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An examination of the linguistic varieties and translation strategies found within the film *Chappie*

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1. Introduction

In this study an examination of the film *Chappie* (Blomkamp, 2015) will be undertaken, as it contains multivariational elements, primarily comprising of *South African English*, *Australian English, American English,* and *British English*. The former, South African English, with its vernacular potency, both proves and remains to be a primal focal point for this research paper as it provides interesting and fascinating research material, as its dynamic qualities evolve through the perspective of one of the film's protagonists. Viewing these particular notions intertwine with pre-existing other varieties of English, creates a hub of exciting potential for translation studies and also furthers the ambition of this paper. South African English, moreover, is not as commonly known to the average foreigner outside its vicinity. It does, as every other language variety, contain linguistic qualities that may or may not prove familiar, depending on the recipient and the context of which it finds itself in. If this is the case, does the translator have to pursue an approach with having to portray a more precise and extensive translation in order for the audience to grasp its entire meaning?

Considering this, it is deemed necessary to introduce a new term that aligns to the scope of this assignment. The notion of a work of fiction that is *multivariational* encompasses the idea of multiple varieties of a given language embedded inherently in said production, that, to a varying degree, produce interesting outcomes. The combination of several intralingual varieties in a work of fiction in the field of translation in general, but also within the film *Chappie*, will stand as the prime point of examination in this analysis.

This paper will primarily focus on examining concrete examples from *Chappie* that display the extent of variation posed between the various fictional characters and their corresponding language-variations, and the method of translation that entails. In a similar vein, there will also be undergone a diagnosis of numerous challenges that entails a multivariational environment, and for instance, what methods and arguments a translator has to consider. The fictional character that stands as the prime subject for this paper is *Chappie* himself. Him, or perhaps we should say *it,* being a robot that enters the world through AI[1], is personally deemed the lightning-rod in terms of both language-input and -output, as *it* absorbs not only one, but numerous variants of the English language, some of them mentioned at the top of this introduction. The exposure of language and the ensuing translation strategies remains to be a key aspect of this paper. In summary, this paper will try to answer the

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[1] Artificial Intelligence

following research question: What, if any, strategies are used to represent the different languages and English varieties used in selected scenes in the film *Chappie?*

2. Theoretical background

Before we move further on and delve deeper into the matter at hand, it is deemed necessary to provide the reader with a description of how this paper in particular defines *multilingualism*, and to what extent this is applied in the paper. For this reason, I have simply utilized the definition given by Grutman, found in the article by Corrius & Zabalbeascoa (2011, p. 116):

The minimum requirement for a [means of production] to be defined as multilingual, is the presence of a simple foreign word.

Seeing as the film *Chappie* does not contain a substantial degree of multilingualism, such a definition as seen above could, however, be used in relation of viewing a means of production as *multivariational*. Such a parallel would more easily accommodate and acknowledge linguistic variety, and subsequently make distinctions less unambiguous.

In order to contextualize the research question, it is also necessary to provide the reader with how the matter is seen according to personal interpretation. The concept of translation, and the field of translation in general, are to a varying degree permeated by cultural references and aspects. With this in mind, the field that comprise numerous varieties of a distinct language and translation strategies are particularly of interest. For a translator, in a position where two or more varieties of a language are in use, being able to grasp the inherent qualities and technicalities of language and culture are considered to be of utmost importance, seeing as this is relevant to be able to comprehend and convey its innate aspects appropriately. Within the realm of film-industry, there has, according to Corrius & Zabalbeascoa, been an "increasing trend to make the audience cope with more than one language" (2011, p. 114). Seeing that the film *Chappie* does not necessarily contain extensive use of different languages, the applied use of different *varieties* of English, however, is what makes this research-material fascinating.

With the presence of more than one language variety, that are in essence equally distributed and applied, complications around determining the principal variety may arise as to which one should receive status as having the primary function (Corrius & Zabalbeascoa, 2011, p. 121). This may appear as a mere trifle for some, but the underlying elements, such as

for instance *power relations*, could potentially on its own produce a valid argument to why this matter is of importance.

Another crucial aspect is the view of the linguistic community as a market. This point of view has been brought to my attention by Rosa (2012). The cultural aspects, and more specifically the vernacular potency and referential potential, are unique to each culture. These *commodities*, as Rosa (2012, p. 76) puts it, "have their own value." There are, essentially, numerous factors to be accounted for when one is to decode the element of the cultural footprint within the sphere of linguistic applicability and translation. Having chosen a research question that entails the discovery of some of the challenges that ensues linguistic variety, I personally deem it necessary to pursue the strategies utilized in order to both capture and grasp the inherent cultural undertones that can be found due to the translator having included, or perhaps excluded, these matters in their translation.

In combination with the abovementioned, Rosa argues that the notion of translation patterns, and more specifically, that "[…] there are contextual norms constraining or motivating translation decisions […]" (2012, p. 85) present in the linguistic environment. Further points are made towards how the translation itself is "a fact of the target culture's space" (2012, p. 85), that the comparison of two languages should go beyond a simple comparison between the two languages (2012, p. 85), and instead include a more in-depth portrayal of the intricacies that can be found in the respective languages and/or their varieties. This shows how the instance of language varieties, where important details from the source language environment, should to a varying degree be represented in the target language. Being able to encapsulate these differences and convey them in appropriate manners will prove beneficiary by that it includes parts and bits from the source that is being reflected in the target language.

From similar origin, other dimensions of linguistic translation varieties are deemed necessary to include. More specifically, Pinto argues that there are three dimensions to account for; (1) textual, (2) diegetic, and (3) sociocultural (2018, p. 17). This is primarily included to provide the reader with certain additional elements that should be considered in relation to the act of translation when non-standard varieties of a given language are present. Pinto further states that there are predominant features that should be accounted for (2018, p. 17). The former being that an analysis of a multimodal production tends to focus on the verbal mode applied. Secondly, "they do not account for different multimodal contexts within the

same film or the different functions the linguistic varieties assume throughout the film"
(Pinto, 2018, p. 17). This is merely included to portray a fundamental understanding of the
obstacles presented when considering the notion of non-standard varieties of language and
their corresponding context of which they derive.

Lastly, it is considered a matter of prominence to include Toury's descriptive
translation studies as the framework to how this paper unfolds. This includes to treat
translations as "facts of [the] target culture" (Toury, 2012, p. 17). With such an approach,
Toury further reiterates that "whatever their function", these facts would ultimately be
"constituted within the target culture and reflects its own systemic constellation" (2012, p.
17). One should be conscious, however, of how the identification of both language and culture
may entail difficulties in that such identifications can regularly result in ambiguity (Toury,
2012, p. 24). This would inevitably produce an obstacle that has to be taken into consideration
when undertaking a process of translation. Identifying these cultural facts, then, becomes
transparent in that they denote what presumably indicates cultural facts, but on the other hand,
may have a certain ambiguity attached to them, nonetheless.

3. Method

For this paper there will be undergone an examination of selected scenes from the film
Chappie that entails various elements that aligns to the research question: What, if any,
strategies are used to represent the different languages and English varieties used in selected
scenes in the film *Chappie?* In order to answer this, these selected scenes will be brought
forward and examined. Subsequently, these will be aligned towards previous research, whilst
also placing them within the framework provided by Toury. In addition to the former, various
other literature will be accompanied in order to portray the matter with a wider perspective.
Moreover, identifying the strategies used by the translator, as mentioned introductorily,
becomes the primal focal point of this paper.

4. Data / Analysis

Having gone through the film, step by step, I found numerous scenes worthy of further
examination. For the sake of this paper, and my own approach to the research question, I have

decided to not undertake a great number of examples, but rather go more in-depth with the examples I have chosen. Isolating these scenes from the film and examining these in a careful manner, I have found results that portray elements that confines to the parameters of the research question; What, if any, strategies are used to represent the different languages and English varieties used in selected scenes in the film *Chappie?*

The plot of the film *Chappie* takes place in South Africa. Naturally, there will be a great influence from the local languages. In combination with having South African English as the primary local variety, we also have other varieties, as mentioned previously, such as American English, Australian English, and British English. Most prominently, there will be examples provided from South African English that contains inherent vernacular qualities that may or may not result in a favourable position for the translator and the recipients of the following translation. Encapsulating the diversity that can be found may result in difficulties for the translator, as a number of additional variables has to be considered. Some of these variables will be further examined below.

One example from the film that provides inherent qualities of displaying the translator's intent is that from a scene at minute 43, where Deon shouts towards Ninja due to a dispute that occurred between them:

Table 1

Deon (SPOKEN)	He is already smarter than you'll ever be, you Philistine!
Deon (SUBTITLED)	Han er smartere enn du noen gang blir!

We can see from the example provided in *table 1*, that the translator has decided to undergo a procedure of deletion. The word "Philistine" has been omitted, as there seemingly is no counterpart that can be found in the target language that is equivalent to its applied usage in the source language. Such an approach becomes an instance of domestication and fulfils the notion of procuring the viewer with a sense of reduced quaintness. With the perspective of having undergone a process of deletion, there seems to be an underlying strategy of neutralisation at hand (Pinto, 2018, p. 22). At this point it will be important to portray such a strategy, as the translator has seemingly used the standard variety of *bokmål* in the target language, which, according to Pinto, involves an elimination of variation, and could moreover, entail considerable loss in terms of both the quality and quantity of variation amidst the source language (2018, p. 22). In addition, the instance of power relations, introduced by

Rosa earlier in this paper becomes a valid argument, but shall not henceforth be considered more in depth, as it will derail the train of thought currently undertaken.

Another prominent example would be the following sequence from the film, where Ninja, the head of the smaller criminal group, interferes when *Chappie* is learning how to paint. The translation procedure applied in this sequence can be steadfastly attached to that of Vinay and Darbelnet's category of *borrowing*. As is depicted through the word *poes*, one can see that it has been directly transferred from the source language to the target language. Munday argues that this "may be employed to add local colour" (2016, p. 89). Seeing as this is the sole word that has been *borrowed* in this sequence, this is presumably an intentional effect the translator had in mind. Moreover, the notion of *borrowing* can sometimes be used in order to "fill a semantic gap in the TL" (Munday, 2016, p. 89). Evidently, the semantic expression of the word does not have a suitable counterpart in the target language, as the word is permeated by South African vernacular tendencies, and therefore difficulties arise in producing a target language equivalent, hence *borrowing* becomes appropriate. The quarrel escalates and the initiation of a fight proceeds where the following words are exchanged between Ninja and Yolandi (Ninja's partner) as shown in table 2:

Table 2

Ninja (SPOKEN)	What are you doing?
Ninja (SUBTITLED)	Hva er det du gjør?
Yolandi (SPOKEN)	He was just teaching him how to paint! He was just teaching Chappie!
Yolandi (SUBTITLED)	Han lærte ham bare å male! Chappie lærte!
Ninja (SPOKEN)	Yeah, to be a *poes*!
Ninja (SUBTITLED)	Å bli en *poes!*

From this sequence we can see the word *poes* appears in the source language as well as the target language. Well, what does it mean? From my own findings on the matter, the word *poes* is constructed as a means of South African slang that can be directly associated with the more vulgar words such as *pussy* or *cunt*. The formulation in and of itself is meant to be understood from the view of Ninja, that Chappie is not supposed to be doing the activities he is doing, but rather funnel his attention towards more *worthy* activities. How come the translator chose to not translate this particular word? As mentioned previously, the lack of a

target language equivalent has seemingly made the translator undertake a procedure consisting of borrowing, which procures a sense of colour to the overall translation. It does not, however, depict a word of meaning in the target language – more so, it both succeeds and fails to acknowledge its vernacular potency to the extent of which it becomes unapplicable, unless the recipient possesses a wider range of vernacular familiarity from South Africa. One does, on the other hand, understand that the word is not familiar, and is therefore, most likely, of South African origin. But what could have been done differently? The word has simply been depicted with italics in the target language, to somewhat signal to the audience that this word is foreign. Such a solution is by no means wrongfully executed, as the use of italics can be easily applied when the use of secondary languages, or perhaps, when a state of vernacularity is of influence in the target language (Bartoll, 2006, p. 3).

A third smaller example can be found at minute 80, where Vincent, the antagonist, answers his superior, Michelle. This can be witnessed in *table 3* below:

Table 3

Vincent (SPOKEN)	I just think the city is tearing itself apart. Everything is going tits up!
Vincent (SUBTITLED)	Byen er i kaos. Alt går på ræva!

From *table 3* it becomes evident that the translator has chosen to use a strategy that encompasses domestication. With the sequence "everything is going tits up!" being translated into "alt går på ræva" results in an approach of domestication that depicts a string of words that are familiar to the audience in the target language. There is a clear distinction between the expression found in the source language, and the expression found in the target language, but still somewhat produces an effective link between what is being conveyed. Under such a circumstance, it could be considered that it entails mild loss, as it does not convey the intricacies, but it still preserves the inherent qualities of what is being expressed. Moreover, there is also undertaken a strategy of neutralisation in the sense of eliminating variation by accommodating the use of a standard variety in the target language (Pinto, 2018, p. 22). The strategies applied seem to be changing in correlation to the specific varieties of English included in a given sequence. This is a rather interesting find, as this procures the translator leeway in producing effects that denote the presence of non-standard varieties in the target language.

5. Discussion

In consideration of the various results we found throughout this paper, one could argue that the film *Chappie* comprise of a wide range of material. From *table 1* we can see that there is an instance of domestication through the procedure of deletion. The word *philistine* is rarely used in the target language in a translated form, and therefore, an assumption can be made that the translator has determined this as unimportant and further omitted it from the translation. However, seeing as the word omitted can be removed without causing a considerable loss, a justification can be brought forward due to the translation conveying its proper meaning effectively. In a similar vein, seeing as the word *philistine* comes from Deon, a seemingly highly educated programmer with a proper accent that unfolds within the sphere of *received pronunciation*, a conclusion could be drawn in that the translator has made a decision that entails a form of standardization in the target language in terms of some of the varieties of English used in the film.

Looking at *table 2* this becomes ever-so important, as the word *poes*, stemming from the South African variety, is included in the translation despite not having an inherent quality of meaning in the target language. This does, moreover, produce elements of foreignization from some of the varieties we have witnessed in the film, and instances of domestication in other parts. Despite this, there is seemingly an uneven balance between the considerations and decisions undertaken in the translation that has occurred. Such an approach is further reiterated by that some words from selected varieties of English remains in a state of omission, whereas other words that stem from other varieties are included. If the word *poes* were to be translated, the outcome, however, would presumably produce an alternative effect in that it does not include a sense of South African potency to the extent of which it did whilst remaining included.

Table 3 contains material that is slightly different. Here, another case of domestication is present by using a strategy that involves translating the source language expression into a more familiar expression in the target language. Such expressions are unique from wherever it derives, and therefore an equivalent has to be procured in the target language translation. There are, of course, other similar expressions that could replace the one found in the target language in *table 3*, but it does portray an accurate depiction of the source language's intent, and furthermore reiterates its validity. In light of this, it then becomes clear that the translator has applied numerous strategies in order to depict a justified approach towards the non-

standard varieties found in the film *Chappie*, rather than sticking primarily to a single strategy.

6. Summary and conclusion

Where does all of this lead us? The presence of different strategies, accompanied by a multitude of other elements to account for in circumstances with more than one variety of a given language, seemingly provides the translator an array of opportunities. Moreover, we have seen that, in the film *Chappie*, the translator has chosen to combine various procedures to produce a satisfactory translation, which includes amongst other things, *borrowing*, as well as both strategies of both domestication and foreignization. More specifically, we have seen that the framework provided by Toury's descriptive translation strategies was necessary for providing this brief analysis of its fundamental pursuit and ambition. In light of the scope of the assignment, one could argue that its contents have barely been touched upon, but nonetheless, has provided insight into some of the strategies and procedures undertaken in the process of translation that can be found in *Chappie*. South African vernacular potency has presumably been influential in some of the decisions made, which we have seen throughout this paper. Having a means of production, especially multimodal contexts such as film, illuminates the complexity of translation when more than one variety of a given language is present. With such a presence, then, it becomes ever-so important to emphasise and convey elemental features from the source language over to the target language.

We have also seen that the notion of power relations, amongst other variables, is impactful in how the process of translation unfolds. This, however, is not too applicable in relation to this paper, but should be accounted for, nonetheless, as traces of it can to some extent be found. Bartoll points out that the diversity that can be found amongst productions that have more than one variety of a given language present, may entail difficulties for the translator, as s/he may not always be "aware of the range of possibilities that exist when rendering such diversity" (2006, p. 4-5). He further reiterates how one could possibly include brackets in particular instances, such as the example from table 2 in this paper provides, has included (2006, p. 5). We have seen that the translator has managed to not determine a linguistic variety as having the primary function, but rather withdrawn traits from each linguistic variety, by applying different translation strategies and procedures throughout the film.

In reference to further research, a direction towards audiovisual translation could be an avenue worth pursuing. This paper has undergone an examination of linguistic varieties in a multimodal context, and Matamala & Orero suggest that the "ever-changing world of technology is leading a new direction in which people continuously interact with electronic devices" (2013, p. 2). The apparent complexity that can be found amidst a multimodal context, combined with the diversity of linguistic varieties, then becomes an area of translation that doubtlessly will produce beneficial goods. Delving deeper into the contents of this paper would also prove beneficiary, as the contents has barely been scratched upon. Moreover, assumptions can be made in that there is a magnitude of research material to be discovered in the field of linguistic variety. In consideration of the capacity of this assignment, a further increase in both length and resources would presumably entail favourable merit to the field of translation studies as a whole.

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