



Adaptation in audiovisual translation; a study based on the Sinhalese version of a children's cartoon series "Ferdie, the ant"

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Abstract

Audiovisual translation, being the newest branch of translation studies, is concerned with the translation of audiovisual material. Amongst many methods of audiovisual translation, dubbing stand out as the most prominent method of translation when it comes to translating children's audiovisual content. In order for children to grasp the meanings conveyed by such products, they have to be adapted in accordance with the target culture. This study will be an analysis on the strategies employed in dubbing by translators in the process of adapting children's audiovisual content according to cultures, based on the British children's cartoon series, "Ferdie, the ant" and its Sinhalese translation, "*Kūmbichchi*". The methodology employed was to compare the translated version with the source version in order to identify how far it differed from the source version and how much the concept of adaptation was applied onto it. As far as the outcomes are concerned, it is noticeable that the applied adaptation strategies to the translation can mainly be classified under six main characteristics that are evident in children's audiovisual content; figurative language, visual and verbal puns, cultural references, educational content, romantic content, and songs. Apart from those, changing character names and characteristics, inserting moral lessons, adaptation of a unique narration style, utilization of humor and satire appear to be added features by the translator as a means of adaptation. The methods of adaptation chosen by the translator in adapting the content according to Sri Lankan culture are domestication, dynamic translation and covert translation with the utilization of the strategies of reduction, maintenance and reinforcement on the source content. With the application of above methods and strategies "*Kūmbichchi*" has turned out to be a whole new creation combined with the video track of the original and the audio track in Sinhalese, which appear less of a translation to its target audience.

Key words – adaptation, audiovisual translation, children's cartoons, culture, translation

1. Introduction

Translation can simply be defined as the communication of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text. As far as the field of translation studies is concerned, audiovisual translation has become its newest branch that emerged within the past few decades, which is concerned with the translation of the verbal components contained in audio visual products such as films, television series, cartoons, musicals and theatrical plays. In a globalized context, most of the audiovisual products do not target only a local audience. They travel far from their places of birth exceeding the language boundaries with the help of audiovisual translation.



Amongst many methods of audiovisual translation, the most prominent and frequently used methods are subtitling and dubbing. Dubbing simply refers to the replacement of the original audio track with a new audio track in another language while subtitling refers to the addition of text in another language to accompany the original film. Many of the dubbed audiovisual products are targeted for the child audience since children are not able to read subtitles. Audiovisual content that are produced targeting children differ from adults' audiovisual content on many levels. When it comes to the translation of such content, a translator has to pay special attention to many aspects which will later be discussed in this study. Therefore, the main focus of this study will be to analyze the concept of dubbing with relate to children's animated cartoons and television series.

The present study will be based on a contrastive analysis between "Ferdy, the ant", a British animated cartoon series for children and its Sinhalese translation "*Kūmbichechi*". This study will analyze the specific features of children's audiovisual content and the methodologies chosen by translators in translating such features. When it comes to making the productions sound more natural and closer to children, audio-visual translation incorporates various types of alterations to the original source despite the fact that the possibility of changes to the source material is naturally restricted in translation. Therefore, the present study will be an analysis on the concept of adaptation in audiovisual translation on children's content

2. Review of Literature

Dubbing denotes the re-recording of the original voice track in the target language using dubbing actors' voices; the dubbed dialogue aims to recreate the dynamics of the original, particularly in terms of delivery pace and lip movements (Luyken et al. 1991, as cited in González, 2009). Dana Cohen defines dubbing as the concept where the audience receives the original visual altogether with a new audio track in another language, instead of audio track in original language (Cohen, 2009).

(Gambier, 2014) describes several approaches to dubbing such as voice replacement, adaptation, parodic, and commentary dubbing. The most applicable approach for this study is concerned with adaptation. According to Najla Owais, in adaptation, translators depart from the source text to domesticate the movie. The reasons for this departure range from market needs and opposing ends of the ideological spectrum. (Owais, 2011)

Julio de los Reyes Lozano explains three types of synchronies that are evident in dubbing; lip-synchrony, related to labials and vowels; kinetic synchrony, the correlation between gestures and the linguistic signs; and isochrony, the respect of the duration of the source text utterances in the target text. A translator must pay close attention to maintain these synchronies when it comes to translation. According to Lozano, perception of these synchronies in translation of children's animated films depends on various factors, such as broadcast media (cinema, television, tablet, etc.), animation technique (cartoon, stop-motion animation, 3D animation, etc.) and target audience (adults, children or both) (Lozano, 2017).

As culture is one of the most crucial factors in audiovisual translations, many scholars have discussed on the strategies and approaches that could help render cultural aspects in translations. Lawrence Venuti, in the book, "The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation", introduces two concepts with regard to the translation of cultural elements, namely; domestication and foreignization. He defined the concept of domestication as "an



ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to the target language cultural values” and the concept of foreignization as “an ethnocentric values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text”. (Venuti, 1995) For Venuti, domestication is a natural tendency of translation and consists in translating in a fluent, idiomatic, and transparent way which tends to erase the foreignness of the source text and to conform to the needs and values of the target culture. Foreignization, on the other hand, takes the target reader towards the source text with a defamiliarising effect, and consists in "preserving linguistic and cultural differences by deviating from prevailing domestic values" (Ramière, 2003) Venuti speaks in favor of the concept of foreignization as he declares that " the foreign text can be original, an authentic copy, true to the author's personality or intention, whereas the translation is derivative, fake, potentially a false copy. (Venuti, 1995)

Eugene Nida also suggested a concept similar to Venuti's. In the essay “Principles of correspondence” he introduced the concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence (Łabendowicz, 2012). Formal equivalence focuses the attention on the form and content contained in the message. Formal equivalence intends to achieve equivalence between original text and translation text which has great impact on the accuracy and correctness. Dynamic Equivalence on the other hand focuses the attention on the message received by the audience. Dynamic equivalence stresses on transferring meaning, not grammatical form. Nida states that “quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors.” (Zoe, 2013) Nida speaks in favor of the concept of domestication as he considers naturalness to be the most important feature of a successful translation.

Yet another concept that is concerned with the cultural aspect of translation is the concept of covert and overt translation by Juliane House. In an overt translation “the original sociocultural frame is left as intact as possible, given the need of expression in another language” while in covert translation “the translator can and should attempt to recreate an equivalent sociocultural event to hide the text's real origin.” There, the translator is required to analyze the source and target cultures in order to achieve naturalness in the translation by making necessary changes. (House, 2010. as cited in Łabendowicz, 2012)

As far as the translation of audiovisual material for children is concerned, Lozano through the journal article, “Bringing all the Senses into Play: the Dubbing of Animated Films for Children” identifies three main semiotic codes in children’s films and cartoons, namely: the linguistic code which represents the language components, the iconographic code which represents the animations that has direct relations with children’s artworks and, the musical code which represents music and sound effects. Lozano further identifies some specific characteristics of which children’s films and cartoons are consisted of, namely; colloquial language, children’s language, figurative language, visual and verbal puns, multilingualism and geographical dialects, cultural and intertextual references, educational content, romantic content and songs (Lozano, 2017).

As for the strategies of translating these specificities, Lozano suggests to reduce, maintain or reinforce the content. In translating the musical code, the strategies suggested by the author are complete adaptation, no translation or creation of new lyrics. In translating the iconographic code, author suggests to modify the original meaning, to modify the translation according to the picture or to maintain the complementary relationship (Lozano, 2017).



As far as the concept of adaptation in translation is concerned, Georges Bastin defines it as a set of translative interventions which result in a text that is not generally accepted as a translation but is nevertheless recognized as representing a source text (Bastin, 2009).

Dana Cohen, in the paper, “Adaptation in Audiovisual Translation”, distinguishes five types of alterations made to the original source in adaptation which includes, minor omissions and changes to wording (removal of wording that isn't the main content, fillers, discourse markers, shortening lines of all speakers), change of textual elements (puns, language games, jokes, songs, objectionable expressions), change of textual elements that affect characterization /situation (names, name dropping, quotes, choice of formality, choice of accent/dialect/register.), change to properties of character / situation that may require minor plot change, and extensive change to properties of character / situation that require changes to plot (Cohen, 2009).

3. Materials and methods

The focus of the present study is to analyze the concept of adaptation when it comes to audiovisual translation of children's content and to identify the strategies that are employed by translators in order to overcome the difficulties that occur during the process of translation. In order to carry out the said objective, the cartoon, “Ferdy, the ant” and its Sinhalese translation, “*Kūmbichchi*” were chosen as research materials. Ferdy, the ant is a 1984 German-British children's animated cartoon series based on the “Ferda Mravenec picture books” series by Czech author Ondřej Sekora. The cartoon series was directed by Jerry Hampeys and Ralph Newman. It is a cartoon series which carries a story about a little black ant and a series of his experiences targeting children aged between 3 to 10 years. The series contains a total of 52 episodes each with a running time of 25 minutes and was originally dubbed in British English and German. Its Sinhalese dubbed version, “*Kūmbichchi*” was translated and directed by Athula Ransirilal and was telecasted through Rupavahini channel.

Both English and Sinhalese versions of the animated cartoon series were available online through www.youtube.com. As it was difficult to study the whole cartoon series within a very limited time period, only the first six episodes each from the source production and the translated production were taken into account while this study was carried out. A qualitative methodology was employed in carrying out the current study. Firstly, the translated version was compared with the source version in order to identify how far it differed from the source version. Due to the fact that only the differences are the contributive factors for the translation to be an adaptation, only the instances with differences in translation were taken in to consideration during the analysis. Secondly, such instances that could be categorized under Lozano's specific characteristics of children's films were comparatively analyzed to measure how the concept of adaptation was applied onto them. The instances that were not applicable to the above characteristics were subjected to the same process individually. Through the analysis, the employed methods and strategies by the translator in translating and adapting such features were identified and the effectiveness of such strategies were qualitatively analyzed.

4. Results and discussion

Owing to the fact that the instances where the translation was different from the source text were classified under specific characteristics of children's films, it could be perceived that out of the nine characteristics, only six of



them were evident in the first six episodes of the cartoon series. Figurative language, visual and verbal puns, cultural and intertextual references, educational content, romantic content and songs were the characteristics that were observable through analysis of the two versions. Some of the specificities were noticeable in the translation which were not originally there on the source text and some of the specificities that were there on the source text were not noticeable in the translation. This chapter will be a discussion on how the translator has chosen to render meanings through the application of the concept of adaptation under each of the above specificities.

Figurative language in a certain creation refers to the usage of figures of speech and literary devices such as metaphors, similes, allusions, alliterations, imageries, or onomatopoeias that appeal to the senses which go beyond the literal meanings of the words. Ferdy, the ant, the original English version uses a very simple, easy to understand language style. The sentences are very short and has no complex grammatical structures. Within the first six episodes of the English version, figurative usage of language was not much evident. *Kūmbichchi*, on the other hand is recreated in Sinhalese in a comparatively different manner. Some of the facts related to the utilization of figurative language that were extracted through the analysis of *Kūmbichchi* can be listed out as follows. It has rather long sentences and they are full of figurative language items. The most prominent fact here is the translator's utilization of idioms. As a means of making the iconographic code more elaborate, the translator has utilized many idioms that are closely bound with the Sinhalese culture which are so close and appealing to the target audience, a technique that is not evident in the original version. The translator also has inserted idioms in place of regular dialogues in the source version. The replacing of the source utterances with bellow idioms in Sinhalese showcases an attempt of dynamic translation.

- On an instance where the ant crosses a bridge, the ant utters - mKaä;hg taokafâ hkak neß jqkdg l+ôkag mqçjka
- On an instance where a frog is told not to eat bugs, the frog utters, msÿre lkafk;a kE n,a,d ÿkafk;a kE (Here the regular form of the idiom, which is n,a,dmsÿre lkafk;a kE lk f.dkdg ÿkafk;a kE is changed into a much shorter form to achieve isochrony; the respect of the duration of the source text utterances in the target text.)
- On an instance where the spider is unable to sleep because of the snoring of the snail b;a;Ej f.a f.g ln,a,Ej ßx.=j jf.a
- On an instance where the ant is going to take flight on a grasshopper weúoao mh oyia jâ lsöfj biair
- On an instance where woody asks to get down from the grasshopper plane, the grasshopper utters kslka ,enqKq wiaihf. o;a .Kka lrkak tmd

The utilization of these idioms elaborate the situations better while making them easy to embrace for children. The concept of domestication is evident here through the utilization of these idioms as a technique that the translator had used to make the final product feel more at home for the target audience.

The usage of visual and verbal puns is yet another specificity that is evident in *Kūmbichchi*, as a creative attempt of the translator to make it more humorous. It also gives the audience something to think about and something to laugh about. For an example on an occasion where a bug is required to hold a rope in order to stop a boat from



drifting away, the bug utters “,Kq fokjd ñila w,a,,d mqreÿ kE” which portrays two meanings at once whereas the source version does not include any utterance which is embedded with verbal puns. There the direct translated term for “rope” is “,Kqj”. It also has another underlying meaning which refers to misleading others by having ulterior motives which is a very common phrase in Sri Lankan day to day speech. This stands out as a means of adaptation as the translator has inserted a new dialogue that was not originally there in the source version which matches with the visual output perfectly. There the translator has subjected the dialogue into a covert translation by reinforcing the content with the aim of adapting it to suit the target culture.

Another specific characteristic that is noticeable through *Kūmbichchi* is the utilization of cultural references by the translator. Cultural references allude to all the socially conditioned aspects of human life specific to a certain country or a society. It includes the food patterns, dress patterns, religious norms, geographical facts, beliefs and rituals of a certain society. As Sri Lanka is a country where majority of the population are Buddhists, the translator had decided to stick to the Sri Lankan natural speech pattern which has strong relations and references to the Buddhist ideology. As the story line of the cartoon series aims to convey a moral for children, the approach of choosing a spoken language variety rich with religious references seems to be another strategy used by the translator in order to adapt the story in accordance with the Sri Lankan culture. Some utterances make reference to the concept of merit and sins in Buddhism such as l< msx isys lr.kak" oka ÿkaku msx tkj"" Tfyag msx isoaO fjkjd" fmr msklg my< jqKd' Some make reference to the concept of reincarnation such as wmdhla yokak fjkjd" ,nk wd;afu yuqfjuq" fi le,E iudch wdfh;a ki bmfokafka kE" ixidf% Nfõ ÿld' The phrase mkais,a rlsk l+ôfhla refers to the five precepts in Buddhism. The concept of karma is depicted through the phrase lreu m< fokjd and the eight worldly concerns are referred by the term wIagf,dal O%u'

Another kind of Cultural references that is evident in the source version are food references. The Sinhalese translator has chosen to omit them as a strategy of making the translation sound more natural for the target audience. “Strawberries and cream”, “beef stew” are some food references that appears in the source version which are omitted in the translated version. The reduction of such foreign cultural material from the script makes it clear that the translator had prevented all the possible chances that would make the production give a sense of foreignness to its target audience. The phrase fnfy;a fydh,d ue,a"i nçkj d refers to a type of medication that comes in Sri Lankan indigenous medicine which is also a close cultural reference that the translator has added to the translation.

Another specific characteristic of children’s audiovisual products are its richness in educational content. They are created with the aim of providing new knowledge and facts that would help develop the level of knowledge in children which will make them well informed citizens. Through the analysis of the first six episodes of *Ferdy*, the ant and *Kūmbichchi*, it could be perceived that there are some educational content embedded in the animated series targeting children. In episode 4, references are made to the incident of first moon landing in 1969. The translator has embedded this details in episode 2 as well where the narrator utters Thd, okakjfka kS,a wdiiafg%dax.a ki y|g .shd where there is no such mentioning in the source version. Through such sceneries and utterances, minor or major educational facts are transmitted to the minds of children.



When it comes to the translation of romantic content, the translator has done some major changes to the plot in attempt to adapt them according to the Sri Lankan culture. The plot of the source version includes a romantic relationship between the two main characters, Ferdy, the ant and Gwendolyn, the ladybird beetle. The target audience of the source version is children aged between 3 to 10 years in Britain, a country where romantic content and sexuality are topics that are discussed openly. When it comes to Sri Lanka, a country with cultural norms that constrain such topics being discussed openly, children are not being exposed to such content as it is commonly believed that they are not appropriate for them. Based on such a cultural context, the translator has changed the gender of the two main characters in order to make them appear less romantic. Therefore, Ferdy, the ant, a male ant in the source version is converted into a female character named “*Kūmbichchi*” whereas Gwendolyn, a female character in the source version is converted into a male character named “*Kuru kuru*”. As a result of that, all the romantic content in the translated version is reduced. The two characters are portrayed as two friends who love each other very much. They address each other as “*frd*” which means “friend”. This has resulted in some major changes to the plot. The main focus of the translated version has been to highlight the value of friendship. Although the gender change has brought a positive impact on the reduction of romantic content, it has directed the story to run on a different path than on the one that was intended by the original version. *Kuru kuru*, having a female appearance, but speaking in a male voice seems rather atypical and unconventional in Sri Lankan context. The fact that the character appears to be transgender makes the translated version more different from the source version. This can be categorized as an extensive change in properties of characters according to Dana Cohen’s classification of alterations.

The last specific characteristic that was evident in *Kūmbichchi* was the usage of songs. Songs play a major role in children’s audiovisual content as they are much liked by children due to music and rhythms. As far as Ferdy, the ant is concerned, it has many songs including the theme song. When translating the cartoon series, the translator has chosen rather uncommon method of song translation, which is to leave out the lyrics and the music as well. Therefore, new music tracks and lyrics are embedded in the translated version. As far as the theme song is concerned, the translator has chosen the melody of a popular Sinhalese song “*l=re .fi l=re f.or l=re l=udí*” and wrote new lyrics to rhyme with it. Therefore, the theme song of the translation is “*l+ô .fi l+ô f.or l+ô l=udí*”. Both the English and Sinhalese theme songs describe the characteristics of the main character, the ant. The utilization of the melody of a popular song has made it more tangible to the audience. When the other songs are taken into consideration, most of the songs in the English version have no lyrics, the characters are humming and singing along to certain melodies as “*la la la*” or “*tum da dum ta dum*”. The translator has chosen to replace such songs with popular Sinhalese children’s songs such as “*rêcqréfjda Wvhs Wvhs*” or “*wdcq ;mr ,dys,d*”. These alterations that are visible in the translation can be classified as a change of textual elements according to Dana Cohen which has contributed to achieve domestication.

Apart from the above mentioned characteristics, some other major differences were evident in the translation. The alterations done by the translator with relate to the characters can be listed out as follows. Firstly the names of the characters in the English version are changed into Sinhalese names. As the story revolves around a set of bugs living in a beautiful forest, the translator has chosen to name them with animal names in Sinhalese. A list of changed character names can be listed out as follows; Ferdy – *l+ôÉÖ*” Gwendolyn - *l=re l=re*” Woody - *ul=Kdia*”



Bug Sniffy - l=1+" Arambula - ul=ç;=ud" Mr. Miller - msá udud" Mrs. Bug - ueis fkdakd" Snail - f.dçfn, sia" Bee - lîlre óueiaid' The translated names appear very creative and appealing to the target audience.

On some instances, the nature of the characters is also changed. For an example, Mrs. Miller, who is an innocent and loving mother in the source version is portrayed as a very angry, and loud mouthed character in the translation, which is the opposite of the source text idea. On another instance, two bugs who are happily working at the mill in the source version appear to be suffering and exhausted in the translated version. According to Dana Cohen's classification of alterations done in the process of audiovisual translation, these instances fall under changes of textual elements that affect characterization.

Another difference that could be identified between the two versions was the way each version presented moral lessons to the audience. The Sinhalese version has a moral at the end of each episode whereas the English version does not. The narrator of the Sinhalese version gives a moral advice to children through a song or a speech with a nice rhythm. For an example, at the end of episode two, the narrator sings;

"fndre lshkd fndre lrkd yeu fokdgu;a jeäfhka" i,a,sj,g jeä ;ek fok iuyr whg;a jeäfhka
fyd| .;s.=K yd fyd| ys; wmg jákj d" ýfö mqf;a fyd| ñksiqka rgla jákj d"

This concept is also evident in Sinhalese folktales where the ending of each story contains a moral advice. Therefore, it seems that the translator has adapted that method to present a moral lesson to children, a manner that is already familiar to them. This method of adaptation stands out as a strategy of covert translation.

Another one of the most evident features that could be identified in the translation was the usage of satire as a means of mocking at society which was not originally there in the source version. The translator mentions many wrongdoings done by the people in the society in the story and mocks at them with sarcastic comments. For an example, he laughs at the corrupted politicians on an instance where two butterflies are confronted with Bug Sniffy, the dog "lgq lk tlaflkd ierhsfka' le,E f,dlaflda Tlafldu wo fif.d,af,dkaf. .dkg jeá, d" whereas the utterance in the source version is "if we sell this ugly dog, we can make a whole lot of money". When Sniffy tries to bite them they kick him saying "go away slum dog!" whereas in the translation they utter "fî jf.a whg mdvula W.kajkak ck;dj oek.kak ´k' fukak fî jf.a!". On another instance where Arambula, the spider complains that he cannot sleep because of the snails snoring sound in the source version, translator elaborates the scene by adding an utterance, "orefjd oyia .Kkla yo, wo fu;k ;kshu" showing the plight of old parents who are neglected by their children. Even though the original target audience is children between 3-10 years of age, such insertions of mocking comments make it eligible for adult audiences as well. On the other hand, it gives children an insight to the corrupted society and gives them an idea on the things they should not do.

Yet another prominent feature that could be identified in the translation was the creative usage of language by the translator. He has created a whole new set of words to refer to certain concepts and things that are evident in the



animated series. For an example, he invents words such as “f. dgqfld< fg, iafl dama” to refer to a telescope, “;ks leurdfo icSù úldIh” to refer to a television channel and “fldÜgïn fld< fndaÜgqj” to refer to a leaf boat. Since the story takes place in a forest, he invents a system of words to refer to different organisms in the forest such as “le,E .u” le,E fmd,sish” le,E Widú” le,E biamsß;df,” le,E biafldaf,” le,E g%e*sla” le,E Pkafo” le,E f*daka”. This gives a unique creative aspect to the story which is not evident in the original version.

The narration style in *Kūmbichchi* is yet another feature that is not evident in the source version. The narration style adapted by the translator in *Kūmbichchi* is similar to that of Buddhist dhamma preaching. For an example, episode 2 starts with the narration “wfma nrKeia kqjr n%yauo;a; rÊcqrefjd .ek fkfuhs fi lshkafka ta ksid ieoevej;a Wmdil Wmdisldfjd idOq lshkak tmd”. The utilization of this method also makes the story feel more Sri Lankan. The narrator in the source version uses a short speech at the beginning of the episode to take an approach to the story whereas the narrator in the translation makes use of speeches and songs at the beginning of the episode to take an approach and at the end of the episode to give a moral lesson and a sense of conclusion. Through such examples, it is evident that the translator has altered textual elements which has affected the situations.

The translator has employed humor in the translation in places where there were no humorous utterances in the source version as a means of making it more interesting for its audience. For an instance, the utterance in the source version which appears as a television advertisement “gather around ladies and gentleman, and discover this heavy duty, long lasting deodorant. Try it where ever you want!” is translated into Sinhalese as “fukak kj;u ksIamdokh ul=ç fldf,daka! is;a ikyk iqj!! kekaoiudg ;E.s fokak! ÿr isáh;a iqjçka y÷kd.; yels nEkdf.a f,a,Sf.a wdrIaIlhd! ul=ç fldf,daka!” Translator has created humor based on feuds between in-laws in marriages which makes such scenes more intelligible for adults. The translation appears to be very humorous compared to the source version due to the new addition.

5. Conclusion

Through the contrastive analysis between the British version of “Ferdie, the ant” and its Sinhalese version “*Kūmbichchi*” the above mentioned strategies of adaptation could be identified. With the utilization of above strategies, the translator has created a version that is much more appealing to the audience, a version that does not have even the slightest traces to prove the fact that it is coming from a foreign land. All the features that portrays the origin of the cartoon have been erased out and reproduced in a manner where the audience feel it to be native. For the said purpose the translation method followed by the translator tend to be dynamic translation, covert translation and domestication which have a tendency in creating an effect in translation where the spectators feel at home by altering all the facts that give hints on the original roots of the source version. Therefore, it is visible through this analysis that the attempt of the translator has made this creation an exact exemplification of the definition of adaptation, which is “the intervention of a set of translative techniques which result in a text that is not generally accepted as a translation but is nevertheless recognized as representing a source text.”

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