valdeon2015ab

Translation students (Spanish translation, English learners) were tasked with translating *The I. T. Crowd*, a British sitcom, to Spanish. Hypotheses: (1) students would sanitize; (2) professional dub would maintain taboo items. Students did sanitize, professionals vulgarized.

Distinction between taboo and slang:

“Most slang is colorful, irreverent, or facetious, but it is not to be confused with taboo words. Although slang is often meant to shock the staid or discomfort the pretentious, it is not intended essentially to violate the properties of common decency, although it may (…) Many taboo words are not slang, and most slang expressions do not deal with sexually or scatalogically offensive concepts” (Landau 2001: 38)

Spain more tolerant of swearwords:

“It has been argued that Spanish in general and conversational Spanish in particular is more tolerant of the use of taboo words in most social contexts” (Scheu-Lottgen and Hernández 1998: 391)

Criteria for offensiveness:

“there are no criteria to establish what can be offensive, when and where, or who might find a certain word or expression offensive” (Landau 2001: 233)

Vulgarization in translations:

“some English translators of French erotic narrative… actually use ‘coarser’ words” (Jacob 2006: 105).

“the Italian dubbed version of *E. R.* replaced the more netural language by ‘elementi di forte colloquilità’” (Pavesi 2005: 46).

“the Spanish version of the American sitcom *Will & Grace* replaced a number of neutral to moderate expressions by swearwords” (Valdeón 2008: 210).

Use null symbol ∅ to indicate an addition in the translation eg:

I don’t know how ∅ it got on my hands…

No sé cómo coño llegó a mis dedos… (374)

Students sanitized; professionals vulgarized:

“Although the learners had been encouraged to be as inventive and spontaneous as possible in order to sound natural in Spanish, they created Spanish texts that reproduced the informal tone of the original, but tended to avoid taboo words. This clearly runs counter to the choices made by professional translators, who favored a higher frequency of swearwords in both the dubbed and subtitled versions” (375).

Professionals exponentially increased swearwords:

“If we consider the whole series, the increase went from 18 in the English programs to 46 in the Spanish dubbed versions” (380).

UK vs Spain swearword taboos:

Examples of the strength taboo words can have are constantly present in most American programs where taboo language is systematically beeped out or written f\*ck. Recently, in Britain, a BBC news item published on 5th March, 2012 highlighted the factor that an expletive had not been beeped out from the popular ITV1 show, X-Factor. The consequences were headlines in most newspapers and a formal apology which “was broadcasted approximately 44 minutes after the offensive language occurred”. The f\*\*\* word was not only criticized but the teenage wannabe responsible “was later axed from the show because of his behaviour” (whatsonTV.co.uk). It is difficult to imagine this turmoil in an Iberian society. (Fernández-Gavela 2015: 135-136)

Spain more tolerant of swearwords:

“In fact, European Spanish is certainly more tolerant of taboo words than British and American English in most contexts, including media. For example, the rather strict television regulations that characterize the US and the UK mark a sharp contrast with the Spanish situation, where some conventions are supposed to be observed but, in reality, swearwords are used all the time at any time of the day or night” (381).