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Subtitling and loss of meaning: politeness features in Pieces d'identite/ID

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Subtitling And Loss Of Meaning: Politeness Features In Pièces D'identité/ID

By

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in the field of Translation.

Johannesburg 2007

Abstract

This research investigates the extent to which constraints of time space and synchrony in the subtitling of cultural features lead to loss in meaning, in particular loss of politeness features, and the effect of such loss on the message deciphered by the subtitle viewer, in the film Pièces d'identité/ID (1998), by Mweze Ngangura. It also explores why, given such loss, audiences of subtitled films still continue to watch, enjoy and understand subtitled films as viewers of the original sound language do. It starts by looking at constraints in subtitling which compel subtitler to deliberately sacrifice meaning in text, then the relationship between language, culture and translation with focus on the translation of politeness features, and evokes the difficulties involved in the translation of cultural elements. The theory applied in this research is that on language, culture and translation and its application also takes account of the constraints of time, space and synchrony under which the subtitler's task is set.

Keywords: Subtitling, contextualisation

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Translation in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Atanga Anyele Allen

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Date: **Monday May 19, 2008**

Dedication

To

God Almighty, my Lord and Saviour

"It is fitting, O our Lord and God that we should ascribe unto Thee the glory and the honour and the power; For Thou didst create all things, and because it was Thy will they came into existence, and were created."

Revelation 4:11

"Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?

Exodus 15:11

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To all of you:

> ***May the God of your father help you; May the Almighty bless you with the blessings of the heavens above, and blessings of the watery depths below, and blessings of the breasts and womb***.
>
> **Genesis 49:25**

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List of Abbreviations

AV : Audiovisual
Fespaco : African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou
FTA : Face Threatening Act
FTAs : Face Threatening Acts
FN : First name
LC : Language culture
LC1 : Language culture (Source text)
LC2 : Language culture (Target text)
LCs : Language cultures
LN : Last name
MM : Multimedia
NN : Nickname
T : Title
TFN : Title and first name
TLN : Titles and last name
Ø : No Naming or titling or segment has been omitted

List of Figures

Figure 1: Film Poster.
Figure 2**:** Table of symbols used during the transcription process.