

Asterix in Sri Lanka: Translating Proper Names into Sinhala

Asterix'te Özel İsimlerin Sinhala'ya Çevirisi Üzerine

Samanthi Jayawardena*

Judith Sumindi Rodrigo**

University of Kelaniya

Abstract

The comic series, the Adventures of Asterix created by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo became exceptionally popular in Sri Lanka in the early 2000s when the local TV channel Sirasa broadcasted the animated films dubbed in Sinhala. The present paper focuses on one aspect that captivated the audience, the translation of the proper names from English into Sinhala. The translation of the anthroponyms in Asterix poses numerous complexities. Following Michel Ballard's theoretical views on the translation of the proper names, we examine the decision of the translators to translate, the challenges and the strategies referring to five Asterix animated films that were dubbed into Sinhala. The names of the main characters, and the secondary/recurring characters that include Gauls, Romans and other nationalities in the target language are analysed, discussed and compared with the English equivalents. The analysis reveals that the names are translated based on the simple, and familiar characteristics easily comprehensible to the audience while the addition of the term *pappa* which replaces the suffix *-ix* in Sinhala in the names of the Gaulish characters, essentially provides the comical component. The paper argues that the sophisticated wordplay, and the literally and the artistic allusions that *Astérix* is known for, are lacking in the Sinhala version. Further, by eliminating the presence of foreign names, the translators have favoured a domestication approach. Though the translators have not attempted to recreate the overall effect that the creators intended, their attempts to form names, comprehensible and appreciable to the local audience, and that equally complements the original screen play, have succeeded in popularizing the comic series.

Keywords: anthroponyms, comics, dubbed films, humour, strategies

Öz

René Goscinny ve Albert Uderzo tarafından yaratılan Asteriks'in Maceraları, 2000'lerin başında yerel TV kanalı Sirasa'nın Sinhala dublajlı animasyon filmlerini yayınlamasıyla Sri Lanka'da son derece popüler hale geldi. Bu makale, yerel izleyicileri büyüleyen karakterlerin adlarının İngilizce'den Sinhala'ya çevrilmesine odaklanmaktadır. Michel Ballard'ın özel isimlerin çevirisine ilişkin teorik görüşlerinin ardından, bu isimlerin Sinhala'ya nasıl çevrildiğini, çevirmenlerin karşılaştığı zorlukları ve Sinhala'ya çevrilen beş Asterix animasyon filmine atıfta bulunarak stratejilerini inceliyoruz. Ana karakterlerin adları ve Galyalılar, Romalılar ve diğer milletleri içeren ikincil karakterler makalenin inceleme konusudur. Bu inceleme, çevirmenlerin stratejisinin, karakterlerin basit ve tanıdık özelliklerini izleyiciye kolayca anlaşılır şekilde çevirmek olduğunu ortaya koyuyor. Makale, Sinhala

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*Dr., Senior Lecturer, Dept. of Modern Languages, University of Kelaniya

ORCID#: 0000-0002-1971-4850; samanthij@kln.ac.lk

**Lecturer, Dept. of Modern Languages, University of Kelaniya

ORCID#: 0000-0002-8937-4214; sumindi@kln.ac.lk

versiyonunda sofistike kelime oyununun ve Asterix'in bilindiği kelimenin tam anlamıyla ve sanatsal imaların eksik olduğunu savunur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: antroponimler, çizgi roman, dublaj filmler, stratejiler, mizah

Introduction

When the death of Albert Uderzo, the co-creator of the world-renowned comic series, was announced on the 24th March 2020, the local newspapers in Sri Lanka who reported on this news had to include within brackets the explanation that *Astérix* was “better known as Soora Pappa to many Sri Lankans” (Mawlana 2020). It was to confirm to the local audience that *Astérix* is in fact Soora Pappa, originally published in French.

A great majority of Sri Lankans were introduced to *Astérix* in the early 2000s, when two local private TV channels started to broadcast the animated *Astérix* films based on the comic series. These films were broadcasted as a weekly TV series of half hour episodes. While the TV channel MTV broadcasted *Astérix* in English, its sister channel Sirasa TV dubbed these films into Sinhala, the mother tongue of the Sinhalese. The adventures of *Astérix the Gaul* fascinated the local audience, and they remain even today a cherished memory. The said TV channel continues to air the same films due to the popular demand, and most recently in 2017 the films were shown yet again.

In the late 1980s, and throughout the 1990s, internationally popular English-language cartoon series were dubbed into Sinhala, and were broadcasted on television including *Doctor Dolittle*, *Bugs Bunny*, and *Top Cat*, which until then were only accessible to the English-speaking public. The dubbed series were characterized by the Sinhala names given to the characters, and the colloquial Sinhala used in the dialogues to make them more familiar to the audience. Dr. Doo Little became popular as *Dostara hondahita* (a good-hearted doctor), Bugs Bunny as *Ha ha hari hawa* (shrewd rabbit), and Top Cat as *Pissu pusa* (mad cat). These dubbed cartoons were first broadcasted on the state-owned television channel Rupavahini. Later on, the private television channels such as Sirasa TV, understanding the demand for the cartoons dubbed into Sinhala, introduced more of them, such as *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* as *Api raja ibbo* (we are skilful turtles), and *Lucky Luke* as *Cow da boy* (who is the boy). During the years 2002 and 2003, the animated films of *Astérix* were translated by Chandra Ranatunga, Chaminda Keerthirathna, Rochana Wimaladewa, Gaminda Priyawiraj, and Suneth Chithrananda into Sinhala for Sirasa TV. The series was broadcast as *Soora Pappa*, the Sinhala name given to the main character.

Research Problem

For the present study, we work on the Sinhala dubbed animated *Astérix* films which were telecasted on Sri Lankan television. The research is of significant importance as it is based on the animated films rather than the albums. Further, they are dubbed into Sinhala, a South Asian language not known to many. When *Astérix* was translated and dubbed into Sinhala, the proper names, including those of the Goals, were translated. These names do not bear any

phono-graphological resemblance to the original names. The two researchers who are native Sinhalese, and also francophone, having first read the albums, and seen the films in French, later in English, and finally in Sinhala, have been captivated by the reaction of the local audience to *Astérix*. Our interest in both the *Astérix* original comic series, and its popular local version has led to the present research on the translation of its proper names into Sinhala. The paper focuses only on the anthroponyms, having excluded the toponyms, and cultural referents.

The reason why we chose to work on the anthroponyms in *Astérix* is that they are unique, creative and humorous. These names are born out of careful reflexion, historical and cultural allusions, and wordplay to entertain the reader. The translation of these names poses a considerable challenge. This study focuses on identifying the challenges in translating the proper names, and particularly examining the strategies that the translators employed to overcome them. We then compare the Sinhala translated names with the English names to see whether the Sinhala translators' strategies have succeeded in echoing the humour, the wordplay, and the creativity which *Astérix* is known for. We argue that when translating the proper names into the target language, the translators have favoured strategies that enable them to popularize the series among the Sri Lankans rather than preserving the humour, the meaning, and the wordplay.

Methodology

For the present study, five animated *Astérix* films based on the comic series created by Goscinny and Uderzo are chosen. The Sinhala translators have worked from the English dubbed films making the Sinhala dubbed version, an indirect translation of the French films. As the translators have not made any references to the French films when dubbing into Sinhala, we too refrain from making comparisons with them. Only the English, the relay language (RL), and Sinhala, the target language (TL) versions of these five films are considered in the study.

Table 1 - The films chosen for the study

	French film	English (RL) dubbed film	Sinhala (TL) dubbed film
1	<i>Astérix le Gaulois</i> (1967)	<i>Asterix the Gaul</i>	<i>Soora pappa saha gaul wesiyo</i>
2	<i>Astérix et Cléopâtre</i> (1968)	<i>Asterix and Cleopatra</i>	<i>Soora pappa saha Cleopatra</i>
3	<i>Astérix chez les Bretons</i> (1986)	<i>Asterix in Britain</i>	<i>Soora pappa saha engalantha savariya</i>
4	<i>Astérix et les Indiens</i> (1994)	<i>Asterix conquers America</i>	<i>Soora pappa saha america gamana</i>
5	<i>Les Douze Travaux d'Astérix</i> (1976)	<i>The Twelve Tasks of Asterix</i>	<i>Soora pappa saha weda 12</i>

These five *Astérix* animated films chosen for the study are dubbed into Sinhala, by the team of translators mentioned above. Currently, there are more *Astérix* films such as *Asterix and the Secret of the Magic Potion* and *Asterix and the Mansion of the Gods* that are dubbed into Sinhala, and aired by another local channel. These films are excluded in the present study for the simple reason that they are not part of the *Astérix* films first dubbed by Sirasa TV translators. This allows us to be thoroughly focused on one team of translators, and to identify, and study the team's strategies applied to all their dubbed films. Catherine Delesse highlights the advantageous of a single set of English translators in the case of *Astérix* and *Tintin*; "since the translation of both the series are the result of a single set of translators for each, they have strong unifying features, making them stand out as works in their own right" (267). It is also noted that the TV channel responsible for broadcasting the recent films is implicated in a legal dispute, for violating "the exclusive rights of the Plaintiff granted by the Intellectual Property Act by broadcasting the movie 'ASTERIX' dubbed in Sinhala" (DailyFT 2020). The Plaintiff is the Capital Maharaja Organization, the parent company of Sirasa TV, which was granted exclusive rights by the copyright owner in Paris.

The chosen films have been watched repeatedly to identify the names of the characters in the RL and in the TL. Nearly all the names in the English films are consistent with the names translated by Anthea Bell, and Derek Hockridge, the English translators of the comic series. However, a few inconsistencies are noted, particularly in the first film *Asterix the Gaul*. This film was adapted to cinema without the creators' knowledge. Further, Bell's and Hockridge's English translation became available in 1969 while the dubbed film was released two years before in 1967. As a result, unlike in the other films, in this film the druid, the chief and the bard are not called Getafix, Vitalstatistix, and Cacofonix, but Panoramix, Tonabrix, and Stophthemusix respectively. In the successive *Astérix* animated films, Goscinny and Uderzo were more involved as writers, producers, and directors which undeniable added more artistry, and authenticity. When one character is identified by more than one name, applicable only to the main or recurring characters, both names are considered in the analysis, but more attention is given to the Bell and Hockridge translated names.

Additionally, the film *The Twelve Tasks of Asterix* is not based on a comic book, but rather on an original screen play by Goscinny, Uderzo, and Pierre Tchernia. The film was produced by Studios Idéfix owned by Goscinny, Uderzo, and Georges Dargaud, the original publisher of the *Astérix* albums. As it is a production of the creators, featuring *Astérix* and other familiar characters from their comic series, we have included the film, and its proper names in the study. Though *The Twelve Tasks of Asterix* is available as an album, it was published after the film was released.

We limit our research to the translation of anthroponyms, names of people or in this case, names of the fictional characters. Michel Ballard's *Noms propres en traduction* (Ophrys 2001) provides the necessary theoretical background to

approach the translation of the proper names. We examine the translation strategies proposed by Newmark, and Moya to translate the proper names. Bridging the gap between the source culture (SC) and the target culture (TC) is never easy. The translators of the *Astérix* find their work even more challenging as they have to face the limitations of dubbing. The difficulties that they face are magnified, when the mode of translation already limits the strategies available to translators, as in the case of audiovisual translation (Azaola 70). Having said that, we would like specify that in the present study, the focus remains on the translating strategies, and the influence of the process, and criteria for dialogue adaptation and lip-sync are not investigated.

In Table 2, we list the names of the main Gaulish characters in the RL, and the translated names in the TL. The list also includes Julius Caesar, the Roman Emperor. Caesar who is a recurring character in the *Astérix* series is featured in all the five films chosen for the study. Table 3 shows a breakdown of the RL names, and the TL names and it also compares their meanings. A list of the translated names of the secondary characters including Romans, Gauls and others are shown in Table 4. The list comprises twelve names given in RL and TL. Table 2, 3, and 4 show names that are translated which is one of the strategies used while Table 5 contains other methods practiced in the translation of the proper names in the dubbed films. All the names included in Table 2, 3, and 4 are analysed and discussed. The TL names compared with the RL names to highlight differences or similarities observed in the meaning, the humour and the creativity.

Theoretical Framework

A common name refers to a series of objects that its concept represents. On the contrary, a proper name does not refer to a concept but in its prototypical form points to an extralinguistic referent, which is unique, and which does not have an equivalent (Ballard 17). In translations, this absence of an equivalent often motivates the translators to resort to various strategies. However, George Moore famously said that all proper names are to be rigidly respected regardless of how unpronounceable they are (cited in Ballard 11). Jean Delisle includes the proper names in the “éléments d’informations” (elements carrying information) which do not require an analysis of meaning. The translator simply copies again or “reports” these terms in the TL (191). Ballard criticises the principle of non-translation of the proper names as “l’antithèse d’une attitude traductologique sérieuse” (antithesis of a serious attitude in translation studies) (15).

The comics are a specific genre that largely uses the proper names to add humour. *Astérix*’s humour is generated considerably by its proper names. Goscinny, and Uderzo have gone to great lengths to create each name based on various references, and wordplay. It is apparent that the authors loved the puns, and the wordplay, and included so many in their creation which sets *Astérix* apart from the other comics, particularly *Tintin*. Harry Thompson writes in his book *Tintin: Hergé and his Creation*, “Hergé disliked the wordplay,

pointing to Asterix [perhaps with a modicum of professional jealousy] as an example of how not to do it” (cited in Kessler 61).

When translating the names of the fictional characters, the language register becomes a decisive factor. For example, a character of French classic such as Madame Bovary is not translated, but a character from a comic such as Dupont in *Tintin* is translated as Thompson in the English version (Ballard 18). Similar to *Tintin*, the language register in *Astérix* is informal. The names in *Astérix* such as Céautomatix or Ordralphabétix are made to make the reader laugh (173). It is visible that the names are made with words comically compressed together. This technique which is used in French is reproduced in the English translation. For example, Céautomatix (c’est automatique – it is automatic), and Abraracourcix (à bras raccourcis – attacking with violent blows) in French become Fulliautomatix (fully automatic) and Vitalstatistix (vital measurements) respectively in English. When translating the names Bell and Hockridge ensured that the translated name suits the character. For example, in the English version the fishmonger is called Unhygienix, because of the poor quality of his merchandise, whereas his wife is given the name Bacteria, to make them an even more matching couple than in French, Ordralfabétix (Ordre alphabétique – alphabetical order), and Iélosubmarine (yellow submarine).

The preservation of the comic aspect, and the precedence attributed to it explains the presence, and at times, the absence of a similarity between the name of the character, and its referent in the French, and the English versions. A case in point is the chief of the village. In French, he is called Abraracourcix, but in English he is baptized Vitalstatistix. The French name Abraracourcix refers to his status as a warrior, but his English name Vitalstatistix (person’s measurements) points to his plump physique. Bell explains that the name Abraracourcix does not signify much to the British audience, and the physical size of the chief has given inspiration to the more humorous and appealing English name (2011). Similarly, the pet dog who is called Idéfix (idée fixe – fixed idea) in French, is called Dogmatix (dogmatic+ix) in English.

It is also important to note that at times, the translators who attempted to adopt the same technique as in French, have not always been successful. A case in point is the German translation of one of the Roman camps, Petitbonum (petit bonhomme – man) in *Astérix en Corse*. The name translated as Kleinbonum in German does not create the same effect as in the source text; “in the case of German *Kleinbonum*, a relatively opaque form that tries to render *Petitbonum* but only achieves the first effect (German-Latin hybrid evoking a Latin toponym) while failing to create the second level of meaning, i.e. the truly humoristic one” (Kabatek 216).

Furthermore, the translation of the proper names has occasionally provoked different reactions from the authors. When J.R.R. Tolkien who was not satisfied with the translations of the proper names in his chef d’oeuvre *The Lord of the Rings*, wrote “Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*” giving his own instructions. He starts the guide with the following advice: “All names not in the following list should be left entirely unchanged in any language used in

translation, except that inflexional -s, -es should be rendered according to the grammar of the language” (01).

Having explained the complex nature of the proper names found in *Astérix*, we must now consider the translation strategies that enable the translators to explore possible solutions. Research on the translation of proper names reveal that transfer or report is often practiced as a strategy by the translators. A corpus-based study on the translation of the proper names found in Jules Verne's *Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours* in ten languages, examines the strategies used such as borrowing, assimilation, loan translation, absence of translation, and others. However, as for the translation of the anthroponyms, transfer from the source language (SL) appears to be the strategy preferred in most languages (Lecuit, Maurel, Vitas 211).

When a word is transferred from SL to TL, it is not subjected to any changes. Newmark explains people's first names and surnames are transferred, on condition that the names have no connotations in the text (214). Connotations are the culture specific or personal associations while the primary or the obvious meaning is denotation (Azahola 72). As far as imaginative literature such as fairy tales, and comedies are concerned, the names with connotations are translated. A case in point is how Newmark translates a chicken's name in P.G. Woodhouse's *Love among the Chickens*. He translates the English name Hariette as Laura in Swedish. Among the possible reasons he lists, we would like to highlight the first two: 1 “As this is a light novel, there is nothing sacrosanct about the SL proper name. 2 The name is incongruous and should raise a smile or a laugh” (215). This example reveals new possibilities in translating imaginative proper names with connotations.

Apart from transfer, naturalization too is considered a possible answer to translating proper names. Moya defines naturalization as a process based on transferring proper names and then adapting them to the morphological and phonological characteristics of the TL (Moya cited by Rodriguez 126). If the propre names don't adapt to the phonological system of the TC they can appear strange and the TL reader can find them difficult to pronounce. (Ballard 46). For the same reason, in theatre, Eric Kahane claims that he is more concerned about the actor's ability to pronounce a foreign word than preserving the local colour of the SC. Therefore, he cuts off certain words which are difficult to pronounce (46).

Though these two techniques, transference, and naturalization are largely used to facilitate the translation of proper names, they have limitations, and their application does not consistently assure success. Transference is a difficult process to apply in the case of proper names in *Astérix*, mainly due to the fact that the names are difficult to pronounce in the dubbed version. Further, without any explanations, the wordplay and humour are very likely to be lost to the TL audience. Naturalization facilitates pronunciation, but it would not communicate the meaning, the humour or the creativity. Azahola remarks that the proper names have a cultural value which makes them even more difficult to translate. “People and place names are especially challenging for translators

because rather than being universal they are usually deeply embedded in a particular culture” (77). In this light, the Sinhala translations face a daunting challenge. They must choose strategies that are creative, effective, and at the same time comprehensible to the TL audience. The strategies can vary from “the ideal of a close-to-the-source translation,” and to those that give “priority to the technique and the effect produced rather than to fidelity to the original version” (Kabatek 217). The translators could transfer the names or provide equivalents based on the ST, favouring a foreignization approach. Alternatively, they could focus on audience friendly names comprehensible in the TL, inclining towards domestication (Venuti 20).

Analysis and Discussion

We begin with the main and recurring characters of *Astérix*. These names are listed below in Table 2. The names of all the Gauls end with the suffix -ix, to honour the Gaulish warrior Vercingétorix (82-46 BC), who fought against Julius Caesar. The hero being entirely unknown, the suffix would not be of any value to the TL audience. As the names are dubbed, it is not possible to add any notes to explain the historical context. Even so, it is difficult to believe that the TL public will understand the significance of an ancient French Warrior. The translators have searched for a Sinhala term to be used instead of the suffix, enabling them to give a certain uniformity to the Gaulish names in the TL. They substitute the suffix with the term pappa. Their choice is intriguing. The Sinhala term is associated with a recognizable cultural figure. In the colloquial language, it reminds the target audience of Naththal Pappa, also known as Naththal Seeya (naththal – Christmas, Pappa/Seeya – grandfather) or Santa Claus. Due to this association, the colloquial Sinhala term gives the idea of an elderly man with long hair, a beard, and a big belly. All the Gauls may not fit this description, but their long beards, and hair justify the use of the term pappa. In the translated names, the term pappa is reserved only for the male characters. The names of the female characters such as Impedimenta, and Panacea who visibly do not possess the suffix -ix in their English names, are not given a unifying term such as pappa or otherwise, in Sinhala too. In the TL names, the term pappa appears as the stem, to which different qualifying adjectives are added.

Table 2 - Proper names of the main characters in English and Sinhala

Language	English (RL)	Sinhala (TL)
Name of the character	Asterix	Soora papa
	Obelix	Jim papa
	Cacofonix/Stopthemusix	Keko pappa/Sarigama kanna
	Vitalstatistix	Loku papa
	Getafix/Panoramix	Veda papa
	Dogmatix	Chuti kuku
	Julius Caesar	Julius Caesar

Asterix is the hero, and the star of the adventure series. His name is inspired from the typographical symbol asterisk which is drawn like a little star. In

addition, the name Asterix is derived from the Greek word asterikos, which means a little star. The heroic nature of the referent echoes in the Sinhala name in a straight to the point manner, without referring to a typographical, or any other symbol. The noun sooraya signifies a talented person or a champion while the adjective soora gives the meaning skilled. Both the terms belong to the colloquial language. The Sinhala term for warrior ranashooraya (shoora a more formal version, also means skilled) could have further supported the choice. Asterix's Sinhala name Soora pappa simply translates as the one/pappa who is skilled. His inseparable friend Obelix is baptized Jim pappa. The use of the term 'Jim' is puzzling as this term is already an English proper name. It is possible that the name is meant to informally represent someone who is like Obelix, a big bellied, fun-loving person who may not be quick witted. The names Asterix and Obelix similar to the French names (Astérix and Obélix) are named after the typographical symbols asterisk and obelus. These two inseparable marks symbolize the friendship between the two characters, one following the other and always together. However, in the Sinhala names, such a connection to bring to focus the closeness between the two characters is seemingly lost. Furthermore, the name Obelix is closely linked to the term obelisk. The menhir that Obelix carves, and delivers conveniently resembles an obelisk, the Egyptian architectural form. In the Sinhala name of Obelix, any indication of his profession cannot be discerned.

Vitalstatistix, the chief of the Gaulish village is known in Sinhala as Loku pappa. Loku signifies big while the term lokka in the day-to-day language means the boss. Considering the two terms, the use of the name Loku pappa can be justified as the character is corpulent and also the village leader. The Sinhala name directly, and plainly refers to his size and status. On the contrary, in the RL name, the reference to his size is crafted with humour as well as literary sophistication. The name Vitalstatistix does not directly suggest that the character is overweight. Indirectly the audience understand his vital statistics are higher than average. The druid is called Getafix except in the first film, in which he keeps his French name Panoramix. In the TL, the character is consistently called Veda pappa in all the five films. The translators have chosen a name for the druid based on his profession. The indigenous medicine man is known as Veda Mahaththaya in Sinhala. The adjective veda gives the meaning medicine while mahaththaya is a polite equivalent to mister in English. The translators have replaced mahaththaya with pappa creating the name Veda pappa that the target audience can easily decipher. However, Panoramix is not just a medicine man. As seen in the films, the druid is capable of concocting potions, like a magician. This meaning is lost in the TL version. For Cacophonix, the translators have created the name Keko pappa. Keko comes from the verb keko gahanava, meaning to shout. Rather than to say keko gahana pappa (pappa who shouts) the translators have taken only the adverb keko and put together with pappa to form an easy to pronounce name, and also to suggest that the person in question is noisy. We observe that keko in Sinhala is phonologically close to /kə'kə/ of cacophony in English. However, the suitability of the name is somewhat debatable as the character is not known to

shout, but to sing. It is his unmusical singing that always leads to chaos. The Sinhala name does not give any indication of his musical talents.

Obelix's pet Dogmatix, though possesses the suffix -ix in his RL name, and is not called a papa in the TL, depriving him of equal status. The dog is given the name Chuti Kuku. The term kuku derives from kukka, often used together as balu kukka, an informal way to say a dog. In this context, it is used as an affectionate nickname to call a small dog (chuti - small, kuku - dog). The RL name uses the term dogmatic as it reflects the dog's nature and more importantly the name includes the term 'dog' as well. The translators have not attempted to create a suitable name for the pet dog in the TL.

It is clear that the RL names are not transferred, literally translated, or naturalized in the TL. The translators' strategy is to choose one single dominant yet simple quality of the character, translate it literally into Sinhala, and then add pappu to it, to create the name of the character. This quality either directly refers to the physical appearance or to the profession. Beyond that, the Sinhala translators have not explored creative literary solutions. They also have not attempted to duplicate the strategies employed by the English translators. The Sinhala names, however, correspond to the characters in question. These names are easily pronounceable in the TL and comprehensible to the TL audience. The terms on which the names are based, are familiar, direct and rudimentary making it possible for the TL audience to grasp the meaning straightway. The strategy adopted by the translators favour a domestication approach. In doing so, it sacrifices the humour, and the word play seen in the RL names as seen in the summarised comparison in Table 3.

Table 3 - Comparison of the names of the main characters in the RL and the TL

Character in English (RL)		Character in Sinhala (TL)	
Name	Meaning	Name	Meaning
Asterix	asterisk/star + ix	<i>Soora pappu</i>	Champion/skilled + <i>pappu</i>
Obelix	obelisk/obelus + ix	<i>Jim pappu</i>	fat/silly + <i>pappu</i>
Getafix	get a fix on the stars + ix	<i>Veda pappu</i>	medicine + <i>pappu</i>
Cacofonix	cacophony + ix	<i>Keko pappu</i>	noise + <i>pappu</i>
Vitalstatistix	vital measurements + ix	<i>Loku pappu</i>	boss/big + <i>pappu</i>
Dogmatix	dogmatic + ix	<i>Chuti Kuku</i>	small dog

The terms employed in the TL such as veda, sooraya, loku already exist in the day-to-day Sinhala. Some are already used as nicknames. An exception is the creation of Keko pappu, somewhat unfamiliar at first to the ear. The main reason is that keko, the adverb of the phrasal verb keko gahanawa is employed as a qualifying adjective in a person's name, which is grammatically questionable. Keko pappu is also known as Sarigama kanna. In the first film,

when the bard is called Stopthemusix, not Cacophonix, the Sinhala translators too have thought of another name for him. Sarigama when broken down to syllables represent the first four sounds of sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, da, ni, sa the seven basic tones of the Indian classical music. Kanna means the one who eats. The name literally means the one who metaphorically eats (or destroys) the music which resembles the name Stopthemusix to some extent. This name too, similar to the others, makes the associated between the name and the referent, direct, and simple. However, it is noted that this name does not include the term pappa given to all the Gauls.

The only Roman name in the list Julius Caesar is not translated. The name is known to the local audience, and it has been naturalized in the TL. Translating according to the phonological rules of the TL essentially concerns historical names such as Caesar (Ballard 30). A phonological assimilation is noted in the pronunciation of the name Caesar in the TL films. The name Julius Caesar is not pronounced with a British accent, but rather with an exaggeratedly emphasized first syllable si:, and a stress on the (r) in Caesar to make the name sound close to the TL.

Table 4 - Other translated names in the TL

Name of the film	English (RL)	Sinhala (TL)
<i>Asterix the Gaul/ Soora pappa saha gaul wesiyo</i>	Phonus Balonus	Nidi Kumba
	Caligula Minus	Heen Kota
<i>Asterix in Britain/ Soora pappa saha engalantha savariya</i>	Anticlimax	Peetara
	Blacksmix	Kulugedi papa
<i>Asterix and Cleopatra/ Soora pappa saha Cleopatra</i>	Edifis	Makabaas
	Artifis	Nikanbaas
<i>Asterix conquers America/ Soora pappa saha america gamana</i>	Champion	Thadigudiboss
	Panacea	Mal Kumari
	Unhygienix	Kelawalla
<i>The Twelve Tasks of Asterix/ Soora pappa saha weda 12</i>	Caius Tiddlus	Sadharana Kota

From the first film *Asterix the Gaul*, we examine the names of Caligula Minus and Phonus Balonus. The former is translated as Heen Kota, while the latter is called Nidi Kumba. The name Heen Kota is formed, based on the character's physical appearance. Caligula Minus is thin and short. In Sinhala, heen signifies thin, and kota is an unflattering colloquial equivalent of shorty. This name

appears more like a nickname than a proper name; firstly, the first name and the last name both refer to his physical appearance: Secondly, the names are humiliating than humorous, pointing to imperfections. Similarly, another character flow is highlighted in the name Nidi Kumba. The name refers to a flower. Nidi Kumba or *Mimosa pudica* is a flower of which the defining feature is that it 'sleeps' or its nyctynastic movement. In colloquial Sinhala, Nidi kumba which already exists as a nickname, refers to a person who falls asleep quite often day or night, and also lazy. In the film, we see on several occasions Centurion Balonus fast asleep during the day, which makes sleepiness, and laziness his distinctive characteristics, and his claim to the name Nidi Kumba. However, it is ironical that the military officer is intentionally named in this manner when professionally he is obliged to be vigilant and active. This proves again that the translators have taken existing nicknames in Sinhala that suit the characters, without making an effort to create effective proper names.

Blacksmix, who appear in *Asterix in Britain* is the village blacksmith. The name has been formed giving prominence to his profession. Similarly, in the TL, the character is called Kulugedi pappa. The term kulugedi means the sledgehammer, the essential tool of the blacksmith. The name matches the character, and its profession as he seems quite attached to his tool, never appearing without it. In same the film, we see Asterix's cousin Anticlimax making an appearance. In Sinhala, he is called Peetara, a proper name that is not uncommon in the TC. It is possible that it derived from the Western name Peter and was naturalized in Sinhala. We assume that the name is particularly chosen here, because the Western influence in the name is easily recognizable, and it is fittingly given to a British national. In contrast to the name in the RL, the Sinhala name does not express any particular meaning.

From the film *Asterix and Cleopatra*, we have included the two names given to the two architects. Though the two Egyptians are architects, they are named Makabaas and Nikanbaas in the TL, transforming them to workmen. Baas is the Sinhala term to say workman such as mason (masonbaas) or carpenter (vadubaas). The term makabaas signifies the disastrous workman, used in informal contexts. It also refers to the verb makanava which means to erase. Seeing Edifis's buildings, the audience is assured of his poor skills as an architect. His rival Artifis is called Nikan Baas which gives the meaning useless workman or workman without a specialization (nikan – nothing). The two names emphasize their ill fate. Although the translators succeed in adding a touch of humour, they lower their status to workman, and their names to a figure of amusement. The RL names are derived from two terms; Edifis (edifice – to construct) and Artifis (artifice – deceit): both the terms have a clear connection to the character or the profession. The suffix -is represent their tribe, as opposed to the Gauls, whose names end with -ix. When compared to the RL names, the lack of creativity and sophistication in the TL names becomes evident.

In *Asterix Conquers America*, the champion of the Red Indian tribe is given the name Thadigudiboss. The Sinhala name is created by the translators putting

together three terms: ‘boss’ is the English borrowing, and thadi, and gudi are an example of the use of onomatopoeia. These sounds echo the shots and blows given by a fighter. The name describes a person who is “the boss of giving punches.” It is interesting to note that as the champion does not have a name in the RL, the translators could have left the character without a name or simply call him a champion fighter in the TL. They have chosen to create a comic name for him with the intention to entertain the audience.

The female character Panacea, who makes a brief appearance in this film, is called Mal Kumari, which literally translates as flower princess or princess of flowers. She is referred to as Jim pappa’s flower implying that he is infatuated by her. The translators have added the term kumari meaning princess to acknowledge her beauty. The RL name Panacea has a more complex meaning; a remedy or a solution to all difficulties or diseases. In contrast, the TL meaning seems transparent. For Unhygienix the village fishmonger, the translators settled on the name Kelawalla. In the TL, this is a name of a fish, a tuna to be more precise. As he sells fish, he is simply called by a name of a fish, but why they have chosen this particular fish poses a question. The name of the fish is readily understood, and it is widely available in the country. It is possible that its familiarity could make the name easily comprehensible to the TL audience. Unfortunately, this name does not bring out the poor quality of his merchandise as in the RL. Further, we note that the fishmonger is just called Kelawalla, and the term pappa is not added to his name. The uniformity created by giving this unique term to all Gauls is not respected in this particular case.

In the fifth film *The Twelve Tasks of Asterix*, Caius Tiddlus is the Roman that Caesar sends to accompany Asterix and Obelix. Caesar himself describes him honest, and fair. The name given to him in the TL Sadharana Kota raises questions. The term sadharana is the literal translation of fair. It is not a colloquial term, but a standard term used in formal contexts. His second name kota points to his physical appearance, like in the case of another Roman Caliguliminix/Heen Kota. He too, is of short build. As names in the TL are concerned, this particular name sounds more comically implausible than the others as it is difficult to grasp this unusual combination given as a name to a person. The standard term sadharna is paired with kota which is a colloquial term, and also a nickname given to a short person. In the name, the positive moral quality is undermined by the less impressive physical quality creating a certain contradiction. It is questionable that whether this name is capable of evoking humour.

The names proposed in the TL, similar to those that we have already seen in Table 3, communicate the meaning effortlessly. In the names in Table 4, the meaning or the technique employed in the RL, are not reproduced in the TL, with Kulugedi pappa being the only exception. Familiar words, and nicknames are continuously used in the TL as equivalents. It is evident that the comprehension of the TL audience has been privileged. The Sinhala proper

names reveal that a domestication strategy has been practiced to a great extent.

The translators have employed other strategies in the five animated films. They are summarised and presented in Table 5.

Table 5 – Summary of other strategies employed by the Sinhala translators

Film	English (RL)	Sinhala (TL)	Strategy
<i>Asterix in Britain/ Soora pappasaha engalantha savariya</i>	General Motus	<i>Senpathithuma/ Uthumaneni</i>	Proper name replaced by military rank
	Stratocumulus	<i>Sulu Muladeniya</i>	
	Gaulix/Escartefix	<i>Wine Mudalali</i>	Proper name replaced by Profession
	Instantmix	-	Omission
	Totalapsus	-	
<i>Asterix conquers America/ Soora pappasaha america gamana</i>	Lucullus	<i>Cesar gegolaya Roman karaya</i>	Proper names replaced by allegiance to Caesar/Rome
	Impedimenta	-	Omission
<i>The Twelve Tasks of Asterix / Soora pappasaha weda 12</i>	Asbestos (the Olympic champion runner)	Olympic runner	Proper name replaced by profession
	Verses (the Persian Javelin thrower)	Javelin thrower	
	Mannekenpix (Chef of the Titans)	Chef	
	Cylindric (the German)	<i>German karaya</i>	Proper name replaced by nationality
	Iris (the Egyptian magician)	<i>Egyptu magician</i>	Proper name replaced by nationality and profession
	Geriatrics	<i>Manamalaya</i>	Proper name replaced by a nickname

<i>Asterix the Gaul/ Soora pappa saha gaul wesiyo</i>	Marcus Samapus	<i>Luthinal</i> (Lieutenant)	Proper name replaced by military Rank
	Jupiter	-	Omission
	Toutatis	-	
<i>Asterix and Cleopatra/ Soora pappa saha Cleopatra</i>	Osiris	-	
	Belisama	-	
	Toutatis	-	
	Belanus	-	

As we see in Table 5, one strategy practiced by the translators is to replace the proper name by the military rank alone. A case in point is General Motus who is called Senpathithuma meaning the general, while leaving out his proper name. As for the various names of the Roman officials, and soldiers, they are often omitted altogether in the films. An effort has not been taken to translate them. For example, Lucullus is at times called Roman karaya (a Roman national), or Caesar ge golaya (Caesar's assistant), and on several other occasions he is addressed only by using the pronoun "you."

In the case of the village chief's wife Impedimenta too, the translators replace name with the pronoun 'you' to address her, and avoid giving a name to the character. Though she has not been given a name in the dubbed films, at times she is called Loku hamine. Hamine in day-to-day Sinhala signifies wife. She is referred to as Loku hamine as she is the first lady of the village, the wife of the chief Loku pappa. Among the names that are completely omitted are the names of gods, Roman, Gaulish, and Egyptian. Replacing the name with the profession is another strategy preferred by the TL translators. For example, Gaulix the wine merchant is simply called Wine mudalali in the voice over, omitting his name.

When foreigners appear at times in *The Twelve Tasks of Asterix*, although they are given names in the RL, in the TL, they are only referred to by the nationality or the profession as seen in Table 5. In certain cases, their names are completely omitted from the dialogues. Occasionally, a nickname is given to a character instead of a proper name. When Geriatrix looks at a beautiful young Roman woman, his compatriots make fun of him calling him Manamalaya, a commonly used nickname in day-to-day Sinhala. The term literally means the groom, but metaphorically as in this case, a flirt.

The names of a considerable number of secondary characters are either replaced or omitted in the TL. It gives the impression that these characters do not play a significant role in the plot, or that their significance is limited either to the nationality or to the profession. The translators have not undertaken the task of finding equivalents to these names which require reflexion and imagination. For example, the name of the chief's wife Impedimenta originates from the noun impediment, which signifies obstruction. It has been converted

into a woman's name stressing on her role in the household. By eliminating such names, and particularly those of gods, the excitement and amusement added to the narrative are lessened to some extent. Further, all traces of foreign names are removed, thus producing an audience friendly dubbed version in the TL.

Conclusion

The aim of the translators has been to provide the characters of *Astérix* with humorous names, a tradition previously practised in the Sinhala dubbed films. Based on the analysis, we perceive that the easy comprehension, the simple humour and the informal nature have been the main feature in the translated names in the TL. The rapport between the name, the meaning of the name, and the referent, or in other words, why this character has been given to this particular name, sets forth effortlessly on most occasions. Even when the meaning is not very clear, for example in the case of Jim pappa; the audience have enthusiastically accepted it, as it is novel, and captivating. The advantage is that they are easy to remember and can easily be used to make fun of someone who fits the description. The use of the term pappa became a phenomenal success applauding the choice of the translators. In fact, it is the use of this particular term added to the names of the main Gaul characters that primarily captured the audience's attention. These names and terms have been popularized to such an extent by the Sinhala dubbed films that one could wonder whether these colloquial words were used in a similar manner before.

When comparing with the English translation of the names, particularly the names of the Gauls, the different degrees of complexity lacking in the Sinhala names become apparent. Bell and Hockridge had six rules that they applied when translating *Astérix* albums. Number five on the list is marked "very important":

Very important: we will try the same kind of mixture of jokes as in the French where Asterix appeals on a number of levels. There's the story-line itself with its ever-attractive theme of the clever little fellow outwitting the hulking great brute; there is simple knockabout humour, both verbal and visual, which goes down well with the young children; there are puns and passages of wordplay for older children; and there is some distinctly sophisticated humour, depending on literary or artistic allusion for the adult or near-adult mind. (Kessler 60)

In our opinion, what is lacking in the Sinhala films is the number of levels that *Astérix* can be appreciated, particularly the sophisticated humour, the literary or artistic allusion, and the wordplay for the adult audience. Unlike in the RL version, the TL translators have not attempted to create the overall effect that the authors intended. This aspect is evident not just in the translation of the proper names but that of expressions, and socio-cultural elements which are not examined in this paper.

The translators' decision to limit to simple humour and easy comprehension could be explained by the fact that *Astérix* was another cartoon meant for

children, young adults, and not beyond. Another reason is that, in a dubbed version, easy comprehension of the names allows the audience to follow the story without having to spend time on unravelling the word plays. Overall, the strategies employed by the translators predominantly favour domestication, erasing all the traces of the foreign presence. The RL names are substituted, omitted, or replaced, bringing them closer to the TL audience.

The translated names succeeded in complementing the original storyline, and the characters and also to win the audience of all ages exceeding the expectations. Though the study reveals a loss of literary and sophisticated humour and a wordplay, it has not affected negatively the reception of the films. It is evident that the Sinhala translators' strategies aimed to popularize the series in Sri Lanka. The popularity of the series in turn translates into financial gains for the TV station, which is another achievement for the translators. It must be acknowledged that even though the translators have sacrificed certain important aspects of the comic series, their strategies have undeniably succeeded in achieving their goals.

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