Synchronies in Dubbing:
The Transfer of Vocal Characteristics through Audiovisual Translation

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This essay aims to describe and analyze the process of dubbing and the factors of synchrony that must be taken into consideration when such a translation is done. By observing and carefully analyzing the film *The Lion King* the essay brings up the issue of fidelity and further observes the differences and similarities between the original, English-language version and the Swedish dubbing. Focus is put on the vocal qualities of the voice actors and comparisons are drawn regarding such factors as culturally specific archetypes, tonality, intonation, etc. The essay concludes that there is a very high level of fidelity in the TT of *The Lion King*.

Key-Words: Dubbing, audiovisual translation, Synchrony, Fidelity,
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1 Introduction

Audiovisual translation is a phenomenon encountered daily by most people. It can be encountered in televised commercials, motion pictures and staged plays. Factors such as the size and relevant influence of a nation and its language may play a big role when a decision is made as to which text should be translated and how it should be done. Like the old saying “There are many ways to skin a cat”, so too are there many ways a Source Text (ST) can be translated into a Target Language (TL). Depending on what form of text is being translated, the options of dubbing, subtitling, voice-overs or any of the other forms of audiovisual translation that have cropped up over time may or may not be usable. The translator, however, is often not the one who decides in what way a translation will be done; this decision, instead, is almost always made by producers and relies heavily on such factors as geographical location, Target Audience (TA) and the nature of the ST.

In Sweden, dubbing is most commonly used in films produced for children and, in some cases, young adults. Children’s programs on television also tend to be dubbed, as are commercials, although these are not limited to being targeted towards a younger audience only. When it comes to films and shows made for adults, however, dubbing is generally frowned upon in Sweden, and subtitling instead steps in to serve as the medium between the ST and the audience. Interestingly, in recent years there has also been an upswing in subtitling even for films aimed at children, and many cinemas offer this along with the dubbed version. The reasons for this are not obvious and although one could assume that it is because of an increasing standard of English proficiency, even in the younger audience, it does not explain how films imported from countries such as Japan (e.g. Spirited Away 2001, Howl’s Moving Castle 2004, etc.) are also offered in both a subtitled and a dubbed version. One reason could be that as it is primarily parents who pay for the tickets to see these films, it is they who choose what language to see it in. As Nornes put it, “[…] preference for either subtitling or dubbing is none other than a naturalized convention.” (2007:191). It would stand to reason then that adults, who spent only their early years watching dubbed films, prefer instead the more familiar subtitling form; a preference that they then transfer to their children. This is of course not an instant process, but successively this has resulted in fewer and fewer films becoming dubbed, and with the arrival of the DVD one can now decide whether to see a film
in its original language, or dubbed into (often) several different languages, thus making readily available the original language to the TA alongside the dubbed version.

Dubbing is a process that requires much more work and resources in order to present a viable alternative to subtitles. It is not simply a matter of trying to constrain your translation to words per second, or to channel the information being said into a condensed textual version. Rather, it is a long and complicated process of trying to remain faithful to several different synchrony-norms, each of which can potentially ruin a translation if not taken into consideration. Martinez (2004:3) describes how voice-actors must be assigned to roles according to often pre-set criteria and a director has to oversee every single line being uttered, making sure it remains as true to the ST as possible.

What are these synchronies then? Synchronies are several different factors of audio correlation with the image presented on the screen. For example, it would be a case of good synchrony if a young man on the screen is voiced by someone who talks like the TA expects a young man to sound. Likewise, having him voiced by someone that does not fill in this expectation will reduce the level of synchrony and lessen the impact the film has on the TA. Chaume (2004:36) writes that:

The objective of ‘good’ synchronization may be said to have been achieved if what the viewer hears on the screen does not sound like a translation, but rather that the utterances in the target language appear to have been spoken by the very actor they are watching.

It becomes obvious then that synchrony is one of the most important elements in audiovisual dubbing. Thus, it is this that this essay will focus most on when analyzing the primary material.

1.1 Aim
The aim of this essay is to analyze and observe the many different synchronies found in cinematic film and, through that, attempt to pinpoint the transfer of character archetypes through dubbing and the general faithfulness, the fidelity, of the Target Text (TT) towards the ST. Elements such as dialects and accents, tonality, body language and vocal pauses all come
together to create a living audiovisual impression and therefore need to be synchronized with the visual elements. The entire image of a character can therefore become transformed in the transition between languages if these factors are not taken into careful consideration. There is also the presence of culturally significant norms that may not transfer correctly if a translation is done too literally or haphazardly. All of these synchronies are crucial if a character is to be perceived by the TA as the original director intended.

By analyzing the differences and similarities between ST and TT versions, a pattern of norms regarding the dubbing will hopefully emerge and indicate what the criteria are when an actor is chosen to perform a role. By comparing these results to secondary sources describing their own views on the subject, one should then be able to draw conclusions as to whether these ideas are established norms in the dubbing community, or simply idiosyncratic solutions.

As this study is limited to only one film in its research, it must be stressed that this is in no way a general overview of the entire field of English to Swedish dubbing, but rather a take on how it has been done in a popular children’s film, and how the author believes it could have been done differently.

2 Background

2.1 Audiovisual translation and Fidelity

Audiovisual translation is the phrase generally used to describe translations that involve input from both visually and audible sources, hence the name. Although film is one of the strongest representatives of this form of translation, it also involves theatrical translations, advertisement, etc. This form of translation can be defined as constrained translation (Titford 1982). Mayoral, Kelly and Gallardo reintroduced the term and applied it to translations “in which the text is only one of the components of the message or when it constitutes only an intermediate stage for a speech read aloud or dramatised” (1988:356, cited in Bartrina & Espasa 2005). Bartrina and Espasa further defines constrained translating as “[…]situations in which the text to be translated is part of a more complex communicative event which attempts to convey a message by various means, such as pictures, drawings, music, etc.” (2005:83).
Zabalbeascoa, however, claims that although other scholars call certain translations constrained (e.g. comics, films), it:

should not be used to imply that there is anything that can properly be called unconstrained translation. Dubbing is not necessarily more constrained than other forms of translation. It is rather that different forms of translation are constrained in different ways and by different factors. (1997:330)

Zabalbeascoa is correct in his disagreement regarding constrained and unconstrained and this paper will be employing the classification decided on by Bartrina & Espasa, “audiovisual translations”, as constrained translation represents a potentially broader field of translation activities than merely the translation of visual texts.

Bartrina & Espasa (2005:85) discuss audiovisual translation further and give this argument:

The specificity of audiovisual translation consists in its mode of transmission, rather than in the topics it covers. In audiovisual texts there is semiotic interaction between the simultaneous emission of image and text and its repercussions for the translation process. One characteristic of audiovisual texts is its redundancy: oral and written messages are conveyed with sound and image.

This definition of audiovisual translation makes it a better phrase to employ as, as Zabalbeascoa argues, more or less every translation is constrained in its own way. While audiovisual translation is indeed constrained, the definition is simply too broad to be use in this situation.

Fidelity is how closely a TT follows the original structure of the ST. Shuttleworth & Cowie (1997:57) describes faithfulness (or fidelity) as:

General terms used to describe the extent to which a TT can be considered a fair representation of ST according to some criterion;

As to how this fidelity presents itself, opinions vary. Contemporary writers offer several different opinions regarding this, but traditionally the view has been that a TT is faithful to a ST if it “bears a strong resemblance to its ST, usually in terms of either its LITERAL
adherence to source meaning or its successful communication of the “spirit” of the original.” (Shuttleworth & Cowie 1997:57).

As the definition of text used in this paper might not correlate to what the reader is most familiar with, a brief explanation may be in order. Gottlieb describes a text as: “any message containing verbal material.”(2001:2), in other words any sort of verbal passage, no matter how it is conveyed, can be labeled a text. Schröder argues, too, that text “should stand for the whole of all communicative utterances which together become coherent in a communicative situation and form an indivisible functioning whole” (Schröder 1992:318, cited in Bartrina & Espasa 2005).

2.2 Dubbing

The process of dubbing has been researched extensively and can be summarized as follows: Initially a film or a program is selected by a distributing company which then proceeds to decide whether the material shall be dubbed, subtitled or remain untranslated. If dubbing is selected then the next step in the process is to hire a studio specializing in the field to supply voice-actors and technicians to get the job done. Today all of this is generally done by a single studio. The distributors can also supply a list of preferences for the dubbing in terms of dialogue, voice actors and such. A copy of the original version is given to the translator or translators and they may also be supplied with the post-production script to aid them in their task. While or after the main body of the translation is done the translation goes through a timing and lip-movement check where corrections are made to ensure that it does not deviate too much from the original. This process can also involve the dubbing director and the selected voice actors, and if so then considerable changes may be made to the original translation. Once the end-result is satisfactory the new soundtrack is dubbed onto the film. (Zabalbeascoa 1997:335)

3 Material

The primary source of material for this essay is the film *The Lion King*. Although *The Lion King* is not a recent production, it is relevant to this study as it exemplifies the standards of Disney’s audiovisual process in the creation of recognizable characters while also being a typical example of Swedish dubbing of films aimed at children and young adults. As Disney is one of the most prolific producers of animated films, it is reasonable to focus on their work
as being a representative of films aimed at a younger audience. *The Lion King* is also a good case study as it brings in a small, but varied range of characters that represent very strong Jungian archetypes which will be touched upon briefly during the in-depth analysis.

As Disney has a long history of making animated films and exporting them worldwide, one can assume that norms and guidelines have been established for their translators to follow. The same effort is perhaps not as obviously put into in some films as in others, but there seems to have been great thought put into the voices cast for *The Lion King*, both the ST and the TT. Although it is hard to make this claim without any solid facts to support it – it might simply be the work of talented dubbing directors – this solid character structure is apparent in both versions.

Although generally relying on pre-established worlds and themes when creating a film (c.f. *Cinderella* 1950, *Pocahontas* 1995, etc.), Disney has a penchant for rewriting much of the original story to better fit their TA. *The Lion King*, for example, is strongly influenced by the play *Hamlet*, written by Shakespeare and is also combined with a very strong moral thread that runs throughout the film. It is the story of growing up and shouldering responsibility, to accept the bad things that happen in life and learn from them, grow stronger and overcome the difficulties you face. However, influences aside, *The Lion King* is the first Disney film without a literary precursor.

Realistically, studying only one film makes it difficult to present a generalizing study of the field of dubbing, as that includes everything from documentaries to commercial advertisements and television series. However, because of limitations in time, resources and the subject of the essay, this film was decided upon to represent a small, but none-the-less relevant sample of dubbing in films aimed at a younger audience.

### 3.1 Story Synopsis

*The Lion King* is a story about the lion Simba, son of the ruler of the Pride lands, Mufasa. His birth guaranteed that he will become king after his father, much to the dismay of his uncle Scar, who has been hoping to take the throne from his brother. Scar plans to have his brother and nephew killed, and succeeds in the former. But before he can kill off Simba, the young cub escapes and ends up far away in a jungle where he meets and befriends Timon and Pumbaa, a meerkat and a warthog, who takes him under their wing.

Time passes and Simba grows up, but his peaceful lifestyle in the jungle is broken when
Nala, his childhood sweetheart, finds him and explains how his uncle has destroyed their homeland. After making up with the ghosts of his past, Simba heads back and finds his lands in ruin. Determined to reclaim his throne he tracks down Scar and defeats him and his hyena lackeys with the help of his friends and the rest of the lion pride. With Scar dead, Simba becomes the king he was born to be and the Circle of Life continues with the birth of his and Nala’s child.

4 Method

4.1 Synchrony

Synchrony is one of the most important factors in dubbing; this is a fact established repeatedly by many different sources, although not always by using the same terminology or focal point. The term synchrony was first introduced to the field of audiovisual studies by Fodor (1976, cited in Bartrina & Espasa 2005) in his description of content, character- and phonetic synchrony. Chaume (2004:44) describes character and content synchrony as:

[character synchrony] covers the agreement between the voices of the dubbing actors and the expectations of the on-screen actor’s voice […] [content synchrony] the semantic relation between the translation and what happens on screen (images and music)…

Bartrina & Espasa (2005:90) acknowledge the establishment of norms created by Fodor, but argue that:

Content and character synchrony are, arguably, common to other types of translation. They can only be seen as specific to audiovisual translation when there is a close connection between image, sound and text which might pose a translation challenge because of word-image discrepancies or which might require the elimination of the text due to audiovisual redundancies.

As the Synchrony Table (see Table 1) is the one that will be used when analyzing the primary material, this essay will therefore be focusing more on the extended list of synchronies
originally presented by Whitman-Linsen instead of those given by Fodor. Although this essay will not dismiss Fodor’s observations in favor of Whitman-Linsen’s, the more detailed list presents a broader and more in-depth tool useful for the purpose of this essay.

By studying the Table of synchrony, in particular the Audio/acoustic synchrony list, conclusions could be drawn regarding similarities and deviations between the originals and the dubbed versions.

Table 1. Types of synchrony (Whitman-Linsen 1992:19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual/optical synchrony:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-lip synchrony/phonetic synchrony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-syllable articulation synchrony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-length of utterance synchrony (gap synchrony or isochrony)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-gesture and facial expression synchrony (kinetic synchrony)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audio/acoustic synchrony:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-idiosyncratic vocal type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-paralinguistic elements (tone, timbre, pitch of voice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-prosody (intonation, melody, tempo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-cultural variations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-accents and dialects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Divided into two broader categories, visual/optical synchrony and audio/acoustic, Table 1 gives a brief overview of the kind of features one should expect to find in an audiovisual translation; how well these norms are adhered too, however, is a different story. For this paper, the audio/acoustic synchrony carries the most relevance, although visual/optical synchrony, kinetic synchronies especially, is very important in the visual presentation of a character. Accordingly, Whitman-Linsen, who established these labels, acknowledges that “exacting and meticulous lip synchrony is […] probably the easiest to distract the audience away from with other sensory input” (1992:54). Whitman-Linsen does argue, as do Bartrina
& Espasa, that synchronies are not to be treated as individual factors, but rather intertwined elements that together compose an audiovisual translation. (Whitman-Linsen 1992:53) (Bartrina & Espasa 2005:90).

The definitions given in Table 1 are very relevant to this study and will therefore be covered more in-depth before the analysis can be presented. As this essay does not focus on the visual and optical synchrony - generally the responsibility of audio-technicians rather than the voice-actors - but rather the audio and acoustic synchrony, elements such as syllable articulation synchrony and length of utterance synchrony will be grouped together under lip/phonetic synchrony.

4.1.1 Lip synchrony/phonetic synchrony

Lip synchrony, or lip-sync, is the process of ensuring that on-screen characters, in particular during close-ups, have their utterances correlate with the movement of their lips and body movement. Chaume (2004:44) argues that open vowels and bilabial and labio-dental consonants are some of the more difficult and obvious synchrony-challenges, and believes that they should be treated under careful scrutiny to ensure a naturalized and less foreign result. Whitman-Linsen (1992:21) describes how up until the 1960s, lip-sync was the absolute dogma, but later research showed that the audience was more concerned with isochrony, the matching of the beginning and end of a sentence to the sound produced, rather than the movement of lips during the actual speaking.

4.1.2 Idiosyncratic vocal type

This is a broad term that covers the assignment of voice-actors depending on their vocal characteristics; an actor who is male and adult would most likely be assigned to voice a character with a similar vocal type. Whitman-Linsen (1992:39) describes how it “involves the compatibility between the voice of the acoustic personifier and the visual image of the actor on screen, his personality, character, deportment, etc.” Although these boundaries are loose at some instances (a young male character can be voiced by either a young male actor or an actress, which is a recurring phenomena in Japanese animation), reason suggests that to present a credible character-voice relationship one must find a voice-actor with a similar vocal type as the Source Language (SL) voice.
4.1.3 Paralinguistic elements (tone, timbre, pitch of voice)

“The laryngeal, pharyngeal, oral, and nasal cavities can all be used to produce ‘tones of voice’ which alter the meaning of what is said. These effects are sometimes referred to as effects of ‘timbre’ or ‘voice quality’, and studied under the heading of vocal paralanguage” (Crystal 1997:171). This means that paralinguistic elements indicate how a line is being delivered by a specific voice actor. Simply put, if the visual cues indicate that the character is sad, it would not do to have the voice-actor speak in an indifferent or amused tone. More generally, this is also a criterion when electing a voice-actor to play a part. If a character has a deep, somber voice then the voice-actor must be able to present similar paralinguistic features in order to properly reflect the SL voice.

4.1.4 Prosody (intonation, melody, tempo)

Again, this is how a line is delivered. In this case, however, it is more relevant to the overall meaning of a line being said. If the character is asking a question, the tone of his voice at the end of the sentence will generally adhere to the cultural norms of intonation. In English, this is generally a tonal rise at the end of the sentence, and this is a typical prosodic feature and therefore the voice-actor doing the TT voice must be careful to present a similar form of intonation in his speech. For more clarifying examples, Whitman-Linsen (1992:45) writes about ‘the remarks ‘Sure I believe you!’ or “You’re cute!’ , two common examples of utterances which can, depending upon intonation, quite easily convey the diametrically opposed meaning of the purely denotative one.” Thoughtfulness, panic and similar features of speech all fall into the category of prosodic synchronies.

4.1.5 Cultural variations

This synchrony transcends general vocal qualities and instead regards such elements as the cultural origin of the character and how interpretation of his or her emotional expressions may differ vastly if the TA is not familiar with the Source Culture (SC) behavior. It is closely related to accents and dialects, and indeed covers similar features in speech. It can be influenced by the social standing of a character, his or her upbringing as well as the role in the story. If presenting a character who is primarily supposed to give the impression of being a father-figure, then it would be a wise decision of the translators to take the cultural variations into consideration when translating the lines to be spoken, as the cultural standards of how a
father might address his son are not completely identical across the world. Translations between countries in the west are generally easier than others, as there is a fairly homogenous cultural tradition spread throughout Europe and North America. Whitman-Linsen (1992:75) writes “there can simply be no artificial splitting by force of vocal and bodily expression, a hindrance giving rise to the chameleonism of the art form of dubbing.” One cannot alter the picture, and therefore discrepancies will arise depending on the social norms of the SC and TC. A decision must be made regarding domestication or foreignization (cf. Venuti 1995) of the piece; should it be altered to be more familiar to the TC, or remain similar to the ST at the expense of being obviously foreign?

4.1.6 Accents and Dialects

Finally, these are some of the most obvious vocal characteristics a character can have, and translating them is something that many translators struggle with. How does one translate a Brooklyn accent or a West English one into the TL? Generally, one does not, but is rather forced to solve it in one of two ways; one can either try to find an equivalent, or simply choose to ignore it. If the TA is not familiar with the SL voice, they will most likely not find the latter solution negative unless the character is supposed to have a peculiar accent and this is brought to attention in the text. Whitman-Linsen describes the problem with pre-existing dialects and accents:

All the connotations awakened in the source language audience must simply be forfeited or distorted, connotations which cannot be overestimated in their cinematic effect and, above all, their huge contribution to meaning. Idiolects, sociolects, colloquialisms, slang, all carry with them undeniable, intricate “messages”, interpreted by the film-going audience with surprising consistency. (Whitman-Linsen 1992:82)

4.2 Jungian Archetypes

In order to find a way to describe and analyze the characters of The Lion King in an organized way, psychological archetypes presented in Indick’s Psychology for Screenwriters, founded upon Jungian psychology, were chosen as they were found applicable to most characters. Unfortunately, some of the minor figures of the story were not found compatible with these
archetypes and therefore more generalizing terms were introduced to describe the character. It should be stressed that these archetypes are based on Jung’s theorems, but are interpreted and defined by Indick with references to Jung’s original definitions.

Fundamental to Jungian psychology is the idea of the collective unconsciousness and archetypes. Jung believed that there were “primordial images” that every human being shared, for example the goddess, which is a representation of the nurturing mother. The image of motherhood can be found all across the world in all manners of representations, but the elemental idea is always the same. Another central tenet was the idea of balance and Jung believed that the shadow, the dark side of every person, was just as important as the light side, the persona. This is also represented in the anima and animus, the womanly and the manly, opposites of equal importance.

The hero is perhaps the loosest archetype. The hero is the central figure and represents the self. It is influenced at varying degrees by the other archetypical concepts, which is why Simba for example is presented as The meek hero. He is influenced by the shadow because of his alleged cause of Mufasa's death, and Scar, who represents the shadow, is the cause of this belief. Some of the archetypes presented by Indick seem to be later constructions and more related to fictional need rather than actual psychology. The Trickster and The Wise Old Man are examples of such and, as they are represented by minor characters, will only be touched upon briefly. Ultimately, these definitions are primarily functioning as indicators of personality rather than to have any deeper relevance to the matter of this essay.

4.3 Application to the present study
The first step of gathering the data for the research was to scrutinize the primary material with both the ST version as well as the TT dubbing, taking time to transcribe the differentiations and similarities between the two different actors portraying a character. A general synopsis was written down in regards to the overall image conveyed by the audiovisual impression (including both visual cues from the ST, as well as paralinguistic elements), and any discrepancies in the synchrony, whether present in the performance, the line spoken or in another form were carefully noted down along with the exact time-span of this deviation. A short description will also be given in regards to what role the character fills in the film and classical Jungian archetypes described by Indick (2004:113) will be used to reflect what purpose they fill. As the focus of this essay is not character portrayal, but rather the fidelity of
the TT, these passages will be relatively brief.

One notable difficulty with this form of research is, unfortunately, that it relies heavily on the researcher’s ability to distinguish these deviations and properly categorize and analyze them. As many of the synchronies are complex forms of visual and aural correlation it is difficult to truly pinpoint how discrepancies, if they occur, materialize themselves.

As The Lion King is an animated film, it could be argued that it does not present a relevant subject of study; the “original actors” are after all dubbed voiced themselves. While this is certainly a correct observation, the general high quality of Disney’s animation, coupled with several sequences of close-ups on the faces of the characters as well as prominent visual characteristics qualifies this film as a complex enough work to warrant research.

5 Results and Analysis

5.2 Character analysis

5.2.1 Simba – The Meek Hero

Young ST Voice Actors: Jonathan Taylor Thomas, Jason Weaver

Adult ST Voice Actor: Matthew Broderick

Young TT Voice Actors: Johan Halldén

Adult TT Voice Actor: Frank Ådahl

Indick (2004:117) describes the meek hero as being “pushed farther and farther by the violent villain until he finally must defend his honor, his family, and himself by evoking the violent side of his own nature.” Although not a literal description of the events that form the main character of The Lion King, one could interpret the killing of Mufasa, the destruction of the Pride land and the alliance with the hyenas as threats to the heritage left behind to Simba and therefore something he is forced into protecting through violence.

The character of Simba is the one who has the most vocal development throughout the film. As a child he has a playful, light voice which is full of self-confidence and energy, something that the TT has succeeded well in transferring. As his father dies, however, he becomes more sullen, unsure of himself, reflecting his self-doubt and feelings of shame at his alleged cause of Mufasa’s death, and as the ST actor’s paralinguistic features become altered from this event, so too does the TT. When he grows up his voice, aside from changing actor, also alters to reflect his now carefree way of life; his prosodic - and paralinguistic features becoming more relaxed and conveying more the image of a typical young bachelor, matching his
vocabulary and body language, relaxed and carefree. He shirks away from his responsibilities and refuses to give an explanation to his behavior, citing instead the motto taught to him by Timon and Pumbaa, “Hakuna Matata”. This behavior is exemplified in (1) below.

(1)

ST: “I just needed to get out on my own, live my own life.”
TT: “Jag behövde vara för mig själv. Leva mitt eget liv.”

(00:51:15)

This is his reply to Nala’s question about what he has been up to. When he is finally forced to confront his past, however, his voice takes on a more subtle change, as he begin to speak with a more determined, somber tone that indicates how he has matured from the recent events. This is shown in (2) as he has recently arrived to his homelands to find it in ruins.

(2)

ST: “This is my kingdom. If I don’t fight for it who will?”
TT: “Dessutom är kungariket mitt. Vem ska slåss för det om inte jag?”

Back Translation: “Besides, this kingdom is mine. Who will fight for it if not I?”

(00:58:45)

Interestingly, this phrase is slightly altered in the TT, as noted above, making the task of fighting for the Pride lands not a necessary burden, as the ST would indicate, but rather a statement of obvious dominance over the domain.

Generally the voicing of Simba has a wide range as far as paralinguistic and prosodic synchronies goes, which is adhered to faithfully by the TT, but he distinguishes his character mainly in his idiosyncratic speech patterns which remains quite true to the ST casting. In both the ST and the TT, Simba is not a courageous, self-sacrificing hero, but, as touched upon earlier, a more passive individual who is pushed to violence due to the actions of the villain.
5.2.2 Scar – The Villain

ST Voice Actor: Jeremy Irons
TT Voice Actor: Rikard Wolff

Scar represents the Jungian Shadow in *The Lion King*, but interestingly enough a Shadow is supposed to be the dark opposite of the Persona, the good Hero (Indick 2004:116). Here, instead, Scar is more of the contrasting duality of Mufasa, which can work to symbolize the generational gap and the theme of inheritance that is carried through the film. As Simba was unable to inherit the role of king because of his father’s early death, he is instead forced to deal with his father’s shadow, his uncle Scar.

Scar is presented as a dark, twisted character of low moral fiber. He is dainty and sleek, speaks in a drawled, insidious tone and gives the impression of deception and manipulation. The TT paralinguistic features of Scar are a bit more growly and guttural than the refined English accent of Jeremy Irons, although the prosodic features remain more or less the same in both versions. Some of the things he says in the film have, in the ST, rather demasculizing undertones, exemplified in (3):

(3)

ST: “I shall practice my curtsy”
TT: “Jag ska öva mig att buga.”
Back Translation: “I will practice my bowing”

(00:05:27)

These kinds of changes in cultural synchrony might indicate a desire to avoid the undercurrent femininity against the masculinity presented by Mufasa in the TT. Similarly, when questioned as to why he has no interest in challenging Mufasa for power, he remarks that:

(4)

ST: “As far as brains go, I got the lion’s share, but when it comes to brute strength, I’m afraid I’m at the shallow end of the gene pool”.
TT: “För eller senare får jag nog min del av kakan. Men i stället för rå styrka föredrar jag nog att använda min intelligens.”
Back Translation: “Sooner or later I’ll get my share of the cake. But instead of raw strength, I believe I prefer to use my intelligence.”

(00:05:45)

On both occasions, he is showing a clear aversion to fighting, but in the TT it is more a case of him being too ‘refined’ to fight, not to mention that he also claims patience, expecting to become king some day after all. Scar also has a large range of tonality, shifting from light to dark tone in his speech depending on the situation, a feature not entirely caught by Wolff who has a naturally darker, growlier voice. This results in a differentiation in tone and timbre, but not a feature that threatens the fidelity significantly.

It could be discussed whether the choice to have Irons portray the voice of Scar was an underlying intent by the director to show Scar as being more sophisticated than the other characters. As Irons is British, his dialectal features are more pronounced and audible to the audience, and one could stipulate that the use of a dialect that is considered stereotypically more refined, would serve the function to elevate Scar’s nature as an intellectual villain. Although Wolff lacks some of the refinement that Irons have, it is an interesting twist of fidelity that he was chosen. Scar, being quite feminine and arguably stereotypically “Queer”, is portrayed by a man who has openly proclaimed himself a homosexual. Even so, the result of this research seems to points to a more masculine performance of Wolff which is a rather surprising change. Perhaps one could assume that to adults, who are most likely those who will catch the undercurrent of feminine behavior in Scar, will recognize the voice of Wolff as that of a homosexual, but these kind of theories are unfortunately rather hard to back up without direct proof of such a decision.

5.2.3 Mufasa – The Animus

ST Voice Actor: James Earl Jones
TT Voice Actor: Johan Schinkler

Mufasa, the father of Simba, fills the archetypical father figure, as well as the role of a benevolent ruler and masculine ideal. He is the Animus, the male, representing the “stereotypically masculine traits of courage, leadership, intellectual wisdom, and physical strength.” (Indick 2004:125). However, he could also be considered the Persona, as he stands
in contrast to the Shadow that his brother creates. His paralinguistic features are deep and masculine, calm and collected and reflects the cultural expectations of a father figure well. He speaks almost with an underlying growl, his vocal timbre even and rarely changing in quality. He also gives the impression of choosing his words carefully, and generally says no more than he needs to, which also contrasts him to the sly and manipulative Scar; this differentiation is what serves to enforce the distinction between the strong, masculine male and the weak, feminine male that the two represent; where Scar shifts in his tone, Mufasa’s remains fairly constant. There are however similarities between the ways the two speak, as Mufasa’s voice is prosodically somewhat like Scar’s in that he speaks with almost a drawl, even drawing out his pronunciations of some syllables. The two voices of Mufasa are idiosyncratically very similar and throughout the film there are a few small, insubstantial discrepancies.

5.2.4 Nala – The Anima

Young ST Voice Actor: Niketa Calame
Adult ST Voice Actor: Moira Kelly
Young TT Voice Actor: Mariam Walelntin
Adult TT Voice Actor: Kayo Shekoni

Nala is the love-interest in the life of Simba and therefore represent the Anima, “sensitivity, emotional wisdom, intuition, empathy, and care.” (Indick 2004:123). Nala, as she appears as a cub, has a slightly less feminine way of speaking in the ST than in the TT, although her audiovisual impression is not altered by it, as her boyish character traits come through regardless of the pitch of her voice. She has little in the way of character development during the parts of the film in which she is present, but there is a clear distinction of roles she fills between her time as a cub and as a lioness and the love-interest of Simba. As a cub, she has the role of an innocent, boyhood love. When she encounters the adult Simba, she is more feminine in her behavior, more obviously attracted to Simba, but outspoken and emotional (which sets her apart from Sarabi, Simba’s mother and the other major female character in his life) and one of the anchors to Simba’s old life. She is also much more sexually aware, having traded her tomboy nature for that of a young woman. This becomes obvious as the two of them are reunited and spend some time alone, where Nala initiates the change in their
relationship. Lacking any other vocal distinctions, the transfer between English and Swedish is felicitous.

5.2.5 Timon & Pumbaa – The Tricksters

*Timon ST Voice Actor: Nathan Lane*
*Pumbaa ST Voice Actor: Ernie Sabella*
*Timon TT Voice Actor: Peter Rangmar*
*Pumbaa TT Voice Actor: Jan Rippe*

Although technically the trickster archetype is one which uses its intelligence to solve matters and defeat stronger opponents, it is also one of comic relief. In some sense, they do help Simba to survive, and are knowledgeable enough to survive on whatever they can find, but it is primarily the role of comic relief that they fill. The two characters fill the typical thin guy – fat guy routine made famous by, for example, Laurel and Hardy, although in this case the roles have been jumbled a bit; Timon is the more dominating, abusive joker while Pumbaa is the dim-witted butt of many of Timon’s jokes and abuse. These two character archetypes are, at least in the western world, a tried and true form of comedy and are therefore not in the need of any cultural variation in the transition between English and Swedish. One rather significant differentiation in the ST to the TT is however the portrayal of dialects. In the ST, both Timon and Pumbaa have distinctive, Brooklynesque ways of talking and represent streetwise survivors; a far cry from the country bumpkin impression given in the TT by Rangmar and Rippe, both who speak in Västgötska, a Swedish dialect that is generally conceived as being rather rural. The combination of laid-back attitude and easily recognized dialects serve to emphasize the humoristic nature of these two characters, but in very contrasting ways.

Both the voices of Timon and Pumbaa have a higher pitch in the TT, Timon most noticeably, and this paralinguistic differentiation is quite noticeable, although not unsuitable in regards to the character design. Prosodically the differences are much smaller, which would perhaps indicate that it is that feature which is the most important of the two; Timon speaking nervously and fast-paced while Pumbaa in a slow, good-natured voice.
5.2.6 Zazu – The Intellectual

*ST Voice Actor: Rowan Atkinson*
*TT Voice Actor: Anders Aldgård*

This is not strictly an archetype, but Zazu is essentially not an important character to the overarching plot, and has little function aside from an extension of the influence of Mufasa over other characters as well as a minor source of comic relief.

Being the majordomo of Mufasa, Zazu presents an interesting case of cultural variation. He is a snobbish, highly strung Hornbill who speaks with the rather nasal voice of Rowan Atkinson. As Sweden lacks the geographically distinct variation that Britain presents, Anders Aldgård, who replaces Rowan Atkinson in the TT, further enforces the secondary vocal characteristics of Zazu (his refined speech) and creates a similar character; i.e. snobbish. The vocabulary used in the translation is formal, even more so than in the ST, to reinforce this characteristic. One good example of this transfer would be:

(5)

ST: “And just think, whenever he gets dirty […]”
TT: “Beakta att varje gang han blir smutsig[…]”

Back Translation: “Observe that every time he becomes dirty[...]”

(00:06:04)

The Swedish word “beakta” is used, which is formal and somewhat old-fashioned, and can also be translated into something like “heed”. Another example is:

(6)

ST: “[...]you’re shaping up to be a pretty pathetic king indeed.”
TT: “[...]kommer du att bli en tämligen löjlig kung på min ära.”

Back Translation: ”[...]you’re going to be a rather silly king, on my honor.”

(00:13:23)

This, like the first example, carries with it a tone of sophistication, especially the “på min ära”, which in Swedish is something you will rarely, if ever, encounter in a typical conversation. The nasality of Atkinson has also been carried over into the character, as it is a strong paralinguistic feature of the character in regards to his enlarged beak (symbolically representing a large nose).
5.2.7 The Hyenas – The Henchmen

*ST Voice Actors: Whoopi Goldberg, Cheech Marin and Jim Cummings*

*TT Voice Actors: Diana Nunez and Anders Öjebo (and Jim Cummings)*

Like Zazu, the hyenas are hard to place in a single category, but echo his function to Mufasa (Scar in their case) as well as his role as comic relief. The hyenas are brutish, stocky and of low intellect; characteristics that work to enforce their grunt-like nature and henchman-positions. The speech pattern and vocabulary of the hyenas are informal and crude reflecting their personalities and they have very little in the way of character development in the film; existing primarily in order to enforce the sinister nature of Scar. An interesting point of note is the strongly male nature of all three of the hyenas, including Shenzi (Goldberg and Nunez), as shown in their basal, violent behavior and grunt-like speech patterns. Only two Swedish voice-actors perform as the hyenas - as one of them has no lines – and they fit their roles quite well. Idiosyncratically, prosodically and paralinguistically they vary, but remain within the frames of being felicitous. Their lines, however, coupled with toned down, non-defined dialectal features distance them from the street jargon used in the ST to a tamer language.

5.2.8 Sarabi – The Goddess

*Madge Sinclair and Liza Öhman*

Although Sarabi plays a minor role in the film, she is the Goddess to Simba. According to Indick (2004:121) the Goddess archetype is the “collective, universal mother who is comforting, nurturing, gentle and kind.” Sarabi does fill this function to a small degree, but in an interesting twist she also symbolizes the “Damsel in Distress”, acting as a representative of the Pride lands. As she is struck down by Scar, Simba chooses to reveal himself, saving her and establishing himself as a protective male, symbolized by his mother confusing him with Mufasa.

Sarabi is matriarchal in her way of speech and her physical appearance, showing the characteristics of a mature and respectable woman. This vocal quality comes through in both versions of the film. She is calm and collected, much like Mufasa, and just like Mufasa she is an opposite of sort, this being to Nala, as the younger lioness is the archetypical maiden.
character; soft-spoken, but headstrong and arguably more emotional while Sarabi is the more patient and restrained elderly woman. The role of mother, Goddess, is handed over to Nala in the end as she conceives a child with Simba, although this is not shown to the extent of Simba’s own transcendence to king.

5.2.9 Rafiki – The Wise Old Man

*Rafiki* the mandrill serves as an interesting medium between mentor, guide and comic relief, being the monkey that he is. He “channels” Mufasa as he helps guiding the young lion onto the right path, acting as an aide to the Circle of Life which helps pushing things along. Although he has few lines in the film, Rafiki’s voice in both the ST and the TT enforces the image of an old, wise man. Being the shaman of sort to the animals, there is originally an air of mysticism around him, which is shown mostly through visual cues as he only really speaks during the latter half of the film. He is prone to outbursts of laughter and barely intelligible speech, both of which are culturally loaded characteristics that transfer well across lingual borders, and his creaky voice has been faithfully reproduced in the TT, although in the transition he has lost his accent. Which, despite his voice-actor (Robert Guillaume, an African-American actor from St. Louis, Missouri), seems Caribbean in origin.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

The dubbing of *The Lion King* is fairly consistent in its adherence to synchronies; most particularly with the idiosyncratic vocal types, but both paralinguistic and prosodic factors have been observed and considered. Cultural variations are fairly small as it is a film produced following classical American cultural norms which Swedes either share or are familiar enough with to understand the conveyed message without any major alterations having to be made. Although some of the actors speak with a very pronounced accent in the ST, this has been toned down in the TT. Of notice however are the three characters Timon, Pumbaa and Zazu, all three of whom have particular ways of talking that have been translated
into the TT with similarly distinguishing vocal characteristics.

After comparing the ST and the TT of the primary material, it can be concluded that Disney’s *The Lion King* has, overall, been transferred from the Source Language (SL) to the TL almost seamlessly. Much attention has been paid to the overall level of synchrony between the SL cast and the TL voice-actors and although some discrepancies become obvious when comparing the two, the end result is quite felicitous to the ST. Being only a single story and taking place in a setting that relies on basic cultural archetypes, it could perhaps be argued that the translation work of *The Lion King* relied more on finding TC representatives to the roles befitting the character concepts rather than to find a voice that resembled the SL voice-actor. These characteristics, however, are not necessarily features that only certain voice-actors can portray, and it is more likely that vocally similar actors were first drafted and then instructed in what way they should speak.

It is also clear that with the added liberty of the film being an animated story, it was a simpler task of transferring to a different language, as there are no cultural inhibitors that make the transfer seem unrealistic; as the setting is in Africa and the characters are anthropomorphized animals, the audience would be more tolerant towards this language change than if it had been in England with living actors being dubbed.

Although not every character adhered to the synchronies of Whitman-Linsen to the letter, it was the whole impression of audio and visual cues that aided the TT towards appearing natural rather than a clear translation. Some things could have been done differently, in particular the dialects of Timon and Pumbaa. The decision to make them appear more like country bumpkins rather than the streetwise survivors they were depicted as in the ST greatly alters the perceived qualities of these characters. Whether this decision was made to reinforce the issue of relaxation (away from the stress of the big cities) that Simba is offered cannot be discerned from the observations made, but it is a viable explanation.

Finally, due to constraints of space, only a single source was studied, which has resulted in a brief glimpse on dubbing. For future research, it would be prudent to include at least two comparable sources of primary material for comparison and more in-depth analysis.
References

Primary Material


Secondary Material

Bibliography


**Filmography**


