



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Localization And Cultural Resistance – A Study On Jurassic Park

M.GopalaKrishnan, Dr. S.MuthuKumaravel

Research Scholar, Associate Professor & Head

Department of English

Nallamuthu Gounder Mahalingam College,
Pollachi, Tamil Nadu

Abstract: Cinema as a tool of expression consciously engages itself with its audience from diverse backgrounds. Every individual brings their own interpretation of the film while these interpretations can be generally clustered together basing it on their cultural and ethical landscapes. One of the important factors that determine the meaning of a narrative is the cultural context of the story and so the focus is more on the cultural codes while the film is translated into a different language other than its original. The purpose of the study is to draw attention to the role of cultural codes in determining the localised narrative. The paper contrasts the original narrative with the adapted version to bring out the differences among them. These differences aid in understanding the objectives of localizing a product in the globalised world. The film taken for study is Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*, an adaptation of the eponymous work by Michael Crichton. The study considers the Tamil version of the film against the original English version locating the points of divergence in the context of culture.

Keywords: Jurassic Park, Cultural codes, Language, Localization, Resistance

I. INTRODUCTION

Accident of geography plays a vital role in determining the language, culture, and traditions of an individual. Two people born on the same day in different parts of the world are conditioned by different factors leading to the creation of varied thought processes and belief systems. Language, in particular, is an indispensable agent in shaping the world view of an individual. The impact of language on an individual's conception of the world is highlighted further by Linguistic relativity also known as Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. According to this notion, thoughts and experiences of an individual is shaped by the language used and the structures employed. Thus, the analysis of language will pave path to understand the overarching cultural background of any individual. For Rita Mae Brown "Language is the roadmap of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going." This paper analyses the differences in the language used by the characters in Jurassic Park under varied cultural milieu.

Globalization & Indian Cinema

Marshall McLuhan popularized the term Global Village indicating the shrinking nature of the world into a village with the extension of media. The sense of interconnectedness among people around the globe with the advent of technologies has enormously influenced the way people understand themselves and others. The interactions between people from diverse backgrounds paved path for the emergence of varied lifestyles. For Nije, "Globalisation has eased the way in which we trade our opinions and the way we exercise throughout borders, which has led to additional cultural interaction as well as crossbreeding" (Nije 2024). Cinema as a tool of expression began gaining traction to trade opinions across cultures and borders. People began to consciously look out for the portrayal of ethnicity, traditions and rituals in films. When the world began expanding, people began protecting their way of living with different modus operandi. As a product of mass

consumption, film portrayals were scrutinized. Silviya posits that Globalization has forever changed the way we experience and engage with films, opening up new possibilities for collaboration, creativity, and cultural exchange.

The impact of Globalization extended itself to influence Indian cinema which had its own trajectory from the roots of its culture. Introduction of foreign soiled films opened up different projections of life along with new technologies. The Indian film industry rose to new standards with the addition of foreign films to their library. The extensive market provided by the Indian society encouraged more filmmakers and producers to release the translated version of their films to cater for the regional audience. Subtitling, dubbing, and translation techniques were employed to remodel the narratives to suit the culture, values and beliefs of different regions. India, known for its diversity, became a flourishing ground for the soiling of foreign films. From the viewpoint of Zaidi, "The sheer size of the film audience in India demonstrates the country's thriving film culture. In India, films have always reflected the strong public presence of modernity" (Zaidi 2017). Consequently, many Hollywood films surfaced on Indian soil remodeling themselves to suit the audience.

Michael Crichton & Jurassic Park

Michael Crichton, one of the prolific writers of science fiction, wrote *Jurassic Park* in the year 1990. The novel dealt with the creation of genetically remodelled dinosaurs for a zoological park and its unprecedented aftermath. It highlighted the extensive greed of humans to control nature and stamp their authority over other species in the ecology. The plot encompasses elements of science and adventure blended together to engage the readers. The novel received critical acclaim and became the skeleton for the film directed by Steven Spielberg. Crichton, having a degree in medicine, used his firsthand knowledge to write fiction and was successful in creating a platform for his expression. He soon earned a space for himself in the arena of science fiction and produced some of the astounding works including *The Andromeda Strain* (1969), *The Terminal Man* (1972), and *Disclosure* (1994). Steven Spielberg directed *Jurassic Park* while Crichton and David Koepp helped him with the screenplay. *Jurassic Park* had its world premiere in 1993 and became an instant classic. The reception of the film instigated the translated versions of it in different languages. It became the first Hollywood film to be dubbed in Tamil language.

Research Gap

Jurassic Park has been approached from different vantage points with different theories inducing variable outcomes. Researchers have explored the hazards of unregulated genetic experiments, effects of going against nature, Marxist tendencies and also on the capitalistic greed of human beings. Most of the discourses were projected around the scientific essence of the narrative. This study focuses on the semiotic codes embedded in the film and the influence of culture in creating a new context for the narrative when it is translated into a different language. According to Daniel Chandler, Semiotic codes are procedural systems of related conventions for correlating signifiers and signified in certain domains. Codes provide a framework within which signs make sense: they are interpretative devices which are used by interpretative communities. In other words, codes are a system of signs that derives its meaning in relation to its context. When the context is culturally integrated then it is called cultural codes. This study will be instrumental in understanding the function of cultural codes in different contexts. The American cultural codes of marriage, notions on women and the history of flea circus are brought in comparison with that of the localised version of the narrative deemed suitable for the Tamil audience. This also highlights the cultural resistance depicted in the localised version.

Cultural Homogenization and Localization

Cultural homogenization is often viewed as a form of cultural imperialism, where Western (particularly American) culture imposes itself on other cultures (Aimie 2024). The film under study is an American film and the culture that is depicted is a product of American soil. The dominant culture in this context is that of America and the subordinated one belongs to Tamil society. The scope of the paper lies within the comparison of the two varied cultural codes of the same narrative when presented to different audiences belonging to different backgrounds. In the growing discourse of cultural homogenization, the article does not prioritise any of the discussed cultures. This is an attempt to show the deviations of the narrative preferring the engagement of the audience and depicting cultural resistance in the evolving world. Berry in one of his articles talks about the

positive aspect of possessing the knowledge of different cultures. He says “Cultural diversity, fostered by globalization, has a profound positive impact on personal and societal development. By being exposed to diverse cultures, individuals gain valuable insights and perspectives that contribute to personal growth, cognitive flexibility, and critical thinking skills.”

The process of adapting a content to suit its target audience is termed as Localisation. It is a comprehensive process that involves considering the shared belief system and values of the target audience in their cultural context. *Jurassic Park*, in the process of translation to Tamil language, has been localised to cater to the audience belonging to Tamil society. In the following section, the article will bring out the instances of modulations in the narrative, focussing primarily on the linguistic codes used by the characters in the film. To begin with, a dialogue uttered by Dr. Ian Malcolm describing the attire of the dinosaur has undergone a change in the Tamil version. In a conversation with the scientists, Malcolm questions the steps taken by the authorities to control the population of the zoological park. One of the scientists says that all the dinosaurs in the park are female and there is no need to worry about population control. Malcolm is intrigued by the proposition and asks how they can be so sure of it as if the dinosaurs are moving with their skirts on. (*Jurassic Park* 00:29:50-00:30:26) The same dialogue undergoes a change in the Tamil version where Malcolm mentions saree instead of skirt. This indicates the localised variation in the cultural codes depicted in the film. Referring to properties that are closely associated with the culture of the target audience enhances the viewing experience of the audience as well as reinforces it to them.

Marriage and Divorce

Marriage in an Indian society is the culmination of a number of dreams not just for the individuals involved in it but also for the families around it. The multitude of rituals surrounding it makes marriage a sacred entity and a cultural phenomenon. The celebration of marriage is so immense that the fall of it is not readily accepted in the Indian society. Marriage is considered to be the duty of a woman and it is upon her to maintain it under any circumstance. Household maintenance and family ties are the gender roles assigned for women right from the days of civilization. Women are solely responsible to glue the family together with her actions and sacrifices. So much is burdened upon their shoulders in the name of caregiving. At this juncture, Indians rely on women for the proper functioning of a family. Thinking of divorce is casted as taboo, more so, widowed women are looked down upon in the society. Divorce has been stigmatized in Indian society for a long time. Bhowal writing for India Today mentions in her article that India had one of the lowest divorce rates in the world, at just 1%.

In *Jurassic Park*, Hammond's daughter is getting a divorce from her husband and there is a clear mention of it in a conversation between Mr. Donald and one of the mine workers (*Jurassic Park* 00:04:07-00:04:11). In the localised version, the translation does not address the issue at all. When Donald asks the mine worker regarding the absence of Hammond, he just replies that he was asked by Hammond to take good care of him. The addressal of the issue is circumvented conveniently by the makers considering the sentiments of the Tamil audience. This instance highlights the cultural resistance portrayed in the translated version.

Women and Motherhood

Women and Motherhood are the conjoined twins born to Indian civilization and that sums up the framed mindset of Indian society. Exceeding reality would be the celebration of motherhood in films. More than the actual individual, people will thrust more respect on the motherhood aspect of a woman. This cultural phenomenon plays a crucial role in the translation of a specific dialogue in *Jurassic Park*.

“God creates dinosaurs. God destroys dinosaurs.

God creates Man. Man destroys God.

Man creates dinosaurs.

Dinosaurs eat man. **Women inherit the Earth.**” (*Jurassic Park* 00:45:02-00:45:21)

This is the actual dialogue which instantly triggers a feminist angle from the viewers. It starts off by charting the history of mankind proceeding further into the scientific proceedings of the present and ends up being a feminist quote. The dialogue ends up giving ownership of Earth to women. In the translated version, the inheriting power of women gets translated into child rearing capability. After dinosaurs eat men, woman will be instrumental in giving birth again to men. The inheritance of Earth from man is replaced by the idea of creation of man from a woman. The power of ruling gets converted to the power of motherhood as the Indian society hails women for this specific aspect. Women as a symbol of power is replaced by a subordinate position.

This small change in the narrative without affecting the plot is also considered to cater the mindset of the audience. This reflects the vantage point of Tamil society on women.

Flea circus to Shadow theatre

In a conversation with Ellie Sattler, Hammond explains the initial stages of his life in which he owned a flea circus. He expresses his ambitious nature of building something magnificent for the people where they can touch and feel the reality unlike the flea circus. He admits that most of the fleas were motorised in his circus which added to his need to build something that was not an illusion. This expresses the motive of Hammond to build the Jurassic Park while also depicting the history of the land. In the Tamil version, flea circus is replaced by Bommallattam (shadow puppetry), a traditional storytelling art form of India. Flea circus is replaced by an artform that is popular in the Tamil society. Shadow puppetry, popularly known as Thol Paavai koothu gets a mention in the film substituting Flea circus. Thol Paavai koothu shares a rich history and is a culturally rooted artform where myth and folklore were passed onto generations through this medium. "The most important aspect of traditional puppetry is its narrative context, which is deeply rooted in the oral versions of epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, stories from the Puranas and regional folklore." (Anurupa Roy). This can be viewed as an instance where the narrative is used to reinforce the historical past of a culture.

Conclusion

The paper brings out the variations in discourse when a narrative is translated into a different language from the original. The differences are consciously shaped to draw the attention of the audience and make them feel closely related to the narrative. Audience from Tamil culture would feel alienated if Hammond spoke of flea circus instead of shadow theatre. This variation helps in building an immersive experience for the audience bringing forth a culture of the past to the foreground. The reference to the attire of Tamil women can also be seen as a value-added variation to the film. On the other hand, the paper also contrasts the varied vantage points of people hailing from different cultures on marriage, women and motherhood. Thus, the paper brings out the ways in which a narrative is shaped to suit the preferences and sentiments of the audience. It also highlighted the resistance of the targeted community to withhold their customs against the waves of modernity.

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