5	6.02
Translation strategies	Frequency	Percentage
3. Renaming	29	34.94
3.1 Renaming with relation to original meanings	11	13.25
3.2 Renaming without relation to original titles	18	21.69
* more than one translation strategies	6	7.23

The findings in table 1 reveal three translation strategies. The most common translation strategies namely, transliteration techniques of 43 names (51.81%), renaming techniques of 29 names (34.94%), and literal translation strategies of 5 names (6.02%). Moreover, there were 6 movie titles that employed more than one translation strategies.

Table 2: Transliteration without the addition of Thai language

No.	Movie title in English	Movie title in Thai
1	Peter pan	ปีเตอร์แพน
2	The Lion King	เดอะไลอ้อนคิง
3	Pinocchio	พินอคคิโอ
4	Fantasia	แฟนตาเซีย

Table 2 shows translation strategies by using English phonetics to transliterate the titles without adding Thai words for context. This translation method results in English movie titles that are short, concise, and easy to pronounce, making them suitable for transliteration into Thai. The analysis indicates that this technique is most commonly used in naming Disney films.

Example 1: “Peter Pan” in Thai is “ปีเตอร์แพน”. It is a transliteration of the English name. It represents the main character of the story. The story involves Peter Pan’s life. It is a fantasy adventure movie.

Example 2: “The Lion King” in Thai is “เดอะไลอ้อนคิง”. It is a transliteration of the English title. It provides an overview of the story and the content related to being "the king of the jungle" through an animal character. The “lion” is recognized as being at the top of the food chain. This arouses the viewers’ feeling and eagerness to follow the character's story.

Table 3: Transliteration with the addition of Thai language

No.	Movie title in English	Movie title in Thai
1	Wreck-it Ralph	เวร็ค-อิต ราล์ฟ วายร้าย หัวใจฮีโร่
2	The Good Dinosaur	ผจญภัยไดโนเสาร์เพื่อนรัก
3	Finding Dory	ผจญภัยคอร์รี่ซีลิม
4	Moana	โมอาน่า ผจญภัยตำนานหมู่เกาะทะเลใต้

Table 3 shows transliteration strategies with the addition of Thai language. Thai language is added to convey meaning and allow the viewers to better understand the movies’ direction.

Example 3: “Moana” in Thai is “โมอาน่า ผจญภัยตำนาน หมู่เกาะทะเลใต้ (Adventure of the Legends of the South Seas)” The Thai title is a transliteration of the English name, with "Moana" being the name of the main character, the daughter of a chief of a coastal village. The Thai phrase "ผจญภัยตำนานหมู่เกาะทะเลใต้" (Adventure of the Legends of the South Seas) adds context, indicating that the main character will embark on adventures across the islands and encounter various stories. This detail enhances information about the plot and storyline.

Table 4: Literal translation with the addition of Thai language

No.	Movie title in English	Movie title in Thai
1	The Little Mermaid	เงือกน้อยผจญภัย
2	Beauty and the Beast	โฉมงามกับเจ้าชายอสูร
3	Chicken Little	ลูกไก่หัวใจพิทักย์โลก
4	Soul	อัศจรรย์วิญญาณอลเวง

Table 4 shows translation strategies that translating the meaning from the original English title literally and by adding Thai language to clarify the content of the film further. In the aspect of using language for elaboration, it is found that translators often create language by using slang, rhymes, and vowel sounds, among others.

Example 4: "Soul" in Thai is “อัศจรรย์วิญญาณอลเวง” (The Amazing Chaotic Spirit). The translation of this movie title is a literal translation of the original English title. The word "Soul" means "spirit." The Thai words "อัศจรรย์" (amazing) and "อลเวง" (chaotic) are added to convey the meaning more clearly. The storyline of an animated film often comes with fun and the chaos of the characters, making the audience understand and eager to watch.

Table 5: Renaming with relation to original meanings

No.	Movie title in English	Movie title in Thai
1	Brave	นักรบสาวหัวใจมหากาฬ
2	The Sword in the Stone	อภินิหารดาบผู้แผ่นดิน
3	Lady and the Tramp	ทรานรัชกับไอ้ตูบ
4	Sleeping Beauty	เจ้าหญิงนิทรา

Table 5 demonstrates the technique of renaming. It is a translation strategy where the translator creates a new title for a movie, without transliterating the English title or translating its meaning from English. This type of title translation may arise from the fact that the English name, when transliterated, is difficult to pronounce, or that translating it into Thai makes it unappealing. Therefore, the translators come up with a new name to convey the meaning of content of the movie in a way that the viewers can understand best. The translator chooses words that have

meanings similar to parts of the original English title. The overall meaning may relate to the original English title.

Example 5, "Brave" in Thai is “นักรบสาวหัวใจมหากาฬ” (The Fearless Warrior Princess). “นักรบ” means “warrior” “สาว” means “young woman” “มหากาฬ” means “powerful”. When combined all elements together, the translation means the young woman warrior with a powerful heart. This translation shows Merinda’s characteristics. The translator choose title that closely aligns with the film's content, which revolves around Merida, a skilled archer and the headstrong daughter of the king. Merida challenges the ancient sacred traditions of the land's rulers.

Table 6: Renaming without relation to original titles

No.	Movie title in English	Movie title in Thai
1	Zootopia	นครสัตว์มหาสุนัข
2	Encanto	เมืองเวทมนตร์คนมหัศจรรย์
3	The Rescuers	หนูหริ่งหนูหริ่งผจญเพชรดาปีศาจ
4	The Fox and the Hound	เพื่อนแท้ในป่าใหญ่

Table 6 shows a strategy of creating new names without translating or deriving them from the original English title. Moreover, Thai title meaning has not connected to the original name.

Example 6: "Zootopia" in Thai is “นครสัตว์มหาสุนัข” (The city of fun animal). The English title refers to the capital city of the story. The choice of this Thai title may stem from the fact that as a city name, "Zootopia" might be too specific and not widely recognized by the general public. Therefore, the translator created a new name to help the audience understand and anticipate the plot and theme of the film more clearly than if they had simply transliterated the city name. The film's content revolves around a world where various animals can live like humans, and "Zootopia" is the capital where everyone strives to chase their dreams. The city is filled with colors, fun, and numerous chaotic events, presented through the story of a small rabbit named 'Judy.' This narrative thus inspired the new Thai translation title "The city of fun animal."

Table 7: More than 1 translation techniques

No.	Movie title in English	Movie title in Thai
1	The Hunchback of Notre Dame	คนค่อมแห่งนอเทรอดาม
2	Monsters University	มหา'ลัยมอนสเตอร์
3	Alic in wonderland	อลิซในแดนมหัศจรรย์
4	Raya and the Last Dragon	ราชากับมังกรตัวสุดท้าย

Table 7 shows the movie title that has two translation strategies. The combination between transliteration without the addition of Thai language and literal translation without the addition of Thai language can be found in the translation technique.

Example 7: "Alice in Wonderland" in Thai is “อลิซในแดนมหัศจรรย์”. The movie title has transliterated the original English name "Alice," which is the name of the main character. The translator has directly translated part of "in Wonderland" to "ในดินแดนมหัศจรรย์," (amazing land) so the Thai title conveys the meaning directly in line with the original without needing additional Thai language. The story revolves around a girl named Alice who falls down a rabbit hole and enters a fantastical underground world filled with strange creatures resembling humans.

4. Discussion

The movies titles used the transliteration technique without adding much information, accounting for 31.33% of the total 83 titles. English names have a linguistic nature that is suitable for transliteration, as they are basic vocabulary that most Thai people understand. They are concise and can be pronounced easily, making them suitable for Thai speakers. This approach allows the majority of the audience to understand easily and visualize clearly. Additionally, it preserves the meaning of the original language, including the names of characters that are prominent, clearly highlighting the protagonists of the story. Therefore, it may not be necessary to use other techniques in the translation. This also aligns with the research of Nisarath et al. (2023), which studied translation techniques in Netflix films from English to Thai, finding that the transliteration technique without enhancing Thai language is the most popular method for translating films from English to Thai on Netflix. Renaming strategies found for 34.94%. This method of renaming shows how complicated it can be to make information suitable for different markets. Cultural translation is just as important as language translation when it comes to making sure that the main idea of the story gets across in the best way for the audience. Literal translation found 6.02%. Thai languages may lack a direct equivalent for certain words or concepts, making literal translation impractical. However, Sukwises et al. (2024) found that literal translations are among the three translation strategies of culture-specific in Sepha Khun Chang Khun Phaen. It is because the genre differences. Movie titles and literary works have different purposes. Moreover, the translation techniques are depended on the genres of the movies. Janthajumrusrat (2019) studied the translation techniques of action movies. The most translation technique used by the translator is making a new name which is not based on the original one. In addition, romantic comedy used a more neutral word/less expressive word, by cultural substitution, and by using a loan word or a loan word plus explanation in subtitle. (Ngampradit, K., & Boonmoh, A.,2012)

5. Conclusion

The techniques for translating movie titles still predominantly use the method of preserving the original. The foundation of translation theory suggests that the researcher combines relevant research documents on movie title translation, which emphasizes the importance of the target audience in every translation. For the purpose of translating titles in

the entertainment sector, creativity in language is essential to enhance the linguistic appeal to attract viewers, while still conveying the film's selling points.

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