The Reduction of Domestication of Anime on American Television Over Four Decades

Jillian Rae Suter, Shizuoka University, Japan

Abstract
The importation of anime into the United States began with Astro Boy in 1963. One aspect of this anime boom in the US that has not been explored fully is the process of domesticating anime for American audiences, and gradual reduction of that process. Early anime was heavily edited and reworked to adapt to what the US distributors and producers thought the audience would accept. An extreme example of this editing is when two anime shows, Space Pirate Captain Harlock and Queen Millenia, were combined into a single anime show, Captain Harlock and the Queen of 1000 Years. Over four decades in the study, domestication of anime has dropped significantly, to where domestication of most shows has been minimized to only the necessary translation of the works. This study aims to explore the reasoning behind becoming less domesticated by analyzing the timeline of the anime imported into the US for American television. Specifically, the study has looked the transition of main character's names over 40 years while also considering the anime's English producers and translators, distributors, broadcasters, target audiences, and adaptations from 99 anime television shows that were either syndicated, on broadcast, or on cable in the US from 1963 to 2003.

Keywords: Anime, Domestication, Translation, Television

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

Anime has been shown in the US since 1963 and has become a cultural juggernaut around the world. However, how companies today translate anime is vastly different from previously. The largest changed was the lessening of domestication that happened starting in the 1990s. Before that time, shows were highly domesticated for American audiences. They eventually shifted towards more accurate representation of the original Japanese shows. Japanese culture, values, and lifestyles became more on display for American audiences. There is a lack of comprehensive research into the ways in which anime became less domesticated over time as well as the reasons for that. This paper is an early attempt at explaining that process.

Early Anime

Anime's international distribution goes back further than television. Japanese animation went to film festivals fairly early on. (Denison, 2015) Rental libraries of containing anime movies started in the 1950s. However, the first anime to be broadcasted on American television was Astro Boy in 1963. Between 1963 and 1979, nine were translated and broadcasted for American audiences and between 1980 and 1989, 24 anime were translated for American audiences (Erickson, An Illustrated Encyclopedia, 1949-2003 Television Cartoon Shows, 2005) (Woolery, 1983). In the early years, Japanese media wasn't looked at something worth preserving. In general, media was seen as more ephemeral and short-term than it is today. One American translation of one anime shown in 1967, Cyborg Big "X", has been lost to time, and no known copies remain.

Additionally, the stories were re-written, the characters changed, and in one example, two anime were combined into one and spliced together. <u>Captain Harlock and the Queen of 1000 Years</u> was an anime that aired in the US in 1985 and was spliced together from two anime, <u>Space Pirate Captain Harlock</u> and <u>Queen Millenia</u> (Erickson, An Illustrated Encyclopedia, 1949-2003 Television Cartoon Shows, 2005). Star Blazers was reworked to that very little matched the original Japanese version (Napier, From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West, 2007). The anime Gatchaman was translated and reworked three times to make three unique anime for American audiences unrelated to each other, Battle of the Planets, G-Force, and Eagle Riders.

There is also the issue with censoring content. What is acceptable in each country is different morally as well as legally. Scenes, dialogue, episodes, and entire seasons had to be cut for censoring reasons (Denison, 2015). One of the pioneers of bringing anime to the US was Fred Ladd. He was credited with saving three of six Astro Boy episodes that were originally rejected by "Standards and Practices" at NBC by cutting sequences and hiding the deaths of character though dialogue changes (Denison, 2015).

This was to become the hallmark of Japanese animation in the USA before the advent of home video cultures – a constant push from pressure government and pressure groups like the ACT (Action for Children's Television) and therefore from US re-producers – for Japanese animation to be produced in ways that did not challenge US conceptions of morality and child-friendly content.

Fan Expectations

There was the editing and censoring on television on the one hand. There was is also the push for more authenticity between fans, on the other hand. That was because fan translation makes the effort to be as authentic as possible, even if they are illegal. They do not have to negotiate contracts, so they can work very fast and get to the audience before official work does. This drives the desire for content that is close to the original. Anime fans would go to conventions and swap video tapes they translated themselves. Many of them not otherwise available in the US at the time. This swapping of video tapes was a very important activity at anime conventions (Napier, From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West, 2007).

Western anime fans began to clamor for more and different varieties of anime and were increasingly able to obtain them. As time went on, subtitling became ever more sophisticated, as fans began to learn Japanese themselves. Later, the internet allowed fans all over the world to get in touch with each other, to spread news about conventions, to trade tapes, obtain anime-related paraphernalia, and to organize clubs of like-minded souls in the same area. As the anime continued to expand on television and beyond into the US market, these tensions and between producers and distributors and fans would become more apparent. (Denison, 2015)

Cultural Exposure

Part of the draw of anime is the fact that does come from Japan, as Napier says, "as anime becomes more and more mainstream, fans are still highly aware that they are participating in activities surrounding a culture very different from their own, which may well be one of anime's central attractions." (From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West, 2007) A Napier also expresses the idea that in contemporary culture, anime could also be an intersection where the elements of different cultures come together to form something new. And given how Japanese and American culture continue to be dissimilar, the "differentness" will expand in the future. (Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation, 2005)

Beginning in the 1990 and through to the early 2000s, there is a distinct pattern that developed as more people became accustomed to Japanese culture and names. The names of the characters were originally translated to more English or Western sounding names. Later, American and Canadian translators started preserving the names as much as possible.

This phenomenon did not happen spontaneously, this was a conscious decision of the distributors based on many factors, the strongest of which is the audiences desire for more authentic content in their anime. Anime on television was not the source of anime. VHS fan-subbing was also really popular among die-hard fans. (Denison, 2015)

Anime is seen as a significant part of Japanese culture and many people who enjoy anime specifically is because it is Japanese. They may not be fans of animated shows in general. Preserving the foreign names is an important part of keeping it as "Japanese" as possible for the fans. And these names are still foreign. They are not names that have been integrated into American society outside of the ethnic Japanese population in the United States. It is not a case where the "foreignness" is integrated, it stays explicitly "other" and that is a part of its desirability. (Allison, 2006)

With anime, the characters might signal race, but they don't have to be a certain ethnicity unless expressly stated. Iwabuchi describes how Japanese export products like anime are "culturally odorless." (Iwabuchi, 2004) In anime, as opposed to live action shows, character names can be changed without changing the actor behind it. Also, the dubbing process allows the switching of names to happen seamlessly during the translation process as a whole. There is no technical reason to keep Japanese names as there is no technical reason to shift to a Western name. The whole process is demonstrating that the American audience wants more authenticity in their translation process and exposure to Japanese culture, even without knowing Japanese.

Anime often is set in places that are not clearly Japanese. These places allow for the entire context of the anime to be accessible to viewers compared to other contemporary medium (Napier, Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation, 2005).

Culture Specific Items

Translations have never been easy, especially for anime in the United States where the source and target languages are vastly different, and the culture specific items are numerous. Culture specific items are words or phrases that do not have one to one translation because they are tired to the culture that they exist in. A person's name, a type of local flower, a festival, or a religious custom could all be examples of culturally specific items. These are typically problematic to translate, [Bilá Kačmárová, 2018] [Horbačauskienė, Kasperavičienė, Petronienė, 2016] [Olalla-Soler, 2018] because there is a delicate balance when dealing with language and culture [Zainudin Awal, 2011] [Dinçkan, 2010] [Amiri Tabrizi, 2018] [Shiryaeva Badea, 2014].

There are also the skills of the translators and their experience that affect the quality of the translation. With every new anime that is translated into English, all the translations decisions must be made all anew. Hagfors describes how culture specific items "not only place the story of a book in a specific culture and period of time, but also imply certain values and create an ambience. These elements also have an effect on how the reader identifies with the story and characters. Thus, it is important to find the most appropriate strategy to translate such elements [2003]."

These decisions are part of the domestication process of translating, when going from the source language to the target language. Domestication of media happens whenever translation happens. It is inevitable that gangly translations are smoothed out for the consuming audience. This paper will explore the domestication decisions of distributing media in the US when they import Japanese anime for the US audience. Domestication happens for many reasons that are both necessary and unnecessary to understand the original content [Amiri Tabrizi, 2018].

Domestication has many considerations. There is the original text, the authenticity, the accessibility to the target audience, the demographics of the target audience, the history between the countries, and the potential profitability of the text among many others [Bilá Kačmárová, 2018].

Motivation behind the translation is also important. Recently, translations are often looked at as ways to enrich the consumers' culture by learning about foreign ones. [Hagsfors, 2003]

Different times places would have other motivations when translating. The values and standards of the translator also influence the translation [Tuominen, 2019]. Finally, media discourse, and the shows that have come before influence the translation [Kraeva, 2019].

Exchange of information and stories was also common. In the early days of anime, Japanese companies based many of their works on international stories as well as domestic. Osamu Testuka was said to have based some of Astro Boy on Disney characters, especially the big eyes [Napier, Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation, 2005].

A particular cross-cultural example of how things are domesticated. Thunderbirds was a puppet show, "supermarionation", from 1964 to 1966 from England. The show followed and American family, patriarch Jeff Tracy and sons, Scott, John, Virgil, Gordon, and Alan. After, Fuji Television created an anime based loosely off the original show. Instead of a family, it used an international team of characters, who the main character was Raiji Hidaka. When ITC, the company who did the original Thunderbirds, dubbed the anime, most of the original names were tweaked, but the original names were not reused. For example, Gerald Simpson became Jared Simpson. However, Raiji Hidaka became Dylan Beyda.

Methodology

This research looks at the names of the main characters from Japanese animated shows that aired on American televisions from the 1963 to 2003. The first step was an online search for Japanese anime that appeared on American television, which originally produced 314 shows. All shows had to confirmed with at least online two online resources or in one of two books used as reference, preferably both.

Book 1	An Illustrated Encyclopedia, 1949-2003 Television Cartoon Shows, Vol. 1-2
Book 2	Children's Television: The First Thirty-Five Years, 1946-1981 Part 1.
Online Site 1	Anime News Network: https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/
Online Site 2	Cartoon Network Achieves: https://cnas.fandom.com/wiki/List_of_Shows/Cartoon_Network
Online Site 3	My Anime List: https://myanimelist.net/

Table 1: References to confirm anime on US television.

Conflicting online information was sorted based on the discretion of the researchers based on the accuracy of previous information, sited sources, and upkeep of the website. Then the shows that were made by Japanese production companies but were based on works in other languages were eliminated. Direct to home videos were also eliminated from the works to be examined, since the shows were supposed to be shown on television. All sequels were eliminated as well on the basis that the characters would have been named the same in subsequent seasons.

Television shows were chosen because they would be the most conservative with their translations. Most television can be accessed by a general audience, while things like movies were more targeted because they people needed to pay money for access.

Additionally, only broadcasted or cable networks are counted, as other programming, such as satellite had not been included. Any steaming services were not included, especially since there were no streaming services by 2003. Subtitled material was not included. Movies and specials, such as those shown on HBO or Cinemax, are also excluded from the lineup. From that, we have 99 television shows.

Translating show titles was also considered but discarded. Original Japanese programming will make use of English titles for various reasons. On the other hand, unless the main characters were distinctly not Japanese, they would usually have Japanese names. Another consideration animation that has been sourced from foreign sources. Generally, those will not be included in the evaluation.

Only the main characters name was considered. This is because futuristic shows also tended toward a global array of characters. When that was the case, the main character was typically still a Japanese character. It is also noted if they changed the non-Japanese characters names as well. Sometimes, Japanese names could be shorted to a nickname more familiar to American-English ears. For example, Kentaro could be shortened to Ken. In these situations, it was considered as a name change as long as the full name was never acknowledged in the translated episode.

The shows were cut off from 2003 for two reasons. The first was that this research is looking at the transition of character names from English to Japanese. By 2003, the transition was mostly complete. The second reason is that ending it the list in 2003 allowed the shows to be confirmed on television with the *Television Cartoon Shows* guidebook by Hal Erickson. This paring down left 99 shows remaining ranging from 1967 to 2003, with a massive jump in the 1990s.

Title	Television	Year	MCs Non-Japanese Names	Main Characters Name Change
Astro Boy	Syndicated	1963	No	Yes
Gigantor	Syndicated	1964	No	Yes
8th Man	Syndicated	1965	No	Yes
Kimba the White Lion	Syndicated	1965	Yes	Yes
Prince Planet	Syndicated	1966	Yes	Yes
Marine Boy	Syndicated	1966	Yes	No
Zoran Space Boy	Syndicated	1966	Yes	Yes
Cyborg Big "X"	Syndicated	1967	No	No
The Amazing 3	Syndicated	1967	No	Yes
Speed Racer	Syndicated	1967	No	Yes
Battle of the Planets	Syndicated	1978	No	Yes
Star Blazers	Syndicated	1979	No	Yes
Danguard Ace	Syndicated	1980	No	Yes
Gaiking	Syndicated	1980	No	Yes
Grandizer	Syndicated	1980	No	Yes
Spaceketeers	Syndicated	1980	Yes	Yes
Starvengers	Syndicated	1980	No	Yes

The Adventures of the Little Prince	Nickelodeon	1982	Yes	No
Thunderbirds 2086	Syndicated	1983	No	Yes
Honey Honey	CBN	1984	Yes	No
Belle and Sebastian	Nickelodeon	1984	Yes	No
Voltron	Syndicated	1984	No	Yes
Mighty Orbots	ABC	1984	Yes	No
Teknoman	Syndicated	1984	No	Yes
TranZor Z	Syndicated	1985	No	Yes
Captain Harlock and the Queen of 1000 Years	Syndicated	1985	Yes	No
Robotech	Syndicated	1985	No	Yes
The Magical Princess Gigi	Syndicated	1985	No	Yes
Macron 1	Syndicated	1985	No	Yes
G-Force	TBS	1986	No	Yes
The Mysterious Cities of Gold	Nickelodeon	1986	Yes	No
Adventures of the Little Koala	Nickelodeon	1987	Yes	Yes
Maple Town Stories	Nickelodeon	1987	Yes	No
Saber Rider and the Star Sheriffs	Syndicated	1987	No	Yes
Noozles	Nickelodeon	1988	Yes	No
Grimm's Fairy Tale Classics	Nickelodeon	1989	Yes	No
A Wind Named Amnesia	AZN Television	1990	No	No
Maya the Bee	Nickelodeon	1990	Yes	No
Dragon Warrior	Syndicated	1990	Yes	No
Littl' Bits	Nickelodeon	1991	Yes	No
Ronin Warriors	Syndicated	1995	No	Yes
Sailor Moon	Syndicated	1995	No	Yes
Teknoman/Tekkaman	Syndicated	1995	No	Yes
Dragon Ball Z	Syndicated	1996	Yes	No
Eagle Riders	Syndicated	1996	No	Yes
The Adventures of Honeybee Hutch	Syndicated	1996	No	Yes
Samurai Pizza Cats	Syndicated	1996	Yes	Yes
Pokémon	Syndicated	1998	No	Yes
Monster Rancher	FOX	1999	No	No
Digimon: Digital Monsters (seasons 1-3)	FOX ABC Family	1999	No	Yes
Mobile Suit Gundam Wing	Cartoon Network	2000	Yes	No
Escaflowne	FOX	2000	No	No
Tenchi Muyo	Cartoon Network/Adult Swim	2000	No	No
Cardcaptors	WB	2000	No	No
Dinozaurs	FOX	2000	No	No
Flint: The Time Detective	FOX ABC Family	2000	No	Yes
Tama and Friends	Syndicated	2001	No	No

Shinzo	ABC Family	2001	Yes	No
Medabots	ABC Family	2001	No	No
Cowboy Bebop	Cartoon Network/Adult Swim	2001	Yes	No
Outlaw Star	Cartoon Network/Adult Swim	2001	Yes	No
The Big-O	Cartoon Network/Adult Swim	2001	Yes	Yes
Dragon Ball	Cartoon Network	2001	Yes	No
Yu-Gi-Oh!	WB	2001	No	Yes
Mon Colle Knights	FOX	2001	No	No
Zoids New Century Zero	Cartoon Network	2001	Yes	Yes
Kirby: Right Back at Ya!	FOX	2002	Yes	No
Ultimate Muscle	FOX	2002	Yes	Yes
Fighting Foodons	FOX	2002	No	Yes
Pilot Candidate	Cartoon Network/Adult Swim	2002	Yes	No
Crest of the Stars	TechTV	2002	Yes	No
Silent Mobius	TechTV G4 (Anime Unleashed)	2002	No	No
Beyblade	ABC Family	2002	No	Yes
InuYasha	Cartoon Network/Adult Swim	2002	No	No
Hamtaro	Cartoon Network	2002	No	Yes
Tokyo Pig	ABC Family	2002	No	Yes
Shaman King	FOX	2003	No	No
Sonic X	FOX	2003	Yes	No
Dai-Guard	Cartoon Network/Toonami	2003	No	No
Martian Successor Nadesico	Cartoon Network/Toonami	2003	No	No
The Twelve Kingdoms	ImaginAsian TV	2003	No	No
Android Kikaider: The Animation	Cartoon Network/Adult Swim	2003	No	No
.hack//Sign	Cartoon Network/Toonami	2003	No	No
Scrapped Princess	ImaginAsian TV	2003	Yes	No
Banner of the Stars	TechTV	2003	Yes	No
Betterman	TechTV	2003	Yes	No
SD Gundam Force	Cartoon Network/Toonami	2003	Yes	No
Knights of the Zodiac: Saint Seiya	Cartoon Network/SVES	2003	Yes	No
Daigunder	ABC Family	2003	No	No

FLCL (Fooly Cooly)	Cartoon Network/Adult Swim	2003	No	No
Yu Yu Hakusho	Cartoon Network/Adult Swim	2003	No	No
Blue Gender	Cartoon Network/Adult Swim	2003	No	No
Dual! Parallel Trouble Adventure	TechTV	2003	No	No
Gate Keepers 21	TechTV	2003	No	No
Trigun	Cartoon Network/Adult Swim	2003	No	No
Rurouni Kenshin	Cartoon Network/Toonami/SVES	2003	No	No
Pecola	Cartoon Network	2003	Yes	No
Cyborg 009	Cartoon Network/Toonami	2003	Yes	No
Reign the Conqueror	Cartoon Network/Adult Swim	2003	Yes	No

Table 2: The Main Character Name Change Chart by Year

The yellow means that the main character's name was Japanese, and it was changed. Orange means that the main character's name was not Japanese, and it was changed. Green means the main character's name was not Japanese, and it was not changed. Blue means the main character's name was Japanese, and it was not changed.

Conclusion and Discussion

There is a clear increasing trend towards keeping the original name as a culture specific item. This ties in with the idea that they fact it was Japanese meant that it was more desirable. Almost all early shows changed the names of the main character, whether they were originally Japanese or not. The first show that did not change the main character's name was Cyborg Big "X", in which they kept the main character's name of Akira, in 1967. This would not happen again until 1990, when A Wind Names Amnesia was shown on ANZ network, a cable station. The next time it happened also jumped to 1999 with Monster Rancher on FOX. By 2003, none of the main character's names where changed, whether they were originally Japanese or not.

Another consideration was that anime originally shown on cable, besides the ones on Nickelodeon, which was aimed more at younger children, were far more likely to keep the names than syndicated shows. This could suggest an older and more targeted audience. Fans' demands based on their increasing sophistication towards anime as well as changing thoughts on the purposes of translation lessened the domestication over time.

Limits on the paper include contemporary reactions to the anime titles at their release. All of the resources have been retrospectives looking back at anime and not first-hand accounts of audiences' responses. Further studies expanding on this research could include contemporary resources of audience impressions and translation decision making.

References

(2021, 09 30). Retrieved from My Anime List: https://myanimelist.net/

(2021, 9 30). Retrieved from Anime News Network: https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/

Allison, A. (2006). *Millennial Monsters.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Amiri, E. S., & Tabrizi, H. H. (2018). The Study of English Culture-Specific Items in Persian Translation Based on House's Model: The Case of Waiting for Godot. *International Journal of English Linguistics* , 135-145.

Bilá, M., & Kačmárová, A. (2018). Is There Anything Like a Universal Typology of Translation Solutions for Culture-Specific Items. *Journal of Language and Literary Studies* , 67-84.

Cartoon Network Archives. (2021, 9 30). Retrieved from Fandom: https://cnas.fandom.com/wiki/List_of_Shows/Cartoon_Network

Denison, R. (2015). *Anime: A critical introduction.* London: Bloomsbury.

Dinçkan, Y. (2010). Culture-Bound Collocations in Bestsellers: A Study of Their Translations from English into Turkish. *Meta* , 456-473.

Erickson, H. (2005). *An Illustrated Encyclopedia, 1949-2003 Television Cartoon Shows* (Vol. 1). jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc.

Hagsfors, I. (2003). The Translation of Culture-Bound Elements into Finnish in the Post-War Period. *Meta* , 115-127.

Horbačauskienė, J., Kasperavičienė, R., & Petronienė, S. (2016). Issues of culture specific item translation in subtitling. *Interntational Conference; Meaning in Translation: Illusion of Precision* (pp. 223-228). Riga: Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Iwabuchi, K. (2004). How "Japanese" is Pokemon? In J. Tobin, *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokemon* (pp. 53-79). Durham: Duke University Press.

Karpińska, P. (2018). Official and internet translations - comparison of culture related aspects from the perspective of foreignisation and domestication dichotomy. *Journal of Education Culture and Society* , 136-153.

Kraeva, S. (2019). Translations of Proper Nouns in Media Discourse as a Didactic Problem . *III (Post mass media in the modern informational society) Journalistic text in a new technological environment: achievements and problems* (pp. 335-345). Chelyabinsk: Future Academy.

Napier, S. J. (2005). *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Napier, S. J. (2007). *From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Olalla-Soler, C. (2018). Using electronic information resources to solve cultural translation problems: Differences between students and professional translators. *Journal of Documentation* , 1293-1317.

Shiryaeva, V., & Badea, G. L. (2014). Subtitling: The Transfer of Culture-Specific Words in a Multidimensional Translation. *LUMEN* (pp. 883-888). Iasi: Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Tuominen, T. (2019). Experiencing translated media: why audience research needs translation studies. *Translator* , 229-241.

Woolery, G. W. (1983). *Children's Television: The First Thirty-Five Years, 1946-1981.* Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Zainudin, I. S., & Awal, N. M. (2011). Translation technique: problems and solutions. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* , 328-334.

Contact email: jill.rae.suter@gmail.com