Chapter I

Introduction
1. Introduction

1.1. Translation

Translation means transferring the information available in one language into another language. Catford, J.C. defines translation as “the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL).” (1969: 20).

Generally, in the field of translation, the language from which the information / idea / message / signal is transferred is called as the “Source Language” (SL) and into which language that information has to be transferred is called as “Target Language” (TL). The information / idea / theme / text / signal found in the SL, which has to be transferred is called as the “Message”. The persons who are engaged in translation are known as “Translators”. The vehicle that transports the message is known as the “Medium”.
1.2. Media

Expression of one’s thought and feelings to others is the important aspect in the societal set-up of mankind. Human race uses various media. Channels of mass media perform the following functions: 1) provide information, 2) allow us to select what information we get and then to evaluate and interpret it, 3) transmit social heritage from generation to generation, and 4) entertain the people. Lazaro L. and Merton also suggested that media can narcotize, ethicize and confer status on the mass (1951).

*Narcotizing* is making people nonsensitive of some information.

*Ethicizing* is creating awareness and a demand among the mass.

Mass media can confer status on some people by exposing them and their achievement in a society.

1.3. Film

*Film* is a flexible and semi-transparent celluloid base for printing photographed images in 35-mm width and was invented by Henry M. Reichenbach in 1889 (*The Oxford History of World Cinema* : 7). Cinema is a sequence of continuous visual images, photographed through camera on the film strips, running at appropriate speed in a machine that makes those images on larger screens. Cinema is a “story or incident et cetera recorded on film in moving picture” [OED].
early period, films were made as magic lantern shows, using lantern slides. During those period, due to silent mode of the cinema, producers worked hard to give expression to information/messages.

In the late 1910s, in silent cinema when dialogue or other expositions which were felt as essential to the sense flow of the story, were projected on the screen in written form, of course creating interruptions on the scenes. Though cinema is a new art form when compared with other traditional art forms like music, dance and drama, the themes/subjects of those art forms also have been adopted and used during the production of cinema. Each cinema, apart from its quality or theme, is a careful combination of many shots, shot mostly at different time slots, with different viewpoints.

1.4. Aim

The researcher observed English subtitles given for Tamil and other language films in Doordarshan's telecast of regional movies since 1988. The transfer of content through English subtitles for dialogues and songs in Tamil films varied from film to film. As the researcher also got opportunities to view several other Tamil movies carrying English subtitles alone or along with other language subtitles given by different agencies with different levels of translation equivalents, he eagerly
awaited to have a chance for studying the same. So, when the researcher got an opportunity to pursue his Ph.D. studies, he took up this field with the objectives of studying: 1) the existing system of English subtitling for Tamil films by NFDC in Doordarshan, 2) the translation strategies that are incorporated with English subtitling process with reference to Tamil films, 3) the factors that affect the course of subtitling, and 4) suggestions to improve the quality of subtitling in general and English for Tamil films in particular.

**Earlier Studies:** Although several works have been carried out in the fields of literary and scientific translation, no single attempt has been made to study the issue of English subtitling in Tamil films. The only exception for the above statement is the solitary work of Santosh Kumar (1991). But Santosh Kumar’s study was very much restricted in its scope. Hence in all respects this study may be considered as a pioneering and extensive one.

**1.5. Data**

Subtitling in different languages for Tamil feature films has been taken by various agencies in different parts of the world. As the researcher has proposed to do his research in the English subtitle for Tamil Feature Films, he tried to establish contact with them by writing
to them. The researcher, however, could get the responses only from the National Film Development Corporation Limited, Mumbai, the organisation which undertakes the subtitling process for Indian films and documentaries. So, the researcher approached the authoritative concerned personally at the National Film Development Corporation Limited, Mumbai. After due verification about the goal of the present study and after confirming national security, National Film Development Corporation Limited permitted him to study their subtitle unit first. Staff in that unit explained and made a demo on subtitling process by Man and Machine. Then, the researcher selected five Tamil Feature Films with subtitles at NFDC, Mumbai. The selection of five feature films was made on the basis of the difference in their thematic level. The films (1) Roja, (2) Thevar Makan, (3) Anjali, (4) Achchamillai Achchamillai and (5) Paci were selected as the data for this research.

The film Roja is named after its heroine's name, which also has the sentimental reference to the beautiful, coloured, soft, good smelling and loving flower. In this film, the theme exposed is the existing and needed patriotism in the Secular India with the existing misguided terrorism in its northern parts.

The second in data Thevar Makan, the Tamil film has the meaning "Thevar's Son" in which the word "Thevar" refers to a caste in
Tamilnadu. This naming itself shows the dominance of caste system in India and especially the dominance of caste groups in Tamilnadu. It is felt that the domination of castes is an existing hurdle for the balanced growth of rural societies and this is the theme of this film.

In the Tamil film *Anjali*, its title is the name of the central character, a mentally retarded female baby. The maker of this film conveys the idea that everyone should “love” the physically handicapped and mentally retarded abnormal children and persons, as they are not the sinners to suffer in this world. And in this film the modern, younger generation’s advanced thoughts and actions which are never found in the previous generations, are duly portrayed.

So, the plea to treat human abnormal evenly and the concept of generation gap could be measured with the psychological scale “love” are the two aspects conceived as the theme of *Anjali* film, according to this researcher.

The next Tamil film in the data is *Achchamillai Achchamillai* with the meaning “No fear, No fear”. The title reflects the coverage and boldness of the rural Tamil heroine of that film. Exposing the real political situation in India by tearing off the masks of politicians, who
make use of caste as a tool for their divide and conquer policy in the rural and urban areas of India, the world’s largest democratic and republican country, is the main theme of this film.

*Paci* "hunger" the Tamil film found in our data, is different from other films and it may be treated as an “art film” or “realistic” film. The terrible conditions of life of the poor, poverty coupled with threat to virginity in the cities of India, the exposure of a ghetto life situation of economically poor people in Madras city etc., can be taken as the theme of the film *Paci*.

In all these five films, the themes conveyed are different from one another to a greater degree. In these films, several peculiarities of the present day Tamil society have been exposed in a remarkable way. The foreign people as well as native Tamilians settled in foreign countries, who wish to have an overview about the present state of Tamilians in Tamilnadu, can have some of the required and important details by viewing these subtitled films, and they can get more or less a correct mental picture of the life of Tamils.

In view of the reasons mentioned above, those five Tamil feature films are taken as the data for the present research on subtitling of films. And, the researcher got the xeroxed copies of subtitles with foot
counter marks for the data and also got permission to do research with that data from National Film Development Corporation Limited, Mumbai. The researcher also bought the only available subtitled video cassette of the Tamil film Marupakkam produced by NFDC & Doordarshan, for making a comparative study when needed. Since the subtitled video cassettes for the data were out of stock at NFDC Limited, Mumbai, they were collected from several video cassette stores and from other sources also. The audio tracks for each film in the data have been recorded in the audio tapes by playing the video cassettes on the VCR. These recorded audio tracks have been transcribed parallely along with their subtitles from the data. Thus, the data for this study have been collected by the researcher.

1.6. Methodology

Comparative method of analysing the SL audio track of the data films with their TL subtitles from structural and semantic point of view using linguistic parameters has been followed by the researcher. This method has been used to make qualitative and, at possible junctures, quantitative method of analysing them from structural and semantic aspects, for the purpose of bringing out the translation techniques employed in the subtitling process.
1.7. Analysis

The audio tracks collected in SL were correlated with the TL subtitle in data. Then, they were grouped under the headings of dialogues, songs and extralinguistic features, and analysed by using appropriate linguistic parameters and translation strategies.

1.8. Chapter Organization

The research report has been organized into nine chapters. In the first chapter entitled Introduction, the translation, media and film have been discussed.

In the second chapter Translation, Media and Film, the classification of translation, media and film have been discussed in detail with the parameters pertaining to them.

The third chapter titled Subtitling discusses the subtitling process at different developmental stages of films. In this chapter, the course of data collection, along with the preparations for analysis have also been discussed in detail.

In fourth chapter Dialogue and Subtitling, the techniques employed were pointed out by comparing the SL dialogues in the data films with their equivalent subtitles, using different translation and linguistic parameters.
In the fifth chapter entitled **Subtitle in Lyrics**, the songs presented in the SL have been discussed and categorized with TL subtitles, together with detailed discussions about their use in general, and films in particular, by using different linguistic parameters. And, a comparative bar diagram of SL songs and their TL subtitle for data have also been presented with a discussion.

In the sixth chapter **Extralinguistic factors in subtitle**, the nonverbal cues that are used to convey meaning along with the dialogues and the culturally important extralinguistic factors presented in SL texts are comparatively discussed with TL subtitles.

In the seventh chapter **Affecting factors of subtitling**, the different factors that are identified as controlling factors at different ranks / hierarchies in the course of subtitling, are discussed with due citations from the data.

In the eighth chapter **Strategies of subtitling**, the techniques that are employed in the process of subtitling have been presented with various supportive arguments.

The results and findings of this research, the strategies that could be used for improving the quality of subtitling in English for Tamil
feature films have been discussed in the chapter on Conclusion. This chapter includes the viewpoints on future perspectives for the researches that can be made in Linguistics in the area of film subtitling.

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