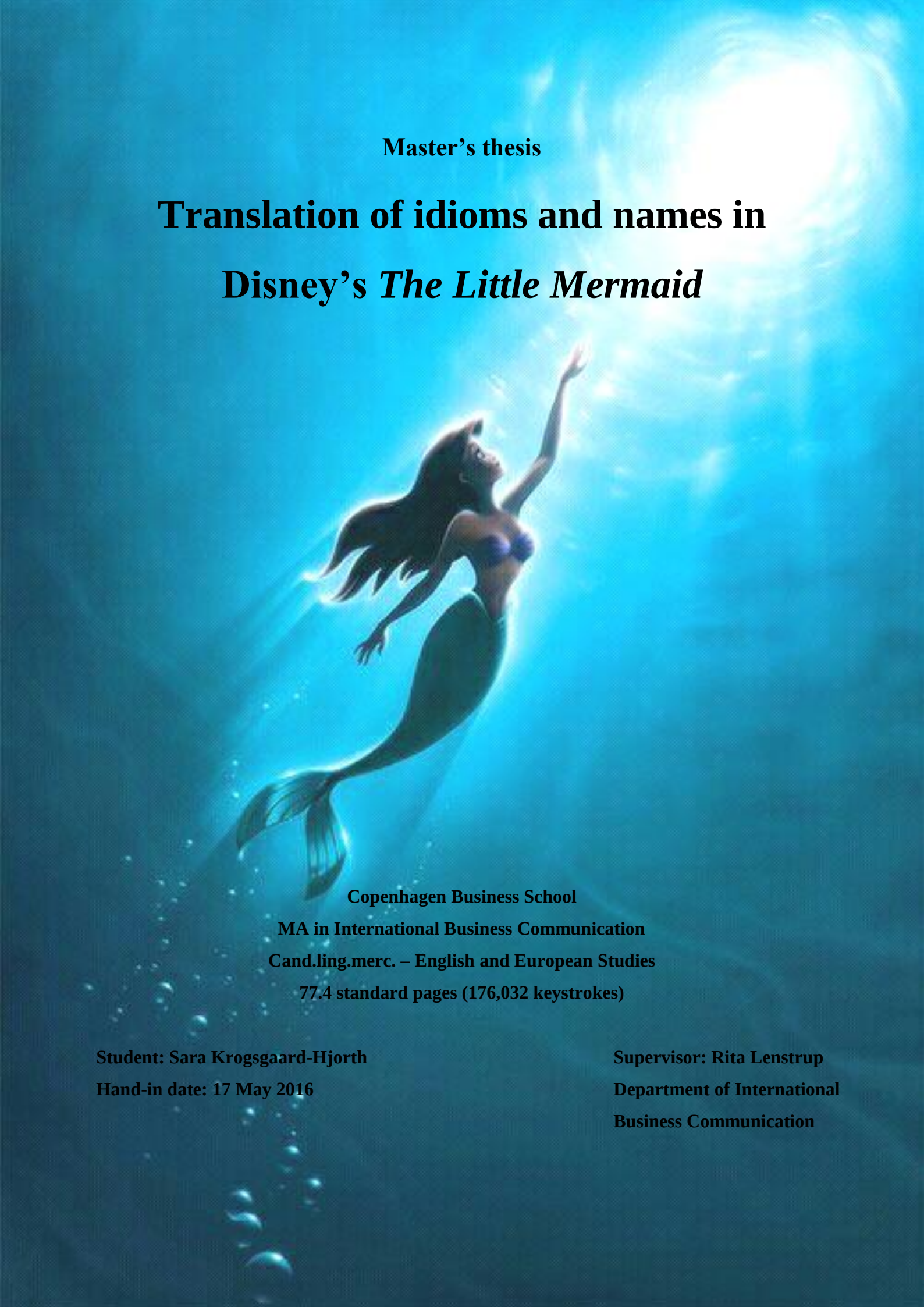
Master's thesis

Translation of idioms and names in Disney's *The Little Mermaid*



Copenhagen Business School

MA in International Business Communication

Cand.ling.merc. – English and European Studies

77.4 standard pages (176,032 keystrokes)

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Hand-in date: 17 May 2016

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Dansk resumé

Oversættelse af idiomer og navne i Disneys *Den Lille Havfrue*

Formålet med dette speciale er at svare på følgende problemformulering: *Hvor vellykket er oversættelsen af idiomer og navne i Disneys Den Lille Havfrue?* Der er mange forskellige faktorer, der spiller ind, når man skal oversætte idiomer og navne i en animationsfilm for børn. For det første er der idiomerne selv, der helst skal oversættes til noget, der ligner, og hvis ikke det kan lade sig gøre, skal oversættelsen kunne fremføre omtrent den samme mening som originalen. For det andet skal man under synkroniseringen tage hensyn til billedsiden, og dermed sørge for, at den oversatte dialog passer sammen med karakterernes gestikulation og mundbevægelser. Dertil skal man også overveje, hvorvidt der skal ske nogen tilpasninger til målgruppen, og om der er noget, som de barnlige seere ikke kan tåle eller forstå. Det samme gælder for karakterernes navne, da en del kan gå tabt i oversættelsen af disse. I animationsfilm har navne ofte tydelige konnotationer til for eksempel karakterernes personlighed eller udseende, og disse konnotationer skal gerne overføres, så seerne ikke går glip af noget.

Alle de ovennævnte elementer vil blive beskrevet i specialets teoretiske del, og vil derefter blive brugt som udgangspunkt for den analytiske del. En række eksempler fra filmen vil blive vurderet i analysen ud fra de forskellige emner. Resultaterne fra analysen viser, at idiomatikken fra den engelske originalversion er forholdsvis godt bevaret i den danske oversættelse, selvom det ikke altid er lykkedes oversætterne at finde et tilsvarende idiom på dansk. På trods af det virker oversættelserne stadig naturlige, og de passer godt ind i filmens stemning.

Derudover er den danske dialog godt tilpasset filmens billedside, da der er få steder, hvor mundbevægelserne er meget ved siden af. Der er gjort noget ud af, at de danske ord bliver ytret på strategiske tidspunkter, så for eksempel tydelige vokaler og konsonanter er blevet placeret samme sted i begge versioner. På den måde bliver mundbevægelserne så naturlige, som det nu er muligt i en synkroniseret film (i hvert fald i idiomernes tilfælde, da det kun er dem, der bliver undersøgt i dette speciale).

Det har ikke været nødvendigt at lave mange ændringer i den danske version for at hjælpe eller beskytte børn, da den originale version allerede er målrettet børn. Alligevel er nogle engelske idiomer i oversættelsesprocessen flere steder blevet udspecificeret eller forklaret i flere detaljer end

originalen, men det er typisk på grund af manglen på et dansk idiom, der kan sige det samme. Der er dog også blevet introduceret nogle mere udfordrende ord, som danske børn ikke forventes at forstå, og sågar et bandeord som ikke var at finde i den engelske dialog. Det antyder, at danske børn forventes at være mere åbne over for fremmede ord og bandeord end det oprindelige amerikanske publikum.

Navnene i den danske version vurderes at være ganske vellykkede. Størstedelen af dem har det slet ikke været nødvendig at oversætte, da de originale ikke har nogen specifikke konnotationer, der skulle overføres. De, der har, er blevet overført på en måde, så konnotationerne enten er blevet overført gennem en direkte oversættelse, eller også er konnotationerne blevet ændret en smule. De, der ikke har beholdt deres oprindelige konnotationer, har fået nogle nye, der også passer glimrende til de pågældende karakterer. Derfor vil man kun bemærke ændringen, hvis man også kender den engelske version. Dog er der også blevet foretaget nogle ændringer i få navne, som vurderes at være unødvendige, men de gør heller ingen skade for dem, der kun ser den danske version af filmen.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction to the thesis

Idioms can be a difficult challenge to face for a translator. The meaning of the individual words may be different than the meaning of the idiom as a whole, or the literal meaning may seem like utter nonsense. The literal meaning could also make perfect sense in a particular situation, even though a figurative meaning was intended. It is thus important for the translator to be familiar with idioms in the source language in order to be able to identify and interpret them and to render the correct meaning in the target text.

The translation of idioms can be relevant in all types of text. In literary and other written texts, there is often room for a certain amount of flexibility when it comes to rephrasing and explaining idioms in another language, but in audiovisual translation, this freedom to elaborate is much more limited. Subtitles have strict rules with regard to time and space, and dubbing needs to match the gestures and lip movements of the characters, among other things. This environment poses an additional challenge to translators of idioms in films.

Another aspect that may add to the complexity of translating idioms in films is the target audience. Particularly in children's films, the translator needs to consider what the children will understand and find entertaining. Sometimes, the translator will also find it necessary to modify some aspects in the original film that are not considered suitable for the target audience.

In children's films, especially in animated ones, names often carry a large amount of entertainment value for the child viewers. Like idioms, they often use imagery to describe a character's personality or characteristics, and thus, it is important to transfer these connotations successfully in the target language in order to maintain the level of entertainment for the children.

1.2. Research question

This thesis seeks to study the combination of challenges related to the translation of idioms and names in an animated children's film, and Disney's version of *The Little Mermaid* (Clements & Musker, 1989) will be the subject of investigation. I will look at the dubbing of the original English version into Danish, and seek to answer the following research question:

How successful is the translation of idioms and names in Disney's The Little Mermaid?

In order to answer this question, I will assess the quality of a random selection of translated idioms from the film according to the general challenges that accompany the translation of idioms, dubbing restrictions and targeting children respectively. Finally, I will assess how well the names have been translated/transferred in the Danish version according to the goal of achieving functional equivalence between the names in the two languages.

1.3. Motivation

At Copenhagen Business School, the primary focus areas within translation studies deal with business, legal or technical translation, which is, of course, quite logical since it is a business school. However, learning the idiomaticity of a foreign language is important if you want to be able to translate into that language in a natural as well as correct way – irrespective of the subject. Therefore, studying the translation of idioms may be new within the business world, but relevant because the mistranslation of idioms may have serious consequences in the same way as individual words.

I decided to use *The Little Mermaid* for my data collection, because I noticed that many of the idioms in the film had been modified in some way in order to be more applicable in the sea world. Therefore, I was curious to see how the Danish translators had dealt with this challenge. I also noticed that many of the names in the film carried specific connotations, and I wondered if they were all transferred to the Danish version.

1.4. Delimitation

The Little Mermaid is an animated feature length film lasting approximately 79 minutes. It came out in the US in 1989 and in Denmark in 1990 (Juhre, 1998). For my data collection, I decided to look at the dubbed translations and not the subtitles, because the target audience is more likely to watch the dubbed version. Juhre (1998) estimates the primary audience to be 5-10-year-olds, and children are not expected to be able to read without difficulties until they are in the 5^{th} or 6^{th} grade (11-12 years of age) (Fæster et al., 2008). This means that they are unlikely to watch the film in the original version with subtitles, and since part of this study deals with the translated version's suitability for children, I have chosen to deal with the translation that they are most likely to encounter.

The specific areas of interest in this thesis are idioms and names, and therefore, the rest of the film's dialogue will not be included in the analysis. Thus, the results of this thesis do not reflect the whole film, but just the idioms and names. However, I will include a few Danish idioms where the original English dialogue did not contain any idioms, because they form part of the overall amount of idioms in the Danish version, and this is closely related to the translation of the English idioms.

1.5. Methodology

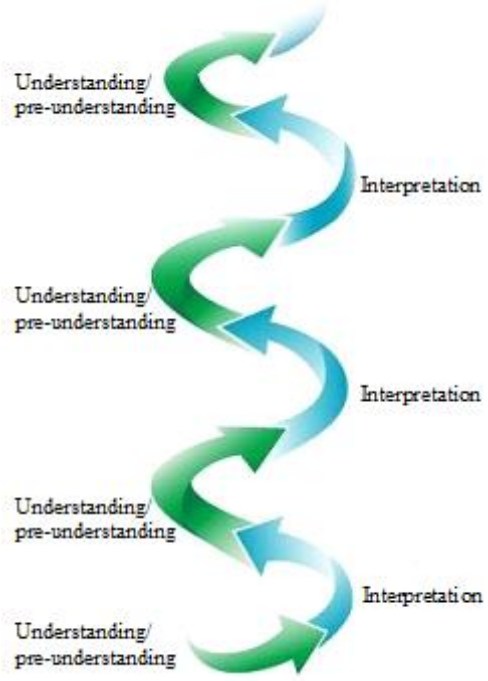
In the following, I will describe the methodology of this thesis. As I have used the hermeneutic approach, I will first describe the main aspects of hermeneutics, and then I will explain how I have used hermeneutics in the conducting of my study and the writing of this thesis.

1.5.1. Hermeneutics in theory

In the natural sciences, positivism is often a favoured approach because of its belief that knowledge is objective and that it is possible to find the objective truth as long as your study is based on observable facts (Presskorn-Thygesen, 2012:28ff). According to hermeneutics, however, there are no objective facts, especially when it comes to the study of people and society (ibid.:31). The hermeneutic approach believes that knowledge can never be objective, because anything that can be observed will automatically be interpreted by the observer based on his or her understanding of reality.

Everyone is believed to be prejudiced and to have certain individual assumptions of people and the world they live in, and this prejudice (or pre-understanding) controls how we perceive the world and how we act in it (ibid.:32). The only way to understand more of the world is to reflect on your own pre-understanding and try to see the world from another point of view – from a wider horizon of understanding. If your horizon is narrow, you can only see that which is right in front of you (Fredslund, 2012:82). If your horizon is wide, on the other hand, it is easier to see everything in context. Therefore, the goal is to widen your horizon of understanding in order to see everything in the right perspective. Understanding is achieved when two horizons meet in a so-called fusion of horizons (ibid.). This fusion, however, does not necessarily ensure agreement. It merely creates a space in which understanding is possible and one person can see the world through the eyes of another. It is called a fusion because both people bring together their pre-understandings in order to create a third element of understanding (ibid.:82f).

The process of understanding is cyclical, as the figure to the right illustrates (Ebdrup, 2012). Before under-standing, for instance, a book, the reader of the book already has a pre-understanding of it and its context based on previous experience. As the reader goes through the first chapter, he or she interprets it and gradually develops a new understanding of the book, which then becomes a pre-understanding of the following pages. Thus, the reader constantly re-interprets the book while reading it, and when it is finished, he or she can collect all the different interpretations into a single unit of understanding – which may later function as a pre-understanding of something else. We never begin from scratch when we have to learn something new. Knowledge continuously turns into background knowledge and thus becomes a part of the pre-understanding, which is used for the interpretation of new knowledge. The essence of the hermeneutic spiral is thus: You cannot understand the whole without the parts, and you cannot understand the parts without the whole (Fredslund, 2012:77).



The hermeneutic spiral (Ebdrup, 2012)
Graphics: Mette Friis-Mikkelsen
(my translation from Danish)

According to hermeneutics, the quantitative research methods associated with positivism and the natural sciences are not enough to ensure understanding. Hermeneutics favours qualitative methods, as they can uncover different horizons of understanding than the quantitative methods can (Presskorn-Thygesen, 2012:28). According to Brier (2012:92f), quantitative methods attempt to isolate things or people from their contexts. Although qualitative criteria are often used to categorise individuals or cases into different groups, they are studied as members of these groups and not as individuals (ibid.). While the quantitative research method seeks to find commonalities, the qualitative method goes into the depth of each case in order to study its uniqueness (ibid.). This means that it is often not possible to study more than a few cases using qualitative research methods, and thus they cannot be viewed as representative of a larger group. But it does allow the researcher a thorough insight into those few cases, while quantitative results are often more superficial.

1.5.2. Hermeneutics in practice

As the purpose of this thesis is to assess the quality of the translations of idioms and names in the Danish version of *The Little Mermaid*, several different pre-understandings and interpretations collide. The original American film crew had one understanding of the film, which has been adjusted continually throughout the making of the film. The Danish translators, then, had their own understanding of the original version, and their job was to create a corresponding Danish version, of which they had different understandings. As the reader of the book in the example from the previous section, I have my own understanding of both the original and the Danish version of the film. As a researcher, my objective is to compare my understanding with the perceived understandings of the translators and interpret a text that they have already interpreted many times. The objective is thus for this comparison to become a fusion of my and the translators' horizons of understanding as I attempt to see the world from their point of view by giving an explanation of the reasons behind their decisions.

On a more practical level, I began the collection of data by watching the film in the original English version several times and transcribing each idiom I encountered. Then, I located the same lines in Danish and wrote down the translation. All the collected idioms can be found in Appendix 1 in chronological order, each supplied with a number and a time code, and each is paired with its Danish translation. I also watched the Danish version several times in order to see, whether there were some Danish idioms present where there were none in the English version. These idioms appear in Appendix 2 with the original English dialogue to the left and the Danish idiom to the right.

I have used a qualitative research method in the analysis by selecting examples from the data collection and scrutinising them individually, according to my understanding of the theory. The examples that are included in the analysis will reflect the issues that are stated in the theoretical framework. As hermeneutics claims that objective knowledge is impossible to obtain, the analysis will inevitably be subjective. It will thus reflect my personal understanding and interpretations, but it will also provide a thorough insight into the possible motivation behind each translation.

1.5.3. Description of the theory used

I have divided the theoretical framework into different sections dealing with four different topics: idioms, audiovisual translation, translating for children and translating names. In the section on idioms, I have used Baker (2011) and Gottlieb (1997) as primary sources to describe the considerations that are necessary to make when translating idioms. This theoretical section allows me to assess the quality of the translations by studying whether the level of idiomaticity in the English idioms was maintained in the Danish translations.

Audiovisual translation is accompanied by some rather different restrictions than literary translation, and therefore, the next theoretical section will address these restrictions. I have used Luyken (1991) and Gottlieb (2005) because they both deal extensively with dubbing, and not just with subtitles, which is what most scholars focus on. This theoretical section will help me assess how well the translators of *The Little Mermaid* have dealt with the difficulties related to dubbing.

Generally, translators have to make different adjustments when translating for children than when translating for adults. Therefore, I have included a section on this using Øster (2006) and Oittinen & Paloposki (2000) in order to see what kinds of adaptations *The Little Mermaid* has been subject to in this regard.

Finally, I have used Coillie (2006) as the basis for my analysis of names. Among other things, he lists 10 different strategies that can be used to deal with character names in translation, and I have used them to assess how well the names in *The Little Mermaid* have been translated/transferred in the Danish version.

1.6. Structure of the thesis

This thesis will be divided into the following sections:

Section 2 comprises the theoretical framework of the thesis, and it is sub-divided into four different areas: Sections 2.1.-2.3. deal with what characterises an idiom, difficulties related to translation in general and different strategies explaining how to go about the translation of idioms specifically.

Section 2.4. describes the challenges and restrictions that are related to the dubbing process and how dubbing differs from traditional translation.

Section 2.5. describes what measures have traditionally been taken in the translation of children's literature in order to increase the entertainment and/or education value and remove unsuitable or frightening elements.

Section 2.6. explains the difficulties related to the translation of names and describe some strategies that can be used to translate them successfully according to a number of criteria.

Section 3 provides an introduction to *The Little Mermaid* comprising a summary of the story, some background information on the film and its entrance to the Danish market, descriptions of the main characters and some background information on the Danish translators.

Section 4 comprises the analysis. As with the theoretical framework, this section is sub-divided into four different areas that deal with idioms, dubbing, children and names. Each sub-section includes a number of examples from the data collection accompanied by an assessment of the quality of each example, according to the respective areas.

Section 5 offers a conclusion on the thesis and **section 6** makes some suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Idioms

2.1.1. Definition of idiom

The word *idiom* is believed to have come from French *idiome* via late Latin from the Greek *idiōma*, which means *private property* or *peculiar phraseology*. It further derived from *idiousthai* meaning *to make one's own*, which derived from *idios* meaning *own* or *private* (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). Of these meanings, the *peculiar phraseology* is closest to the meaning of today's use of *idiom* in English, as illustrated by the below definition:

> *a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words.*
> *'Let the cat out of the bag' is an idiom meaning to tell a secret by mistake*
> (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries)

The reason for the peculiarity of idioms is that their literal meanings often do not make sense in the context in which they are uttered, as the above example illustrates: in a situation where someone accidentally reveals a secret, it is unlikely that either a cat or a bag would be present, and if they were, they probably would not have anything to do with the secret in question. However, there are many kinds of idiom with different levels of literalness, which will be elaborated on below.

2.1.2. Idiom vs. idiomaticity

It is relevant to clarify the difference between an *idiom* and *idiomaticity*, because translating *idiomatically* and translating an *idiom* are two different things. Warren (2005:35) defines idiomaticity as *"that which one has to know over and above rules and words"*. With this definition, she indicates that there is more to learning a language than dictionary items and syntax, and this includes discourse patterns, idioms, collocations, expressions in social interaction and how different words can be combined – or in one word: idiomaticity. Idioms, thus, only form a small part of idiomatic language, since there are many other conventions that need to be fulfilled in order to achieve idiomaticity. *"Presence of such idioms in a text does not necessarily make it idiomatic; nor does their absence make it unidiomatic"* (ibid.). Idiomaticity can also be described as language that sounds fluent and natural to the native speaker (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries).

Fernando (1996:30) explains that idioms are indivisible, which means that their components can only be varied within definable limits, if at all. This separates idioms from e.g. habitual collocations, such as *"rosy cheeks, sallow complexion, black coffee or catch a bus, etc."* (ibid.). These can easily be paired with different words. For instance, it sounds perfectly natural to catch a tram or a train rather than a bus, but *to smell a mouse* makes no sense compared to the idiom *to smell a rat* (to suspect that something is wrong about a situation (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries)). Such habitual collocations show idiomaticity because they often appear together, but that alone does not make them idioms. Idioms, however, always show idiomaticity precisely because they appear together to create a certain meaning.

There are different subclasses of idioms: pure idioms, semi-idioms and literal idioms (Fernando, 1996:35). Fernando proposes a working definition of a pure idiom as *'a type of conventionalized, non-literal multiword expression'* (ibid.:35f). This means that it is a conventional expression consisting of more than one word, and it has a meaning that cannot be literally inferred. This definition correlates well with the Oxford definition above, except this definition includes the fact that it needs to be a fixed expression that most speakers of the language will recognise. The example *to spill the beans* is given, as it has nothing to do with beans, but instead means to commit an indiscretion.

Semi-idioms have literal constituents, but at least one constituent has a non-literal sub-sense that usually only occurs in that particular expression (ibid.:36). An example would be *to drop names*, where *names* is literal and *drop* has a non-literal sub-sense that means to overuse – but only in this connection.

Literal idioms are, as the name suggests, not as opaque the two previous types (ibid.). At first glance, this seems to contradict the general definitions of idioms given above. However, literal idioms are still subject to the 'rule' that idioms are invariable or can only be varied within definable limits. For instance, *tall, dark and handsome* is fixed because you cannot change the order of the adjectives or replace them with others. It is thus a literal idiom because the literal meaning of each word is maintained. What makes it different from a habitual collocation is the invariable aspect, as collocations appear together *often* while the components of idioms *always* appear together. You can also change the components of habitual collocations, as mentioned above.

It is important to remember that, in some cases, these different sub-classes can overlap, as some expressions can arguably fit into more than one class. However, they can be helpful in categorising different idioms and thereby understanding them better.

In his definition of idioms, Fernando (1996:41) includes compounds as the lower limit regarding size. Gottlieb (1997), on the other hand, does not include them in his study. He uses the following delimitation:

> *"**Idiomatic phrases with at least one nominal element**, e.g. 'head over heels' and 'put one's foot down', thus excluding*
>
> *a) compound nouns where one or more elements have gained metaphorical meaning, such as 'head hunter' or 'jet lag'.*
>
> b) *simple phrasal verbs with metaphorical meaning, e.g. 'put down', 'put up with', etc."* (Gottlieb, 1997:267)

It should be specified that when Gottlieb refers to *idiomatic phrases* in the above quote, he refers to idioms, and not to any non-idiom phrase that shows idiomaticity. In a study such as Gottlieb's, it makes sense that longer idioms are considered more interesting than simple compound nouns or verb phrases with non-literal meanings. Even though they can also show many of the characterising features of idioms, as Fernando claims, they are often less remarkable than the longer idioms containing nominal elements.

Previously, it was described how idioms can only be varied within definable limits. However, language users are innovative, which means that it is possible for them to make up substitutions to components in an idiom and still claim that it is an idiom (Fernando, 1996.:46ff). For instance, the meaning of *cold feet* is the same whether you *get*, *give* or *have* them. You can be even more creative than that as long as you know that your audience is familiar with the meaning of the original idiom, and thus you can make it more applicable in a particular situation. It is also possible to make additions to idioms, rearrange or even delete some of the components, but it is important to make sure that the audience will still understand the meaning of the changed idiom.

Gottlieb (1997) also questions both the fixity and opacity of idioms. He says that even though idioms are classified as fixed expressions, some of their components may vary. He divides idioms into categories according to the semantic status and structural variability of the individual elements:

Semantic status

Core elements

1) *Nuclear element*
2) *Auxiliary elements*
3) *Toggles (showing interchangeability within a closed class)*
4) *Jokers (showing interchangeability within an open class)*

Peripheral elements

5) *Optional elements (which may be added to the core)*

Structural variation

A) *Fixed form*
B) *Flexible form (prone to inflection etc.)*

(Gottlieb, 1997:224)

The nuclear element is the only fixed element and is thus the central part of the core. Auxiliary elements, on the other hand, may be varied. Toggles can only be varied within the same class, for instance, articles, while jokers may consist of anything that is relevant in a particular situation. Sometimes, it is also possible to add optional elements, perhaps to increase the relevance of the idiom. An example illustrating the different categories could be to *knock* (auxiliary) *the last* (toggle) *nail* (nucleus 1) *into* (toggle) *the coffin of* (nucleus 2) *the Keynesian boom* (joker) (ibid.:259). The structural variation of this particular idiom is thus flexible, because it is possible to vary all elements except the nuclei. Other idioms are more fixed, such as *bury the hatchet*, which, under normal circumstances, does not allow any variation in form (Baker, 2011:67).

Only the nuclear elements in the above example are metaphorical, the rest can be understood quite literally. The previously mentioned definitions suggest that you cannot understand the meaning of an idiom by putting together the meanings of the components, but Gottlieb (1997:260) believes that most idioms have unmistakeable connotations, where the context explains a lot. Thus, even if a reader/listener is not familiar with such an expression beforehand, he or she would most likely still be able to understand the literal meaning and transfer it into the context in question. To take the above example, *to knock the last nail into the coffin* clearly connotes death, and death can be applied literally to living beings, but also metaphorically to symbolise the end of, in this case, the Keynesian boom.

2.2. Translation in general

Before we move on to the translation of idioms, I would like to briefly mention some issues related to translation in general. A common understanding of translation is to replace the words in one language with equivalent words in another language. The only problem is that languages are not equivalent to each other – far from it. Although some languages are similar, more often than not, you run into concepts that are expressed in different ways. For instance, the verb *type* is a single word in English, but in Spanish, you need three separate words (*pasar a maquina*) to describe the same action. *"This suggests that there is no one-to-one correspondence between orthographic words and elements of meaning within or across languages"* (Baker, 2011:10).

When translating, you also need to consider the differences in meaning. The adjective *famous* may have a seemingly 'direct' translation in the French *fameux*, as they both mean 'well-known'. However, while *famous* is generally neutral, *fameux* usually carries negative and derogative connotations. Therefore, the two cannot simply replace one another without some kind of clarification (ibid.:12). These words in different languages that look alike, but mean something different are often called *false friends* or *faux amis* (ibid.:22). Another example would be English *sympathetic*, which means that you understand the way someone else is feeling, and French *sympathique*, which means that you are nice or likeable. Although many similar words in different languages do actually mean the same thing, false friends can be sneaky and even treacherous, and therefore, the translator should be aware of them in order to produce a correct and idiomatic translation.

A translator should also be aware of *co-occurrence restrictions*, i.e. specific words or expressions that we expect to see next to a specific lexical unit. These can either be selectional or collocational. Selectional restrictions refer to the context of certain words. For instance, only a human can be *studious*, while *geometrical* applies to inanimate objects. These restrictions are often violated on purpose in figurative expressions, but in all other cases, they should be complied with (ibid.:12f). Collocational restrictions are the tendency of certain words to occur together such as *brush teeth* or *break laws*. They are semantically arbitrary, which means that they often vary across languages. In the mentioned examples, it is important to know, for instance, which verb is more appropriate to use in the target language (ibid.:13).

So far, we have looked at translation on the microlevel, but before even beginning to translate a text, it is important to consider a macrostrategy. There is no terminological consensus regarding the various kinds of translations and the decisions that translators make, but Schjoldager et al. (2008:67) prefer to talk about strategies rather than translation options, approaches, methods, procedures, principles, types, forms, etc. since strategies refer to the decisions that are made on the concrete level. According to Schjoldager et al. (ibid.:71), it is impossible to achieve exact identity between source text and target text, which means that a translator must make compromises. He or she must choose to focus either on the form and content of the source text or the effect of the target text, and thus use either a source-text oriented or a target-text oriented macrostrategy. Baker (2011:14) says that most translators would want to produce translations that match the register expectations of their prospective readers, and thereby avoid being, at best, misunderstood and, at worst, ridiculed. However, some translators prefer the source text orientation, because they want to give readers a 'feel' of the source culture. It is up to the individual translator to decide which is more appropriate in the specific situation.

2.3. Translation of idioms

Now that the basic challenges of translation in general have been established, I will move on to deal with some different ways in which idioms can be translated. As mentioned above, a translator chooses a source-text oriented or a target-text oriented macrostrategy and thus considers how relevant the structure and elements of the original text are for the wording of the translation. When it comes to the translation of idioms, Gottlieb (1997:262f) thinks that being too loyal to the source text may result in a translation that seems outlandish and sometimes even awkward.

In many cases, it is not appropriate to attempt to render a source language idiom as an idiom in the target language, and, in such situations, target text orientation is to be preferred. When translating an idiom, you must allow for some degree of linguistic modification in order for the target text to appear natural to the receivers. But you can choose many different approaches and show different degrees of loyalty towards the source text, because you need to choose a strategy for every phrase encountered. When it comes to the translation of idioms, there are many different approaches and strategies to choose from, and, in the following, some of them will be explained. But first, I will describe some general difficulties that accompany the recognition, interpretation and translation of idioms.

2.3.1. Difficulties in the recognition and interpretation of idioms

Before I move on to the concrete strategies, I am going to look at some of the challenges one may encounter when dealing with idioms. Baker (2011:68f) identifies two main problems related to the translation of idioms:

- recognising and interpreting an idiom correctly
- rendering the various aspects of meaning that an idiom conveys into the target language

The first challenge that may arise when you come across an idiom is recognising that it is in fact an idiom that you are dealing with. As mentioned in section 2.1.2., there are different kinds of idioms. The pure idioms are generally easier to recognise, because they often violate truth conditions, i.e. they describe something that is not literally possible. For instance, you should immediately recognise the peculiarity of the expression *it's raining cats and dogs* because its literal meaning is impossible. Other conspicuous idioms are the ones that do not follow the grammatical rules, such as *trip the light fantastic*, which means to dance (The Free Dictionary). Generally, the more opaque and strange an idiom seems, the easier it is for the translator to find it, interpret it correctly and thus come up with an appropriate translation (Baker, 2011:69).

Other idioms may be much more difficult to find. Many idioms have both a literal and a non-literal meaning, and sometimes people play on both these meanings. This can be very difficult for a translator to pick up on, and thus the play on idiom may easily be missed completely. For instance, an unaware translator may take the literal meaning of *to drain the radiator* for granted when dealing with a text about people driving trucks. However, the literal interpretation misses the fact that the expression is also slang for urinating (ibid.:70).

Another challenge is when you come across an idiom that has a counterpart in the target language which is superficially identical or similar. The target language idiom may include some of the same words or structure as the source language idiom, but have a partially or completely different meaning. This is related to the *false friends* described in section 2.2. Idioms in different languages can also be false friends, because when the components of the idioms are more or less the same, you might be led to believe that they have the same meaning. This, however, is not always the case, and thus one should be aware of fixed expressions that are similar as well as individual words when translating. For example, English *has the cat got your tongue?* and French *donner sa langue au chat*

[to give your tongue to the cat] are similar in form, but the first one means urging someone who is quiet to speak while the latter means to give up, for instance, when asked a riddle (ibid.).

A translator should also consider an idiom's collocational environment. Individual words have different connotations. For instance, *cold* often occurs with words like *winter* or *weather* and *foot* with *sock* or *smelly*, and so on. Together, however, *cold feet* creates an entity with a whole new meaning that has nothing to do with actually being cold around your feet, but rather feeling nervous and regretting the situation you have put yourself in (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). The collocational environment in which an idiom may appear can thus, to some extent, help the translator interpret the meaning of an opaque idiom. In any case, the opacity itself can help the translator identify the idiom, as explained above.

2.3.2. Difficulties in the translation of idioms

After identifying and interpreting an idiom, the translator meets the challenge of actually translating it. This process introduces some new difficulties. Baker (2011:71ff) identifies four main difficulties related to the translation of idioms:

a) An idiom or fixed expression may have no equivalent in the target language

As mentioned in section 2.2., different languages use words differently and the same applies to idioms. Therefore you cannot always expect to find an idiom in the target language that is equivalent to the source language idiom. Many idioms are also culture-specific or relate to social conventions that only apply in the source culture (ibid.:71). This makes them particularly difficult to translate, but the important thing in a situation like this is to convey the meaning, not necessarily the specific expression.

b) An idiom or fixed expression may have a similar counterpart in the target language, but its context of use may be different

Idioms in different languages may look similar and they may even have similar meanings, but it is important to define the context in which they are used (ibid.:72). For example, *to skate on thin ice* has a similar counterpart in Serbian, except the Serbian version *navuci nekoga na tanak led* [to pull someone onto the ice] implies that the person on the ice is not there voluntarily.

c) An idiom may be used in the source text in both its literal and idiomatic senses at the same time

These idioms can only be translated successfully if the target language has an identical idiom, otherwise another strategy will have to be used in order to convey the meaning, and the play on words may then be lost (ibid.:72f). For example, *at slå en streg* [to draw a line] is a well-known Danish expression for urinating, but *at slå en streg i sandet* [to draw a line in the sand] means to set clear boundaries for something. English has the same idiom *to draw a line in the sand* with the same meaning, but in Danish it is possible to play on two expressions at the same time if someone were to urinate on a beach. If this Danish play on idioms were to be translated into English, it would be difficult to render both meanings successfully, although it would be easy to see the connection between drawing a line metaphorically and drawing it literally even though it is not an expression in English.

d) The very convention of using idioms in written discourse, the contexts in which they can be used, and their frequency of use may be different in the source and target languages

While idioms appear frequently in written English in many types of text, in other languages, such as Chinese or Arabic, they are reserved to spoken language and less formal contexts (ibid.:75). Therefore, a translator needs to consider the style, register and rhetorical effect of the target language before translating idioms as idioms.

2.3.3. Baker's strategies

In the following, I will explain the different translation strategies that Baker proposes for dealing with idioms. It may be tempting to go for the first strategy (a) in all cases and use an equivalent idiom, but you first need to consider the rhetorical nuances of the target text and thus assess whether or not it would be appropriate. Baker (ibid.:75ff) proposes the following seven strategies:

a) Using an idiom of similar meaning and form

When using this strategy, you need to find an idiom that conveys essentially the same meaning as the source language idiom and also uses the same lexical items (ibid.:76). For instance, the idiom *to skate on thin ice* has a Danish equivalent: *at være ude på tynd is* [to be on thin ice]. As opposed to the Serbian version of this idiom, the Danish one actually conveys the same meaning as the English one, and is therefore an accurate translation. As mentioned in the previous section, it is not always possible to succeed in finding an equivalent, and even if it is, it is not always appropriate to use it.

However, the norms of the use of idioms in English and Danish are very similar, so, in most cases, it is appropriate to render idioms in the source text as idioms in the target text when translating between these two languages.

b) Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form

This strategy resembles the first one, but it can be easier to find an idiom with similar meaning which consists of different lexical items (ibid.:78). Even though cultures differ, many of the same situations occur across cultures, and thus the meaning of an idiom may also be valid across different cultures. For example, the expression *to carry coals to Newcastle* is culture-specific, but the same meaning is rendered in the French expression *porter de l'eau à la rivière* [to carry water to the river]. Even though different images are being used, they both mean the same thing: supplying something to someone who already has plenty of it (ibid.:71f).

c) Borrowing the source language idiom

When using this strategy, no translation as such takes place – the exact same idiom is transferred directly into the target text (ibid.:79). This can be appropriate in situations where the target language receivers are assumed to understand the idiom even though it is presented to them in a non-native language. For instance, many Danes are familiar with the idiom *when in Rome, do as the Romans do*, as is illustrated by a Danish blogger (Isdamen, 2016) who uses it as a headline in one of her articles, which is otherwise written in Danish. She probably would not have borrowed this idiom if she did not expect her readers to be familiar with it, so it is a safe assumption that it is well-known by Danes even in its English form. This means that, in many cases, it would not be necessary to translate this particular idiom into Danish, even if the rest of the text is being translated.

d) Translation by paraphrase

Paraphrasing is the most common strategy when it is impossible to find a matching idiom in the target language or when using it would be inappropriate (Baker, 2011:80). The phrasing of the idiom is changed in the target language and explained in a different way, so that the idiom disappears. For instance, the English idiom *once in a blue moon* does not have an equivalent idiom in Danish, and thus it may be necessary to translate it as a non-idiom phrase, e.g.: *meget sjældent*

[very rarely] (Øveraas, 2016). This translation is much plainer and arguably more boring than the original, but it can be the only solution if you want to get the meaning across.

e) Translation by omission of a play on idiom

In this strategy, the literal meaning remains, but the play on idiom disappears because it is not possible to maintain the idiom in the target language. Baker (2011:84f) gives the example of a promotional leaflet where the caption in English says *Centuries of craftsmanship on a plate*. As the leaflet is handed out by Wedgwood, which is a factory that makes pottery and ornamental china, the caption plays on both the literal meaning of *plate* and the idiom *handed on a plate* which means that something is easily acquired. In the Japanese translation of the leaflet, the non-literal meaning is left out: *The craft of famous people has been continually poured for centuries into a single plate* (Baker's back translation). In Danish there is a similar expression to *on a plate* called *på et sølvfad*, but, as the factory produces crockery, the Danish expression would not render the same meaning.

f) Translation by omission of entire idiom

You may also decide to leave out the idiom completely in the target text due to the lack of a close match, difficulty in paraphrasing or for stylistic reasons.

g) Compensation

This final strategy is not as concrete as the others, because an idiom is not strictly speaking being translated, nor is it transferred directly as in strategy *c*. When using a compensation strategy, you remove or downplay an idiom at one point and then compensate by introducing another one elsewhere in the target text (ibid.:86). Thus, you maintain a certain amount of idioms in the target text as a whole. Allowing for the loss of source text idioms may help make the target text seem less foreign, because the new idioms that are introduced through compensation are likely to be more natural and familiar to the readers. This strategy is most likely to succeed if the translator is translating *into* his or her native tongue, because this will imply a native feel of the target language and an increased sensitivity towards idiomaticity in general (ibid.:68).

The Danish translation of the operetta *H.M.S. Pinafore* provides a good example of compensation in the song *When I was a lad*. In the original English lyrics, there is a line that says: *And I polished up the handle of the big front door* (LetsSingIt.com, 2005). The Danish translation says: *Fordi jeg gnubbede for dem der sidder højt på strå* (Danskesange.dk) [because I polished for those who sit

high on straws]. When someone *sidder højt på strå* in Danish, it means that they are part of the upper class of society (Gyldendals Røde Ordbøger). This aspect, however, is not evident from the original English line, as it seems completely neutral apart from the fact that the front door is big. The Danish translator thus added an idiom even though there was none in the original.

2.3.4. Gottlieb's strategies

In his PhD thesis on *Subtitles, translation & idioms*, Gottlieb (1997) refers to the first edition of Baker's book on translation from 1992, where she presents five strategies instead of the above-mentioned seven. In the second edition, she added *borrowing the source language idiom* (*c*) and split *translation by omission* into two (*e* and *f*), and thus specifies that you can omit a part of the idiom without leaving it out completely, as explained above. Gottlieb (ibid.:264ff) combines Baker's (1992) strategies with those of Eckhard Roos (1981) and Bo Svendsén (1987) as a basis for his own typology, which comprises the following eight strategies:

Strategy	***Process***
1) Congruence	*SL idiom > identical TL idiom*
2) Equivalence	*SL idiom > similar TL idiom*
3) Correspondence	*SL idiom > different TL idiom*
4) Reduction	*SL idiom > TL word*
5) Paraphrase	*SL idiom > TL phrase*
6) Expansion	*SL idiom > TL circumlocution*
7) Omission	*SL idiom > Ø (void)*
8) Compensation	*SL non-idiom > TL idiom*

These eight strategies fall into four distinct categories:

Adherence	*(1, 2, & 3: idioms rendered metaphorically)*
Literalization	*(4, 5, & 6: idioms rendered non-metaphorically)*
Deletion	*(7: idioms being omitted)*
Idiomatization	*(8: non idioms rendered metaphorically)*

(Gottlieb, 1997:265f)

These categories suggest that you can either translate an idiom as an idiom, explain the idiom with literal words or phrases, leave out the idiom completely or create an idiom in the target text where there was none in the source text. Gottlieb's typology offers more categories than Baker's, and they are also slightly more nuanced. Although, Baker does offer some strategies that Gottlieb does not include (e.g. *c* – borrowing the source language idiom and *e* omission on a play on idiom), these were not relevant to the data that has been collected for the analysis (cf. Appendix 1).

Gottlieb says that his typology is not enough on its own, since it does not describe the semantic and stylistic quality of the translations (ibid.:268f). He therefore adds a quality dimension, where he assesses whether a certain strategy is *correspondent*, *insufficient* or *defective*. Combining the above-mentioned four categories with the three types of quality, he comes up with no less than 12 new strategies for translating idioms. This new typology is very effective for large amounts of data, because it allows you to quantify it and easily compare different texts. However, the purpose of this thesis is to assess only one text (film), and thus a less generalised approach will be used to assess the quality of the translations in *The Little Mermaid*. The data will be categorised according to the eight strategies above, and the quality will be assessed thoroughly for each example in the analysis.

2.4. Audiovisual translation

2.4.1. What is audiovisual translation?

The word *audiovisual* is an adjective which describes something that uses both sound and pictures (Oxford Learner's Dictionary). Therefore, it is often used to describe, for instance, films. Audiovisual translation is thus the general term for translation of such audiovisual media. Luyken (1991) uses the term *language transfer* instead, because the content is *transferred* from one language into another. More interesting are the different methods that can be used to translate a film and thus make it understandable to a wider audience. The two main types of audiovisual translation are subtitling and post-synchronisation. The latter is the focus of this thesis, and is more commonly known as *lip-sync dubbing* or *dubbing* for short. Luyken (1991:31) defines dubbing as *"the replacement of the original speech by a voice track which attempts to follow as closely as possible the timing, phrasing and lip movements of the original dialogue"*, while subtitles are short lines of translated text that appear on the screen. Gottlieb (2005:87) describes dubbing as an *isosemiotic* text type, because the translated communication happens through the same channel as the original dialogue (in this case speech), and subtitling is diasemiotic because it uses a channel that is different from the original dialogue – it crosses over from speech to writing. As dubbing is of main interest to this thesis, subtitling and other kinds of audiovisual translation will only be mentioned in order to put dubbing into perspective.

Dubbing is not the only isosemiotic type of audiovisual translation. Revoicing is the general term describing the replacement of an original soundtrack with another, and it covers four different categories: lip-sync dubbing, voice-over, narration and free commentary (Luyken, 1991:71). Voice-

over is a particularly useful approach when translating monologues or interviews because only one voice is used (ibid.:80). The original sound is reduced and the voice-over is thus the dominating sound, but the original sound is often still detectible in the background. Narration works as an extended voice-over that describes what is happening synchronously with the original sound (ibid.:80f). Both voice-over and narration are relatively faithful to the original. Free commentary, on the other hand, is different from the others, because it is not expected to be anywhere near identical to the original, as it only comments on the events on the screen and thus describes them indirectly (ibid.:82). Some degree of synchrony is required of all types of revoicing, because viewers expect correspondence between what they see and what they hear.

Dubbing is expected to be more faithful than the above-mentioned types of revoicing, because it is supposed to be a reproduction of the original, down to the timing, phrasing and even lip movements (ibid.:73). The main purpose is thus to make the dubbed version seem as natural to the new target audience as possible. This is where dubbing differs the most from the other types of revoicing, since they do not attempt to hide the fact that the content has been translated.

2.4.2. Restrictions

There are restrictions with any type of audiovisual translation, but it may be more difficult to render the entire meaning of the original with subtitles or dubbing. Subtitles are especially tricky because there are strict rules dictating, for instance, the number of characters that can be present at the same time, and for how long each subtitle can be visible on the screen (Luyken, 1991:74). This makes it impossible to include the entire original dialogue in the subtitles, and thus they are often considerably shorter in order to make it possible for viewers to read it all while watching the film.

In this respect, dubbing is much less restricted. However, the fact that the natural appearance is much more important with dubbing unveils some different problems. As with subtitles, synchrony is of the essence (ibid.). The lines must be delivered at the same time as the character on the screen utters them, otherwise the audience will be confused. But time is not the only important factor with dubbing. The translator also needs to make the lines match the characters' gestures and lip movements, as their entire body language corresponds with what they are saying and when they are saying it (ibid.:160f).

One might think that this would mostly pose a problem in live films, but it has also become increasingly important in animated films. Since computer graphics have become so sophisticated

during recent years, it is possible to render animated characters so realistically that you can clearly see their lip movements (Bogucki, 2011:14). This is, of course, a good thing if you are watching the film in the original language version, because then the film is more realistic. However, accurate lip movements pose a problem in the dubbing process. In Disney's *The Lion King* (Allers & Minkoff, 1994), there is an example where the meerkat Timon and the warthog Pumbaa are lamenting the potential loss of their friend Simba (who is falling in love with his childhood friend) in a song. At the very end of the song, they are holding a long note when singing *doom* as the last word, and in Danish, they are singing *væk*. The longevity of the note makes it almost impossible for Danish viewers not to notice that, on the visual side, they are singing a very rounded *oo* sound, while on the audible side, they are singing the very *un*rounded *æ* sound (cf. Appendix 3). In this case, the translator could have made an effort to find a vowel in Danish that looked more like the English vowel in order to avoid confusion among Danish viewers.

This consideration of lip movements and gestures is referred to as *nucleus-sync*, as different body movements tend to coincide with the uttering of stressed syllables – nuclei (Luyken, 1991:160f). Viewers will be confused if the character raises an eyebrow in-between stressed syllables, so a dubbing translator should, to the extent possible, make the translated lines match the characters' body language (ibid.). Furthermore, if there is any noticeable pronunciation, such as bilabials, the translator ought to insert some bilabials in the translation around the same time as the character makes the lip movements in question (ibid.:161). In spite of these challenges, dubbing does present an advantage compared to subtitling, because the end-product will most likely be less condensed and thus include more aspects of the original dialogue. However, Carstensen (1992:78) notes that dubbing is still likely to be reduced to some extent compared to the original, because consideration still needs to be taken with regard to creating a natural flow and matching gestures and lip movements.

2.4.3. Opportunities

The restrictions applying to subtitles work as a safety mechanism that is absent when it comes to dubbing (Gottlieb, 2005:156). The essence of the subtitles is often very close to the original dialogue (despite the condensation) because the viewers can still hear it. This would not make much of a difference if the spoken language was completely foreign to the audience. But since a vast number of films and television shows are produced in English – and since most of the countries favouring subtitles have at least a reasonable proficiency in English – subtitlers translating from

English feel an increased sense of responsibility towards the original (ibid.). Thus, it is easier for dubbing translators to change or adjust the original dialogue, because the viewers will not be able to check the fidelity of the translation.

It is not necessarily a bad thing, though, if dubbers choose to change the literal meaning of the original in their translations. It is not as important in dubbing to translate sentence by sentence as it is with subtitling, because the viewers have no way of testing whether the dialogue is the same. Dubbers that do try to match the sentences of the original often end up with translations that sound unnatural and inconsistent (Luyken 1991:162). The only essential thing is to make sure that all plot-carrying elements are transferred successfully. As long as this is the case, it does not really matter whether a point is made at the exact same time as in the original (ibid.). What matters is that it is included at some point. Thus, the most effective approach would be to translate scene by scene and not sentence by sentence (ibid.:163). This gives dubbing translators much more liberty than subtitling translators, and it allows them to create a dialogue that seems truly natural to the viewers.

You can also use dubbing as a strategy to explain cultural elements that the target audience may not be familiar with (Wehn 2001:65f). Since body language and gestures are sometimes culture-specific, it can sometimes be necessary to add some dialogue in the dubbed language in order to explain the gestures made in the original which could mean something else to the target audience (ibid.). Sometimes, taboo or other elements are also erased in the dubbing process in order to adapt to the customs of the target culture or to children (ibid.).

Dubbing can also be used as an alternative to subtitles when translating writing on the screen. For example, in DreamWorks' animated film *Shrek*, the ogre Shrek and his friend Donkey visit the town of Duloc. They pull the lever of an information stand (cf. Appendix 4.1.), and in the original English version, there is no speech, only two signs that say *"Information"* and *"Pull"*. In the dubbed Danish version, however, Donkey says out loud: *"Information. Træk i håndtaget"* (Adamson & Jenson, 2001, time code: 21:38). Since Donkey turns his back when his Danish voice utters this line, viewers cannot see that his lips are not moving, and this is thus a clever way to maintain the information given without using subtitles. After the information stand has played a song, it prints out a photo of Shrek and Donkey with the caption: *"Welcome to Duloc"* (cf. Appendix 4.2.). The same tactic as before is used in the Danish version, where the information stand plays a recording that says: *"Velkommen til Duloc"* (Adamson & Jenson, 2001, time code: 22:20).

2.4.4. Subtitling vs. dubbing countries

Since dubbing came to Europe in 1936, there have been relatively clear-cut preferences across European countries of either dubbing or subtitling (Luyken 1991:31ff). The countries that prefer subtitles are Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Greece, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Sweden. The countries that prefer dubbing are Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. The dubbing countries have chosen this method because they have a large domestic market, so they can afford the extra cost, while subtitling countries often have a smaller native language and therefore they import more foreign-language programmes (ibid.:32). However, small and poor countries with a high rate of illiteracy face a problem, as they cannot afford to dub everything, but subtitles restrict the people that cannot read them. Spain and Portugal have solved this problem by subtitling films of minority appeal and dubbing the ones expected to be box office successes. This is the only situation in which countries tend to mix the two methods; in all other cases there is a clear preference for one over the other (ibid.).

As mentioned above, the Scandinavian countries prefer subtitles. In fact, they reject dubbing completely except for children's programmes, where dubbing (or other kinds of revoicing) is used for target audiences aged up to 8-10 (ibid.:36). In Denmark, you would originally only encounter revoicing in foreign TV documentaries and children's programmes, but never in films (Gottlieb 1997:156). The exception to this rule was the dubbing of Disney's animated 'classics', but in the mid-nineties, non-animated films were also dubbed due to the request of the companies that produced the films (ibid.).

Dubbing was only ever tolerated for children because they have not learned how to read yet, or at least to read fast enough to follow subtitles. Also, in many cartoons and animated films, subtitles can seem inappropriate and invasive because they do not fit with the bright colours and it would be difficult to place them accurately according to the often fast-paced action (Luyken, 1991:135). As the main purpose of these children's programmes is entertainment and not necessarily education, it also makes more sense to use revoicing techniques to maximise enjoyment and limit the confusion that could arise with subtitles (ibid.:137).

2.4.5. Audiovisual translation vs. traditional translation

Thus far, this thesis has treated audiovisual translation as a sub-category of translation in general. In section 2.2., a common understanding of translation was established as the replacement of words in one language with equivalent words in another language. There were some issues concerning this definition, but audiovisual translation presents some new problems. In audiovisual translation the whole message is made up by visuals, acting, sound, language, etc. and the translation only affects one of these elements (Luyken 1991:153f). It is not possible to translate the visuals into another language.

As with any type of translation, the translator is bound to make his or her own interpretations with regard to the original (ibid.:154). As discussed in section 2.2., it is impossible to achieve total equivalence. But the restrictions to audiovisual translation described above indicate that it is not possible to explain with anything more than dialogue – which is already restricted. In literary translation, it is possible to add explanatory sentences or even footnotes or asterisks, but such luxury is not possible in audiovisual translation, as it would undermine the naturalness. Additionally, it would take precious time and space to make room for explanations, and the picture would move on in the same pace as before – you cannot reduce the pace of the visuals in order to make room for more dialogue. These restrictions also mean that audiovisual translations are often condensed, while literary translations are better able to include most of the original's content or even add some explanatory phrases. Luyken says that audiovisual translation incorporates an editorial element that is not as apparent in literary translation:

> *"It is at one and the same time both more and less than conventional translation. Less, because it does not translate everything. More, because the audiovisual Translator/Writer has to make editorial decisions all the time about omissions or condensation of the original text, and about new information that has to be inserted into it"* (ibid.:154f).

Audiovisual translators thus need to edit the original content to a greater extent than literary translators.

2.5. Translation for children

In the following, I will touch upon some elements that characterise the translation of children's literature based on the hypothesis that many of the same decisions are made when translating for children in general – regardless of whether the medium is a book or a film. I will use as a starting point Anette Øster's (2006) take on the English translation of some of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales and the adaptations made from the originals in order to 'better' suit the norms of English children's literature at the time of publishing.

2.5.1. Hans Christian Andersen as an example

The 19th century Danish author Hans Christian Andersen is world-famous for his fairy tales. In his home country, he is generally considered to be writing for two different readerships – children as well as adults – but in the English-speaking world, he is seen exclusively as a children's writer (Øster 2006:145). Although Andersen himself stated that his fairy tales were written for children, he also said that he always remembered that the parents were often listening in, and he wanted to give them something to think about as well. In other words, he wrote his fairy tales with 'dual address' so that both readerships would enjoy them (ibid.). Why, then, is he 'only' considered a writer for children in the English-speaking world? It would seem that most of the answer lies with the fact that the translators saw the fairy tale genre as one for children, and thus they adapted Andersen's stories to the genre expectations of the fairy tales they already knew, such as the collections by the Brothers Grimm, which fit the traditional format of folk tale. This explains why many of the English translations of Andersen's fairy tales open with the conventional 'Once upon a time', even though he very rarely used it himself in the Danish originals (ibid.:148ff).

These adaptations provide excellent examples of what kind of changes are usually made when targeting children and what children are expected to be able to handle. Øster has compared several English translations of Andersen's fairy tales and she summarises her findings thus:

> *"there are far fewer details; abstractions are concretized; there are more paragraphs; and sentences are shorter. In general, the English version tends to be simpler and more specific in its expression, less descriptive and abstract"* (Øster, 2006:146).

The Danish originals tend to be more ambiguous, leaving it up to the reader to draw conclusions, while the English translations provide a helping hand making explicit the implicit aspects of the

originals. As Andersen wanted to emphasise the role of the narrator, he often used indirect speech, but this too was made explicit in the translations by changing it into direct speech (ibid.). Furthermore, there are many examples of additions to the text in order to make something more specific than it was in the original.

The above illustrates how translators have changed and added to the originals in order to help children understand the full meaning. However, other changes have been made for different reasons. Many fairy tales and folk tales contain elements that adults sometimes consider unsuitable for children. These include death, sex, violence, excretion, bad manners and adult faults as well as ideological, religious or frightening elements, which are considered taboos in children's literature by many adults (Oittinen, 2000:91f). This means that they are often deleted completely from the translation in an act of 'purification' in order to protect the children from unpleasantries. The fact that taboos are so often left out in children's literature is perhaps part of the reason why books that intentionally violate taboos, such as *Pippi Longstocking*, are so popular among children. Nevertheless, it is still considered inappropriate in many children's books to include these elements. As mentioned in section 2.4.3., dubbing can be used as a tool to remove taboo or other elements, because the viewers do not have access to the original and thus cannot check the fidelity of the translation. The same applies to literary translation, because most readers only read one version of the book, so they do not notice the changes.

Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Match Girl* is an example of a story, where the English translation has changed considerably (Øster 2006:150ff). In the original, the girl dies and reunites with her dead grandmother in heaven, but in an American translation from 1944, she is found by an elderly lady who takes her in and brings her up as her own granddaughter. Apparently, the girl's death was not considered appropriate for children, and thus a happier ending was opted for. The same is the case with *The Little Mermaid* (Andersen, 2005), where, in the original fairy tale, the prince marries someone else and the mermaid is left to die. In many English translations, this was unacceptable, so instead, the mermaid and the prince ended up together resulting in a happy ending (Boas, 2004). Although, whether the original endings of both of these tales were sad or not is a question of interpretation, as both the little match girl and the mermaid move on to a better place. In many of his fairy tales, Andersen made obvious references to God and Christianity, as well as sex and irony, which were all considered inappropriate in many English translations. Øster says that

"there is no agreement on how well children understand irony" (Øster 2006:147), and thus it is often left out of the translations.

There was a greater purpose in most 19th century children's literature than mere entertainment: it was meant to educate children and teach them a sense of morality and how to behave and grow up to be good citizens (ibid.:153). Many of Andersen's fairy tales also contain a moral, but it is usually much less explicit than that of the 'regular' fairy tales. However, as the English translators tried to fit Andersen's tales into the same mould as the others, they also tended to make the moral more explicit to make sure that the children understood the importance of it (ibid.). This is another aspect, where the translators missed the dual audience that Andersen originally wrote for, because adults might enjoy the implicitness and they would still be able to explain it to their children.

2.5.2. Domestication or foreignisation?

In section 2.2., I briefly described how a translator can choose to use a source-text oriented or a target-text oriented macrostrategy. These strategies can also be called *foreignisation* or *domestication* respectively, because a source-text oriented translation retains some foreign elements in the target text, while a target-text oriented translation domesticates the source text to match the target readers' cultural and linguistic values and norms (Oittinen & Paloposki, 2000:374). This topic is characterised by much disagreement among scholars when it comes to which strategy is more appropriate in children's literature, since it is not easy to agree on what children understand and enjoy. Perhaps surprisingly, many scholars prefer the foreignisation strategy, because they feel that adapting the original story through domestication *"denatures and pedagogizes children's literature"* (ibid.:380) and is a sign of disrespect for the children (ibid.:381). Some argue that the original author has already considered the target audience – regardless of which language this audience knows. Therefore, the translator's job is to maintain functional equivalence, meaning that the function of the target text should be the same as that of the source text (ibid.:381). The target text should neither be easier nor more difficult to read, and it should be equally as interesting as the source text. One could also argue that translators who domesticate have no faith in children's ability to find knowledge and information by themselves. They underestimate the role of imagination in learning.

However, while the pro-foreignisation camp emphasises the learning opportunities for children reading foreignised translations, scholars in favour of domestication argue that foreignisation can

seem very authoritarian, which often has the opposite effect of what is intended. This means that foreignisation is like the authoritarian rhetoric that is often used in politics and schools which can seem *"designed to stupefy and passevize"* (ibid.:382). Domestication thus enhances the interest of children in reading the story, which in turn enables their learning abilities.

Irrespective of which strategy is preferred, Oittinen & Paloposki (ibid.:386) argue that it is impossible *not* to domesticate to some extent when translating, because the target text inevitably becomes part of the target literature and culture. The question is how much domestication should be allowed? Oittinen & Paloposki ask: *"If we do not translate for our readers, then why translate at all?"* (ibid.:387). It all depends on the individual situation, because, naturally, the readers should understand at least most of the translation. However, in many cases, they would also enjoy some foreign elements. In many stories from, for instance, the fantasy genre, foreign names of places and characters are part of what makes them appealing. Both children and adults tend to be fascinated by foreignness. However, the names should not be too foreign, since people still need to be able to recognise and pronounce them. This will be elaborated on in the following section, particularly 2.6.1.1.

2.6. Translation of names

Names are often considered sacred, because they are an integral part of the characters that they describe. However, in children's literature, it seems to be very common to adapt character names to the target culture (Coillie, 2006:123). Part of the explanation for this is that names can have several different functions. The first and most obvious function is, of course, identification, but several other functions may coincide. These include amusement of the reader, imparting knowledge or evoking emotions, and thus names can carry much semantic content with a function exceeding that of mere identification. Coillie defines 'function' in this sense as *possible effect*, because it is not necessarily intended by anyone, nor does it have to be the actual effect on a particular reader. Coillie (ibid.:124) lists six different types of functions: *informative* (there is a teaching element), *formative* (provides a moral compass), *emotional* (appeals to emotions and enriches them), *creative* (stimulates the imagination), *divertive* (meets the need for relaxation) and *aesthetic* (provides aesthetic pleasure).

In the following sections, I will use Jan Van Coillie's (2006) article on the translation of character names to describe the motives for translators to adapt names and some strategies that can be used to go about it.

2.6.1. Translator motives

The choice of which strategy is most appropriate when a translator encounters a character name depends on a number of different factors. Coillie (ibid.:129ff) distinguishes between four different categories.

2.6.1.1. Nature of the name

The connotations or semantic content attached to a name may seem to be the main motivational factor for changing it. However, the following factors may also play an important part in the decision:

- Foreignness. The more foreign a name is in a children's book, the more likely it is to be modified in the translation, especially if it is difficult to pronounce (ibid.:130).
- The name is unknown in the target culture and might lead to confusion based on, for instance, gender. All cultures have different customs for girls' and boys' names, which do not always correspond with each other (ibid.).
- The name belongs to a famous person that is not likely to be recognised in the target culture. In this situation, the name is often replaced with the name of someone who is equivalently famous in the target culture; however, it is important to be consistent in order to avoid confusion (ibid.).
- First names are replaced more frequently than surnames (ibid.). The reason is presumably that the first names are used more often that the surnames and children are more comfortable with using names that they can easily recognise.
- Names from the real world are replaced more frequently than those from fantasy worlds. As mentioned, translators would often rather find a real target culture person with the equivalent connotations and replace the name than keep the original. However, with made-up names from a fantasy world, foreignness is a part of the reading experience, and thus there is no reason to translate it (ibid.:131).

- Resonance, rhythm and puns are often modified in order to reach an equivalent function (ibid.).

2.6.1.2. Textual factors

Names always appear in a cultural context (ibid.:131f). The bigger the influence of the context, the less motivation there is for changing it. If the context is not important to the essential theme, it is more likely that the context and the corresponding names will be modified. A historical figure may more easily be changed if the historical part is not as important as a certain character trait. Names in poems are often changed to fit measures of rhyme and metre. Illustrations may also make the connotation evident, and thus the name may need to be adjusted.

2.6.1.3. The translator's frame of reference

The translator's knowledge of the source language and culture as well as his or her experience, norms and values inevitably affect the choice of strategy (ibid.:132ff). Translators may also be influenced by others in the same field and by what seems 'appropriate' in consideration of the target audience. The translator's personal image of childhood and ideas about what children can handle, what they like, etc. is essential to the choice of strategy. This is where the issue of domestication vs. foreignisation comes back (cf. section 2.5.2.). Speakers for domestication argue that children do not look up explanations for things they do not understand, and thus they need a bit of help from the translator (ibid.). Speakers for foreignisation (or against domestication) argue that unfamiliar words are an important part of reading for children and are cause for great enjoyment (ibid.:133). They may not look the words up, but they make a guess at the meaning and use their imagination. There is also a difference between children and adolescents, as children may be more comfortable with words and names that look familiar, while older children and teenagers find it easier to immerse themselves in the unfamiliar (ibid.:135).

2.6.1.4. Other factors

The translator may get help in deciding the appropriate strategy from multiple sources, but there may be some restrictions to, for instance, copyrighted names such as Harry Potter (ibid.:136). Some difficulties may also arise if a book is made into a film or a TV series and the main character's name is changed in the translation of the book. This may lead to some confusion if the character has one name in the spoken dialogue of the film and a different name in the subtitles. All these factors

are important to consider before deciding what to do with character names in translations. In the following, I will describe the actual strategies that can be used when encountering new names in translation.

2.6.2. Strategies

At some point, every translator of children's books will have to consider what to do with character names. Whatever choice is made will bring some consequences or other, and it is impossible to achieve exactly the same effect as the original. However, it is possible to get close, and the main goal should be to achieve 'functional' or 'dynamic' equivalence between the source text and the target text (Coillie, 2006:124). In the following, I will list and describe ten different strategies that Coillie mentions in his article, which can help translators decide how to best achieve functional equivalence. Coillie emphasises that the strategies are not intended to be prescriptive, since each situation is unique. However, they do present an overview of a number of possible paths to follow.

2.6.2.1. Non-translation, reproduction, copying

When you are using this strategy, the name remains completely unchanged in the translation (ibid.:125). There is a risk that the name will seem too foreign and thus have an alienating effect on the reader. This could make it difficult for the reader to identify with the character or it could even spoil the pleasure of reading. If the source text uses the name of a real person with specific traits or a made-up name with a specific connotation, this effect could be lost if the name is not adjusted to the target language. For example, the protagonist in *The Hunger Games* trilogy is named Katniss, and when she first introduces herself to her friend Gale, he mishears it as *catnip* (Johansen, 2011). In the Danish translation of the books, her name is changed to Kattua in order for this misunderstanding to make sense, but in the Danish subtitles of the film adaptation, her name is transferred directly as Katniss. This could make it difficult for some Danish viewers to understand why Gale is consistently calling her *katteurt* [catnip] if they do not know the English word.

2.6.2.2. Non-translation plus additional explanation

This is a strategy that resembles the former in that the name is transferred directly. The difference is that the translator adds a note in the text that explains the meaning of the name (Coillie, 2006:125f). When doing so, the translator reinforces the informative function, encouraging the reader to learn something. This may, however, affect the reader's experience, as a thorough explanation can be too

obtrusive, but minor additions are more subtle and can thus be acceptable. But one should still be careful with explanations, especially if it concerns a name that is based on a play on words: *"Once explained, the pun is often no longer funny"* (ibid.:126).

2.6.2.3. Replacement of a personal name by a common noun

This strategy is often used if the translator cannot find a name in the target language with the same associations (ibid.). Instead of transferring the name, the translator omits the name and uses a common noun instead that evokes the same connotations. In the Dutch translation of Frank Andriat's *La Remplaçante*, the Québécois pop singer Roch Voisine is described as a *handsome male singer* with no name (ibid.).

2.6.2.4. Phonetic or morphological adaptation to the target language

This means that the pronunciation or spelling of the name is adapted to the target norms to make it more familiar to the target readers (ibid.). For example, the first name of Dolores Umbridge from the *Harry Potter* series is translated as Dolora, which is apparently considered to sound more Danish than Dolores (Filmz.dk).

2.6.2.5. Replacement by a counterpart in the target language (exonym)

Different countries have different versions of the same names that are adapted according to the countries' individual norms (Coillie, 2006:126f). This is especially the case with some popular first names and names of well-known historical figures. For example, Christoforo Colombo is known in English as Christopher Columbus and in Danish as Christoffer with a double-f.

2.6.2.6. Replacement by a more widely known name from the source culture or an internationally known name with the same function

This strategy allows the translator to find a recognisable substitute and still retain the foreign context (ibid.:127). For instance, when replacing one singer from the source culture with a more famous one, the translator clearly abandons some of the first singer's character traits, but the important element – the fact that we are in fact dealing with a singer – is retained in the translation (ibid.).

2.6.2.7. Replacement by another name from the target language (substitution)

This strategy is very close to the former except the substitute in this case is a person from the target language with similar associations (ibid.). One could argue that this strategy is a tad more domesticating, as the name gets even closer to home for the target audience.

2.6.2.8. Translation (of names with a particular connotation)

Evidently, when a name has very specific connotations, it makes sense to reproduce them in the target language (ibid.:127f). One example is the *Harry Potter* character Fenrir Greyback who is translated into Danish as Fenris Gråryg (Wikia, 2016). In this case the standard equivalent of Fenrir in Norse mythology is Fenris and the two elements in grey + back are translated directly as grå + ryg. This is a very successful translation, since the exact same connotations are transferred. This strategy is also often used in cases where a common noun is used as a proper noun, as for instance with Jiminy Cricket who is called Jesper Fårekylling in Danish.

2.6.2.9. Replacement by a name with another or additional connotation

Even though it would seem relatively easy to translate a name with a specific connotation literally, it happens surprisingly infrequently (ibid.:128). Instead, many translators find a different connotation that often goes further than the original. The translated name may also use another of the character's traits instead of the original one. That way, it is still descriptive of the character. In Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Hand, 1937), the unofficial leader of the dwarfs is called Doc, which implies that he is wise and smart (whether or not that is actually the case is a different matter). This expression has no equivalent in Danish, so evidently the translator decided to use a more obvious trait and call him Brille, which is the Danish word for glasses. This was an obvious choice, as Doc is the only one of the dwarfs who wears glasses, but the original connotations of his name disappeared.

The translator can also take it even further and add a connotation to something that was originally neutral (Coillie, 2006:128f). This means that the target text readers get a different image of the character than source text readers do. You can use this strategy to alter and add to the creative function by, for instance, introducing alliterations or rhymes.

2.6.2.10. Deletion

Sometimes a play on words or a name would not be understood in the target language, so the best solution can be to leave it out completely (ibid.129). This is a way to avoid having to find a functional equivalent in the target language, which can be far from easy. The translator needs to make sure that the translation still makes sense, and sometimes it is just not possible to transfer a specific element, no matter how much you change it.

3. The Little Mermaid

3.1. Introduction to The Little Mermaid

3.1.1. The story

In a magical kingdom under the sea, the mermaid Ariel lived with her father King Triton and her sisters. Ariel had a never-ending fascination with humans, and she often swam to the surface to study them, even though her father forbade her to go anywhere near them.

One night, in spite of her father's orders, Ariel found a ship where she saw a handsome prince called Eric. She was instantly taken with him, and when a storm forced him into the sea, she had no choice but to rescue him. She carried him onto the beach and sang to him until he woke up, after which she returned to the sea.

Obsessed with the idea of being with Eric, Ariel ignored the advice of her friends Flounder the fish and Sebastian the crab, and visited the sea witch Ursula hoping that she could help her. In exchange for Ariel's voice, Ursula agreed to turn Ariel into a human on the condition that she could make Eric kiss her within the next three days. If she failed, she would turn back into a mermaid and become Ursula's slave for the rest of her life.

Ariel took the deal and managed to make friends with Eric. However, as she couldn't speak, he was not convinced that she was the one who rescued him. In spite of this, Eric was clearly interested in Ariel, and he got so close to kissing her that Ursula had to intervene. She used Ariel's voice to turn herself into an attractive woman called Vanessa and put a spell on Eric, convincing him to marry her instead.

Ariel's friend Scuttle the seagull then discovered that Eric was about to marry Ursula in disguise, and with the help of their friends, they managed to stop the wedding and recover Ariel's voice so she could tell Eric who she really was. Alas, it was too late, and Ursula dragged Ariel back into the sea after she had become a mermaid again.

King Triton agreed to switch places with Ariel as Ursula's slave, and Ursula then took the king's place as ruler of the ocean. Eric managed to defeat Ursula, and when everything was back to normal, King Triton realised how much Ariel and Eric were in love. He made her human again, Ariel married Eric and they lived happily ever after.

3.1.2. Behind the story

The production of *The Little Mermaid* is considered to mark the renaissance of Disney's animated films lasting from 1989-1999 (Pallant, 2011:89). *The Little Mermaid* was the first in a line of hugely successful features, and this success was especially evident from the music. *The Little Mermaid* received three Oscar nominations in 1990 and won two of them: one for Best Original Score and one for Best Original Song with the energetic number "Under the Sea" (Oscars.org, 2015). The detailed animations, however, were also cause for applause. The film was among the last of the Disney classics that was made without computer animations, which means that every last air bubble has been drawn by hand (Juhre, 1998).

The film was very well received in general and the dubbed version was also very popular in Denmark. Parental guidance was advised for children below the age of seven, which was considered a shame, since the primary target audience for Disney's animated classics in general was assumed to be 5-10-year-olds (ibid.). However, it is safe to assume that many children, also below the age of seven, became familiar with Disney's *The Little Mermaid*.

The film is very loosely based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale by the same name (Det Danske Filminstitut, 2016a). When co-writer and co-director Ron Clements first read the fairy tale, he was immediately intrigued, but he also knew that the original story would need to be adapted. As with many of the early English translations, Clements decided to come up with a happier ending while still remaining faithful to the basic themes of the original. When John Musker joined Clements in the writing process, they elaborated on the unnamed sea witch turning her into the even more villainous character Ursula (ibid.). They also increased the importance of the sea king and

came up with the complicated relationship between him and Ariel. Furthermore, they also created the colourful supporting characters Sebastian, Flounder and Scuttle.

According to Darcy (2004:190), all the psychological and social complexity of the fairy tale is left out in the film. In the fairy tale, the mermaid suffers greatly in order to become human, and, in spite of this, she still does not succeed in marrying the prince in the end. In the Disney fairy tale world, however, *"no character representing good ever ultimately fails"* (ibid.), so, naturally, the mermaid would have to get the prince in Disney's adaptation. This process of minimising unpleasantness and the complexities of life is often referred to as *Disneyfication*, because Disney has been inspired by many old fairy tales and modified them in the same way, for instance, by ensuring happy endings, where the endings were originally sad, and removing sexual, religious and violent elements, among other things, as was the case in *The Little Mermaid*.

3.2. Gallery of characters

The following is a brief description of the main characters. Both the English and Danish names are stated when there was a difference in the two versions. The motives behind the translations of the names will be discussed in section 4.4.

3.2.1. Ariel

The main character Ariel is a 16-year-old mermaid princess, who is fascinated by everything that comes from above the surface. She enjoys going through ship wrecks and collecting trinkets that humans leave behind. She is a dreamer who is curious beyond compare and sometimes careless in her actions, which often gets her into trouble. She is the classic image of a teenager who believes that there is more to life than behaving as her father expects.

3.2.2. Sebastian

Sebastian is a crab with a promising composing career ahead of him until the sea king asks him to 'babysit' Ariel to keep her out of trouble. At that he fails miserably, but when Ariel becomes human, he is more of a friend to her, doing everything he can to help her get what she wants so desperately.

3.2.3. Flounder/Tumle

Flounder is a chubby yellow fish with blue stripes and Ariel's best friend. They go everywhere together and Flounder is the only one who seems to understand Ariel's fascination with humans – although he does not quite share it to the same extent. He has a nervous disposition, but, sometimes reluctantly, he follows Ariel into more or less dangerous situations for her sake. Ariel appreciates his company, but still calls him a guppy if he gets nervous or afraid.

3.2.4. Scuttle/Skralde

Scuttle is a seagull, and he thus gets to see more of humans than any of those who live in the sea. Therefore, Ariel often visits him to ask questions about humans and the stuff she finds under water. He claims to be an expert who knows all about humans and their world, but, as it would seem, he is seldom right in his assumptions. For instance, he tells Ariel that a fork is called a *dinglehopper*, which humans use to comb their hair – this gets Ariel into an awkward situation later when she is dining as a human.

3.2.5. King Triton

King Triton is king of the ocean and Ariel's father. He is on his own in raising his seven daughters, and thus he is very protective of all of them. As Ariel is the youngest and most rebellious, the two of them often argue about what is best for her. In the end, Triton realises that he cannot stop her from trying to fulfil her dreams, so he decides to help her instead, even though it means that he will lose her to a human prince.

3.2.6. Ursula

Ursula is a witch with a human upper body and octopus tentacles. She used to live in the palace, but was banished and sent into exile – presumably due to the performance of dark witchcraft. Now, she claims to help people with their problems, but the consequences are severe if they cannot pay the price.

3.2.7. Eric/Erik

Eric is a prince who dreams of true love, but he struggles to find the one girl he wants to marry. When he finally does meet her and she disappears from him, he stubbornly searches for her until he

finds her. He is also an esteemed sailor – an ability that ends up saving the entire ocean and allowing him to marry Ariel.

3.2.8. Grimsby/Onkel

Grimsby is Prince Eric's loyal confidant who especially urges him to find a wife and settle down. He does not seem to have much of a life of his own aside from assisting Eric and giving him advice.

3.3. Introduction to the translators

3.3.1. Edward Fleming

Edward Fleming (1924-1992), born Flemming Møller in Denmark, was best known as a film director, but he started his career in the film business as an actor in Italy (Det Danske Filminstitut, 2016b). He was also cast in a few French films and he spent some time dancing at the Lido de Paris cabaret show. He later returned to Denmark to play some minor roles in Danish films, and in 1970, he wrote and directed his first film called *Og så er der bal bagefter* (*The Performance Will Be Followed by a Dance*) (IMDb.com). He was most famous for *Den korte sommer* (*That Brief Summer*) from 1976, *Lille Spejl* (*Mirror, Mirror*) from 1978 and *Den kroniske uskyld* (*The Chronic Innocence*) from 1985 (ibid.).

According to The Danish Film Institute, Fleming only translated three films, all of them animated Disney classics: *The Fox and the Hound* from 1981 (Det Danske Filminstitut, 2016c), *The Little Mermaid* from 1989 and *Beauty and the Beast* from 1991 (Det Danske Filminstitut, 2016b). He also directed the Danish versions of *The Fox and the Hound* (Det Danske Filminstitut, 2016c), *The Great Mouse Detective* from 1986 (Det Danske Filminstitut, 2016d) and *Oliver & Company* from 1988 (Det Danske Filminstitut, 2016e).

3.3.2. Jesper Kjær

Jesper Kjær (1938-) is known for writing revues and songs, and for his translation skills (Dramatiker.dk). Before he got more involved with his artistic side, he worked as a travel guide, a proof-reader for the Danish Newspaper Politiken, a hotel receptionist, an interpreter for Copenhagen's criminal police and a teacher, among other things. He has translated many television programmes for the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (Danmarks Radio) from English, French,

German, Spanish as well as Norwegian and Swedish into Danish. He has written the Danish song lyrics for several animated Disney films including *Aristocats* from 1970, *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin* from 1992 and *The Lion King* from 1994 (Det Danske Filminstitut, 2016f). He has been involved with a long list of plays, musicals and revues, and he has subtitled a very large number of films for the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (Dramatiker.dk).

4. Analysis

In order to answer the research question: *How successful is the translation of idioms and names in Disney's The Little Mermaid?* I am going to assess the collected data according to three different criteria of success: maintaining idiomaticity, dealing with dubbing restrictions and adapting to the target audience. Finally, I will analyse the translation of names by assessing whether functional equivalence between the English and Danish names was achieved. The following section will deal with the level of idiomaticity in the Danish translation compared to the English original.

4.1. Idiomaticity

In this section, I will provide some examples of idioms transcribed directly from *The Little Mermaid* and assess the quality of their translation. I will use the same conditions for the identification of idioms in the film as Gottlieb (1997:267) used in his study (cf. section 2.1.2.), meaning that I will only include idioms with at least one nominal element. All the collected idioms can be found in Appendix 1. In the far right column, the applied strategy appears based on Gottlieb's (1997:265f) eight strategies as described in section 2.3.4. In the examples below, only the number and the English and Danish lines appear. In order to make it easy to distinguish between the spoken dialogue and the song lyrics, there is a little note symbol before all the lines that appear in a song. This way, it is also easy to distinguish between the two translators Edward Fleming, who translated the dialogue, and Jesper Kjær, who translated the lyrics of the songs.

The primary success criterion in this analysis will be that of maintaining idiomaticity in the sense of the word that was described in section 2.1.2. This means that the translation of an idiom is not only successful if an equivalent idiom is found in the target language. It is also successful if no equivalent idiom is found, but the meaning in the translation is (more or less) the same, as long as it still sounds natural to the receivers. In section 2.3.3., it was described how idioms should only be rendered as idioms if the norms of the use of idioms are the same in the two languages. Since these

norms are very similar in English and Danish, and since colourful language is generally welcomed in animated children's films, appropriate idioms in the translation will be considered the ideal solution – bearing in mind that this will not always be possible.

The strategies that were used in *The Little Mermaid* will be listed below, and different examples will be given along with an assessment of the quality of those examples.

4.1.1. Adherence

Adherence covers the three strategies where idioms in the source text are rendered metaphorically in the target text, which means that idioms are translated as idioms. With *congruence*, an identical idiom is used in the target text, with *equivalence*, a similar idiom is used and with *correspondence*, a different idiom is used.

4.1.1.1. Congruence

In section 2.1.2., it was described how, even though idioms are assumed to be fixed to a certain extent, it is possible to change some of the components or replace them with others. *The Little Mermaid* provides several examples of idioms that have been adjusted to the sea world, and many of them have been translated as equivalent idioms. Below, some of these examples will be described and the quality of their translation will be assessed. The elements that have been changed from the conventional idioms are marked with bold.

Example 1

Context: Ariel and Flounder are about to swim into a shipwreck to see what the humans have left behind when Flounder gets nervous and suggests that they leave.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
1	ARIEL: You're not getting cold **fins** now, are you?	ARIEL: Du har da ikke fået kolde **finner**, har du?

As explained in section 2.3.1., *cold feet* is a common idiom that means feeling nervous and regretting something that you had planned to do. This is clearly how Flounder feels, as he voluntarily follows Ariel to the shipwreck, but, as soon as they get there, he wants to leave. However, as Flounder does not have any feet, the script writers changed the well-known idiom into *cold **fins***. Apparently, they assumed that the viewers would be familiar with the original idiom and

thus understand the humorous effect that this modification brings. The exact same idiom exists in Danish with the same components and the same meaning: *kolde fødder* (Den Danske Ordbog). *Feet* and *fins* are similar, because they have the same initial letter *f* and both contain one syllable. The same can be said for *fødder* and *finner*, since they both have two syllables and begin with *f*. This means that the modification has been an easy decision to make for both the script-writers and the translator, as it sounds natural to the viewers even though the idiom is different from the one they are familiar with.

Example 2

Context: Sebastian is trying to convince Ariel that life under the sea is much better than above the surface.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
9	SEBASTIAN: ♫ The **seaweed** is always greener in somebody else's **lake**.	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Ja, **søgræs** er altid grønnest i naboens **fiskedam**.

This idiom has been modified from the common *the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence* (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). In the modified version, *grass* is replaced with *seaweed* and *the other side of the fence* has turned into *somebody else's lake*. These substitutions are in no way similar to the originals, and this indicates that it is the middle part, *always greener*, that is key to recognising the idiom.

Again, the translator is fortunate that there is an almost identical version of the idiom in Danish: *græsset er altid grønnere i naboens have* (Den Danske Ordbog) [the grass is always greener in the neighbour's garden]. A quick search on Google reveals that a more popular version of the Danish idiom resembles the English version even more: *græsset er altid grønnere på den anden side af hækken/hegnet* [the grass is always greener on the other side of the hedge/fence]. Regardless of which version is used, it is clear that the *altid grønnere* part is the element that characterises the Danish idiom just like the English one, and this makes it a simple task to translate the idiom into Danish. However, because the line appears in a song, a little more creativity was needed. Jesper Kjær managed to make the same modifications in the Danish idiom as the ones that appeared in the English one by translating *seaweed* directly as *søgræs* and *somebody else's lake* as *naboens fiskedam* [the neighbour's fish pond]. This is a very successful translation, because the idiomaticity remains in the translation and, at the same time, it is very close to the original.

Example 3

Context: Ariel has been turned into a human and has just arrived at the beach with the help of Flounder and Sebastian. Scuttle sees and joins them.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
20	SCUTTLE: Well, look at what the cat**fish** dragged in!	SKRALDE: Hvad er det, **havtasken** har slæbt med ind?

The original expression behind this idiom is to *look like something the cat dragged in*, in other words, to look dirty and untidy (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). From this, a new idiom arose: *look at what the cat dragged in,* which is an informal and good-humoured way of expressing surprise at someone's presence (The Free Dictionary). Naturally, the script-writers saw this as another opportunity to adapt an idiom to the sea world, and this particular one only needed a small modification: replacing *cat* with *cat**fish***.

The same idiom exists in Danish, although the first version is the most frequently used one: *ligne noget katten har slæbt ind* [look like something the cat has dragged in] (Den Danske Ordbog). The second version is also used in Danish: *se, hvad katten har slæbt ind* [look what the cat has dragged in], but it seems that this expression mostly appears in Danish through English, as revealed by a Google search. It is most frequently used in fictional books that have been translated from English into Danish, as the translation of Danielle Steel's *Prodigal Son* illustrates. In this book, the sentence *"Well, look what the cat dragged in"* (Steel, 2015a) has been translated directly as *"Næ, men se, hvad katten har slæbt ind"* (Steel, 2015b), and it is far from the only case where this idiom has been translated directly into Danish.

The idiom from *The Little Mermaid* has also been translated in this way, but another interesting part is that *catfish* has been translated as *havtaske* [monkfish]. The literal translation of *catfish* into Danish is *havkat*, and since *kat* is an integral part of the Danish idiom, it would seem a natural choice to use *havkat* in the translation. We cannot know what Edward Fleming was thinking when he translated this line, but, offhand, it seems an odd choice to use *havtaske* instead of *havkat*, especially because the definite forms of both have three syllables (*hav-task-en* vs. *hav-kat-ten*), and thus there is no obvious reason for using *havtaske* instead of *havkat*.

4.1.1.2. Equivalence

By using an equivalence strategy, a translator uses an idiom that is similar, but not identical, to the source text idiom, and has the same meaning. One example was found in *The Little Mermaid*, as described below.

Example 4

Context: Ariel is singing about how wonderful she imagines life is above the surface.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
5	ARIEL: ♫ Bright young women Sick of swimmin' Ready to stand	ARIEL: ♫ Der står kvinder Uden finner På egne ben

The English idiom is usually expressed thus: *to stand on your own two feet*, and it means to be independent (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). In the song, an abbreviated version of this idiom has been used, but it is safe to assume that viewers get the same associations when they hear it. The Danish equivalent is *at stå på egne ben* [to stand on one's own legs] and the only difference is thus that one version uses feet to illustrate and the other uses legs, but essentially, they mean the same thing. Jesper Kjær could have chosen to translate these lines more literally, for instance: *Unge kvinder, uden finner, klar til at stå* [young women, without fins, ready to stand]. In this new Danish version, both the rhymes and the syllables match, but the idiom is reduced in a manner which a Danish audience is unlikely to understand right away. Thus, Kjær managed to find a more idiomatic solution that every Dane should understand immediately.

4.1.1.3. Correspondence

This strategy implies that one idiom in the source text is translated as a different idiom in the target text.

Example 5

Context: Ariel has just rescued Eric from drowning, and Sebastian emphasises the importance of keeping the episode a secret from King Triton.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
6	SEBASTIAN: I will stay in one piece.	SEBASTIAN: Og så redder jeg **skallen**.

To be or stay *in one piece* means to get through something safely (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). A corresponding idiom in Danish is *at redde skindet* [to save the skin] (Den Danske Ordbog), and it has the same meaning as the English idiom, even though the formulation is different. In *The Little Mermaid*, the Danish idiom is modified slightly to *at redde skallen* [to save the shell], as Sebastian is a shellfish, and, in this way, the Danish translation brings an additional element of humour.

4.1.2. Literalisation

Literalisation is a strategy where the idiom in the source text is rendered non-metaphorically in the target text, which means that the idiom is replaced with a non-idiom. It can either be replaced with a single word, which is the case with *reduction*, or another phrase, which characterises the *paraphrase* strategy, or it can be explained with more or different words than the original as the *expansion* strategy suggests.

4.1.2.1. Reduction

By using the reduction strategy, you replace an idiom in the source text with a single word in the target text. This is an effective strategy if one word is considered concise and accurate enough to explain the meaning of the idiom even if the idiom's metaphorical effect is lost in the translation.

Example 6

Context: Ariel is completely absent-minded after having rescued Prince Eric, and she is dancing and humming to herself. Her sisters and her father, King Triton, watch her with wonder. Attina is one of Ariel's sisters.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
7	ATTINA: Oh, she's got it bad.	ATTINA: Hun er godt medtaget.

To *have got it bad* is an informal way of saying that someone is very much in love (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). The way it is phrased almost indicates that love is a disease that you can catch, and this connotation is reinforced by King Triton's response to his daughter's statement: *"What? What has she got?"* after which another daughter replies: *"Isn't it obvious, Daddy? Ariel's in love"*.

At first glance, one might wonder about the Danish translation of this idiom. The word *medtaget* means to be weakened or damaged in some way, or it means that something is included somewhere.

It is not typically used to describe love. In fact, not in a single instance out of 318 results in a search on KorpusDK was it used with this meaning (KorpusDK). Even so, in the context of the conversation, it does not seem out of place, because it has the same connotations to illness as the English idiom does. It therefore seems a natural response when King Triton asks *"Hvad? Fejler hun noget?"* [What? Is something wrong with her?], and we immediately understand what Attina meant when the other sister replies that Ariel is in love. Thus, even though the Danish phrase *"Hun er godt medtaget"* may seem odd in isolation, it is not cause for confusion when heard in the context of the rest of the conversation. The visuals also make it clear that Ariel is not hurt or sick in any way – except for lovesick.

Example 7

Context: Ursula describes how she wants to help the poor unfortunate souls that come to her.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
15	URSULA: ♫ Now, it's happened once or twice, someone couldn't pay the price. And I'm afraid I had to rake 'em 'cross the coals.	URSULA: ♫ Når en stakkel uden held ikke har betalt sin gæld, har jeg desværre måttet vise mig lidt studs.

To *rake someone over/across the coals* means to criticise or reprimand them severely because they have done something wrong (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). In Ursula's case, the threat is more severe than mere verbal abuse, although she cannot literally rake someone across the coals under water. Instead, she turns her debtors into plants and keeps them in the entrance of her cave. The Danish expression *studs* implies that Ursula will be angry, which is a bit of an understatement compared to the connotations of the English idiom. However, as Ursula says it while demonstrating what she does to people who do not pay, there is no doubt of how serious she is. Therefore, even though the translation itself is not 100 % accurate, the effect is still transferred to the Danish line with a little help from the visuals.

4.1.2.2. Paraphrase

With the paraphrase strategy, you re-write a source text idiom as a non-idiom phrase in the target text.

Example 8

Context: After Ariel and King Triton have an argument, because she went to the surface without his permission, Ariel storms off because she is upset, and Triton is left with Sebastian by his side.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
4	SEBASTIAN: Hm! Teenagers. Hm. They think they know everything. You give them an inch, **they swim all over you**.	SEBASTIAN: Hm! Teenagers. Hm. De tror, de ved det hele. Og at alle andre bare er dumme.

The original English idiom says: *when you give somebody an inch, they take a mile/yard*, which means that if you allow someone a small amount of freedom, they will take advantage of you (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). Instead of taking a mile or a yard, Sebastian accuses Ariel of *swimming all over* them, and thereby, the idiom is more applicable to the sea. There is a corresponding expression in Danish that says: *når man rækker Fanden en lillefinger, tager han hele hånden* (Den Danske Ordbog) [when you pass the devil a little finger, he takes the whole hand]. Although this idiom would render the same meaning as the English one, it does not seem appropriate in this particular situation. Somehow it seems awkward to involve the devil, when it is really just a teenaged mermaid, and it seems Fleming agreed, if he even considered using the idiom in the first place.

In the end, Fleming decided to write: *Og at alle andre bare er dumme* [and that everyone else is simply stupid]. Although this translation is not even close to the original idiom, on its own, it is a logical continuation of the sentence that comes before it. If teenagers think they know everything, it makes sense that they also think that everyone else is stupid.

Example 9

Context: Sebastian is trying to convince Ariel that life under the sea is much better than above the surface.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
8	SEBASTIAN: Will you get your head out of the clouds and back in the water where it belongs?	SEBASTIAN: Hold op med at danse på de skyer, og kom ned i vandet, hvor du hører til.

To *have your head in the clouds* means that your thoughts are unrelated to what you are doing or that you are making unrealistic plans (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). Sebastian makes the idiom more applicable to the situation, because Ariel is dreaming of life above the surface (where you can

at least see the clouds), and he urges her to get her thoughts away from the clouds and back in the water where her body currently resides.

This idiom does not exist in Danish, but Fleming decided to keep the image, presumably because the cloud vs. water metaphor describes the situation so well. Although, instead of having her head in the clouds, Sebastian says that Ariel is *dancing* on the clouds, which could be a reference to the Danish idiom *en dans på roser* [a dance on roses] which describes a carefree existence (Den Danske Ordbog). These associations and the striking image make this translation quite successful, because there is no doubt as to what is meant here.

Example 10

Context: Ursula is about to convince Ariel to make a deal that will make her human, so she can live with Prince Eric.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
13	URSULA: Now, then. You're here because you have a thing for this human	URSULA: Altså, du er her fordi du er blevet lun på det der menneske

When you *have a thing for someone*, it usually means that you like them (although *having a thing about something* can also mean that you do not like it) (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries), and in this case, it means that Ariel is in love with Eric. This idiom has an equivalent in Danish, where the meaning is the same, but it is structured a little differently: *at være lun/varm på nogen* (Den Danske Ordbog) [to be warm on someone]. In this case, Fleming has succeeded in finding common Danish idiom with the same meaning as the original idiom, even though it is structured differently.

Example 11

Context: Ariel has just been turned into a human, and Scuttle finds her on the beach with Sebastian and Flounder. Scuttle knows that something is different, but he is not quite sure what it is.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
21	SCUTTLE: I gotta admit I can't put my **foot** on it right now…	SKRALDE: Jeg må indrømme, jeg kan ikke komme på det lige nu…

As with the examples mentioned in section 4.1.1.1., this idiom has also been modified slightly to match the situation. The original idiom is to not be able to *put your finger on something* (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries), but, as Scuttle is a seagull, and thus does not have any fingers, he says that he cannot put his *foot* on it. There is an identical idiom in Danish that says: *at sætte en finger på*

noget (Den Danske Ordbog) [to put a finger on something], so it is surprising that Fleming did not use it. He could easily have used the Danish idiom and replaced *finger* with *fod* [foot] as in: *Jeg må indrømme, jeg kan ikke sætte en fod på det lige nu* [I must admit I can't put a foot on it right now].

However, it is possible that Fleming thought that using the idiom would make it too long and strange, and therefore he decided to use a more common Danish expression: *at komme på noget* (Den Danske Ordbog) [to come on something] which usually means to remember something, but can also be used in this situation, where you know that there is something, but you cannot place it in your mind. This translation still manages to render the meaning of the English idiom, even if the humorous effect disappears.

Example 12

Context: Ariel has been turned back into a mermaid and Ursula has just dragged her under water.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
28	URSULA: Poor little princess - it's not you I'm after. I've a much bigger fish to -	URSULA: Stakkels prinsesse - det er ikke dig, jeg vil ha'. Det er en langt større fisk, jeg -

It is safe to assume that, even though Ursula never gets to finish this sentence, she wanted to say that she has *a bigger fish to fry*. The conventional meaning of this idiom is to have something better or more important to do (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries), but in this case, it means that Ursula wants something that is even better than a princess – she wants her father, the sea king. This idiom is very applicable in this situation, because it already uses an image from the sea with no need of modification. This might explain why Fleming decided to keep the image, even though there is no equivalent idiom in Danish. Because Ursula never finishes the sentence, Fleming could translate the first part of the idiom almost directly, and it is thus up to the Danish viewers to guess what comes next. For instance, it would make sense if the sentence looked like this: *Det er en langt større fisk, jeg er ude efter/vil have fat i* [It is a much bigger fish I am after/want hold of]. This way, the meaning and the image of the original idiom remain, and the translation is still metaphorical even though it is not actually an idiom.

4.1.2.3. Expansion

With the expansion strategy, you do more than just re-phrase the source text idiom; you take it a step further by explaining it in a different way.

Example 13

Context: Sebastian is trying to convince Ariel that life under the sea is much better than above the surface.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
10	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Under the sea, we off the hook.	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Her er du fri og frisk og glad

To *let someone off the hook* means to free them from a difficult situation or punishment (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). In this case, Sebastian means it both metaphorically and literally, because free fish (and merfolk) have not been caught on a hook – at least not yet. This idiom does not exist in Danish, so Kjær decided to take the essential meaning of *off the hook*, which is to be free (*fri*) and add fresh and happy (*frisk og glad*) in order to match the number of syllables. Happiness and supposedly also freshness (in the energetic sense of the word) are emotions that often accompany freedom, so this translation is an elegant solution.

Example 14

Context: Sebastian is trying to convince Ariel that life under the sea is much better than above the surface.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
11	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Each little slug here cutting a rug here	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Hver lille reje Tager sin skalmeje

The idiom *to cut a rug* is another way of saying *to dance* (The Free Dictionary), which the slugs in the film seem to enjoy very much (cf. Appendix 5). However, in the Danish translation, the *slugs* have turned into shrimp (*reje*), and instead of dancing, they play the shawm (*skalmeje*), which is a kind of flute. As the English idiom does not exist in Danish, Kjær has had to be very creative to come up with a Danish version where the rhymes and syllables would match, and in this, he was quite successful.

4.1.3. Idiomatisation

Idiomatisation is the opposite of the literalisation strategies, because idioms are created in the translation, even though there were none present in the source text. This strategy is called *compensation*, because it compensates for the loss of idioms elsewhere in the text. As quite a few of

the original source text idioms in *The Little Mermaid* have been rendered non-metaphorically, the target text would appear to contain fewer idioms than the source text. In order to make up for some of the loss of idioms, the translators have inserted some new Danish idioms in the target text.

4.1.3.1. Compensation

Example 15

Context: Sebastian is trying to convince Ariel that life under the sea is much better than above the surface.

#	English dialogue	Danish translation
30	SEBASTIAN: ♫ What do they got? A lot of sand We got a hot crustacean band	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Oppe på land er der kun sand Mod os er de det rene vand

Although it would be possible to translate *"We got a hot crustacean band"* directly as, for instance, *"Vi har et lækkert krebsdyrsband"* [We have a hot crustacean band], where the rhyme remains and the syllables work, it does not have a nice ring to it. Kjær decided to take it as an opportunity to play with the Danish lyrics and insert an idiom: *"Mod os er de det rene vand"* [Against us, they are the pure water]. In Danish, *det rene vand* usually means that something is insignificant or easy (Den Danske Ordbog), so, apparently, Sebastian thinks that humans are nothing compared to all the creatures that live under the sea. In addition to the fact that this idiom fits very well with the mood of the song, the literal meaning provides a humorous element. If anything should be 'pure water', it should be life below the surface, but Sebastian mocks humans by saying that they are *det rene vand*.

Example 16

Context: Ursula has just dragged Ariel back into the water after she became a mermaid again, and now Ursula wants to bargain with King Triton.

#	English dialogue	Danish translation
35	URSULA: The daughter of the great sea king is a very precious commodity.	URSULA: Den store Kong Tritons datter er et godt kort at have på hånden.

Commodity is usually used about products and raw materials that can be bought and sold, and this is how Ursula sees Ariel. She is the currency that will give Ursula what she really wants. In the Danish translation, the image of a card game is used instead of a purchasing situation: *at have gode kort på hånden* (Den Danske Ordbog) [to have good cards on the hand] means to be in an

advantageous situation, like in a poker game where you have the right cards to win the game. This is a very suitable image, since Ursula's personality seems to be just as close to that of a gambler who likes to play dirty as to that of a businesswoman who depends on unbreakable contracts (which she does in the film).

4.1.4. Deletion

4.1.4.1. Omission

As mentioned in section 2.3.4., *omission* indicates that an idiom in the source text is deleted completely. This means that it is not translated or rewritten in any way, but simply gone, leaving a void in the target text. No examples of omission have been found in *The Little Mermaid*, and there is a quite logical explanation for this. As we are dealing with a film and not a written text, viewers would notice if there was something missing in the Danish version. As explained in section 2.4.1., viewers expect correspondence between what they see and what they hear, and if a character's lips are moving on the screen, viewers will be confused if there is no sound to accompany the movement. Therefore, the translators have used the remaining strategies to replace the original dialogue with a corresponding dialogue in Danish.

4.1.5. Partial conclusion

This analysis shows that each idiom has been assessed by the translators individually, since all of Gottlieb's strategies except deletion have been used at least once. The table below shows how many times each strategy has been used throughout the film:

Category	**Strategy**	**Number of uses**	**Total**
Adherence	Congruence	6	9
	Equivalence	1	
	Correspondence	2	
Literalisation	Reduction	3	20
	Paraphrase	14	
	Expansion	3	
Deletion	Omission	-	-
Compensation	Compensation	6	6
Total			**35**

The table shows that literalisation has clearly been favoured, but adherence is not too far behind, which means that the translators have been relatively successful in finding idioms in Danish that

mean the same thing as the original idioms. Bearing in mind that it is virtually impossible to do so in all cases, the translators have found some ways to literalise some of the idioms in an elegant way that smoothly describes what the idioms mean. In order to make up for some of the literalisation, the translators have also inserted some new Danish idioms.

Although most of the translations are quite successful, there are a few examples that are less fortunate. For instance, example 3 with the *catfish* >< *havtaske* match was strange, and in example 11 a paraphrase was used (*komme på* [come on]) even though it was possible to use the congruence strategy (*sætte en finger/fod på* [put a finger/foot on]). It is difficult to say whether a source-text oriented or a target-text oriented macrostrategy has been used, since the idioms have been translated in many different ways. However, since literalisation has generally been favoured and since differences have occurred between English and Danish idioms, it would seem that target text orientation is the preferred macrostrategy. Despite the differences between the English and Danish versions, the overall impression is that the translations are creative and natural to the viewers, and there is no cause for confusion as long as the original English dialogue is not heard (or understood) by viewers.

4.2. Dubbing restrictions

In this section, I will study how successfully the translators have dealt with restrictions associated with dubbing. In order to do this, I will study how well the Danish translations of the idioms match the lip movements of the characters, and whether there are instances where the dialogue does not correspond with the visual side. The directors of *The Little Mermaid* used an, at the time, new technique, where the dialogue was recorded before the animation began (Det Danske Filminstitut, 2016a). This allowed the animators to make the characters even more realistic and personal, as the lip movements and gestures could match the dialogue almost perfectly. However, the fact that the original version became so realistic posed a problem to all the countries that wanted to post-synchronise the film, because they could only manipulate the sound and not the visuals, as is the case for any non-animated film. Therefore, a big part of dubbing *The Little Mermaid* was to make the Danish dialogue match the visual side as well as possible. The following discusses how the Danish film crew managed this task with respect to the idioms in the film.

4.2.1. Natural expression

Below are shown some examples where the Danish dialogue successfully matches the visual side of the film despite the difficulties that dubbing imposes.

Example 17

Context: After Ariel and King Triton have an argument, because she went to the surface without his permission, Ariel storms off because she is upset, and Triton is left with Sebastian by his side.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
4	SEBASTIAN: Hm! Teenagers. Hm. They think they know everything. You give them an inch, they swim all over you.	SEBASTIAN: Hm! Teenagers. Hm. De tror, de ved det hele. Og at alle andre bare er dumme.

Even though this translation is a paraphrase (cf. example 8 in section 4.1.2.2.), where the Danish sentence construction is completely different from the English one, the dubbed version seems surprisingly natural. Not all the lip movements match, but the film-makers have managed to place Danish *alle* at the exact same moment as English *inch*. Both consonants *l* and *n* are alveolar (tongue-tip touching teeth-ridge) (Mees & Collins, 2011:53ff), and therefore you cannot immediately see the difference, you can only hear it (cf. Appendix 6). The fact that these consonants are being uttered at the same time in both versions helps make the utterance look more natural, even though English *know* (rounded vowel) and Danish *ved* (unrounded vowel) are also placed at the same time. In spite of this, the overall impression is natural, because Sebastian's pace matches his gestures and facial expressions. He speaks a little bit more slowly in Danish, but his intonation still corresponds perfectly with his gestures.

Example 18

Context: King Triton is worried about Ariel, because he does not know what happened to her when she leaves the ocean and becomes human.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
25	TRITON: Leave no **shell** unturned, no coral unexplored.	TRITON: Søg under hver en sten og i hver en grotte.

In this example, Triton's face is in a close-up frame, where his pronunciation is even more visible than Sebastian's in the previous example. This makes it even more important that the Danish dialogue fits the visual side, and it does, quite successfully. As with example 17, we can clearly see

Triton's tongue tip touch his teeth-ridge when he pronounces the *n* in *unexplored* (cf. Appendix 7). The Danish *en* that comes before *grotte* is placed at the same time as *un* in *unexplored*, so it does not seem strange that Triton should lift his tongue at that moment, even though he is speaking Danish. In fact, the *en* in *hver en sten* is also placed at the same time as the *un* in *unturned*, so the whole sentence is placed successfully in the dubbed version.

Example 19

Context: Ariel is singing about how wonderful she imagines life is above the surface.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
5	ARIEL: ♫ Bright young women Sick of swimmin' Ready to stand	ARIEL: ♫ Der står kvinder Uden finner På egne ben

Example 4 in section 4.1.1.2. explains how Kjær found a translation of *ready to stand* that was less direct, but more idiomatic than *klar til at stå*. On a visual level, *på egne ben* is also the better alternative, because the *a* in *stand* and the *e* in *ben* are both unrounded, while *å* in *stå* is rounded. As the visual side shows a close-up of Ariel while she sings this long note (cf. Appendix 8), it would seem unnatural if the audience heard an *å* while seeing an *a*. This problem was avoided in *The Little Mermaid*, because the translator used a word with an unrounded vowel.

Example 20

Context: Ariel has been turned back into a mermaid and Ursula has just dragged her under water.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
28	URSULA: Poor little princess - it's not you I'm after. I've a much bigger fish to -	URSULA: Stakkels prinsesse - det er ikke dig, jeg vil ha'. Det er en langt større fisk, jeg -

As with example 17 and 18, the film-makers have again succeeded in placing the Danish dialogue strategically according to the visual side. Generally, the lip movements in this line are not perfect, but viewers are unlikely to notice, because Ursula is moving when she utters it, and thus focus is not on her mouth. However, there is one point where she very clearly utters a labio-dental consonant (lip to teeth) (Mees & Collins, 2011:36), which can be seen in Appendix 9. In English, she is saying *after* in this moment, and in Danish, she is saying the word *vil*, and *f* and *v* are both labio-dental consonants. The only difference between the sounds is that *f* is a strong consonant (voiceless) and *v* is a weak consonant (voiced) (ibid.), but, as this difference can only be heard, but not seen, it makes

perfect sense to put *vil* at the same place as *after*, even though the words are otherwise quite different.

This example also shows how the subtitles are sometimes shorter than the dubbed dialogue, as explained in section 2.4.2. As Appendix 9 illustrates, the word *langt* is left out of the subtitles in order to respect the restrictions to time and space, but in the spoken version, there is room to include it, and thus the dubbed translation is closer to the original than the subtitles.

4.2.2. Unnatural expression

This section will show some examples where the Danish dialogue has not been successfully matched with the visual side.

Example 21

Context: Sebastian is trying to convince Ariel that life under the sea is much better than above the surface.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
10	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Under the sea, we off the hook.	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Her er du fri og frisk og glad

Sebastian is very clearly rounding his lips when pronouncing *hook* (cf. Appendix 10), and it looks unnatural when he sings *glad* in Danish. It causes the same kind of confusion as the example from *The Lion King* mentioned in section 2.4.2., but, as Sebastian is not holding this note for quite as long as Timon and Pumbaa, the song quickly moves on and viewers soon forget about it. It would seem that good and catchy lyrics that rhyme were considered more important than using a rounded vowel for the sake of matching lip movements.

Example 22

Context: Ursula is about to convince Ariel to make a deal that will make her human, so she can live with Prince Eric.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
13	URSULA: Now, then. You're here because you have a thing for this human	URSULA: Altså, du er her fordi du er blevet lun på det der menneske

In this example, we get a quite close look at Ursula when she speaks, which makes it obvious that her voice has been post-synchronised, because none of the lip movements match (cf. Appendix 11). However, the duration of this utterance matches the period of time that viewers can see her speak, so not everyone is likely to notice her mouth if they are following the story. In addition, the utterance is relatively fast-paced, so there is not much time to dwell on mismatching lip movements.

As with example 20, this example also illustrates how subtitles can be condensed compared to the dubbed dialogue. *Altså* has been left out of the Danish subtitles, but not for the lack of time or space. It could easily have been included on its own, but instead, the remaining part of the subtitle appears on the screen early. This is mainly cause for confusion if you are watching the Danish version with Danish subtitles, which few people do, but if you watch it in English with Danish subtitles, and you have a basic understanding of English, you might also wonder why her first words are not subtitled and the rest of the dialogue is subtitled early.

Example 23

Context: Ursula discovers that Prince Eric is very close to kissing Ariel, and thereby allowing her to stay human, so she decides to interfere in order to prevent it from happening.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
26	URSULA: Well, it's time Ursula took matters into her own **tentacles**.	URSULA: Det er på tide, at Ursula tager sagen i sine egne hænder.

Most of this line is uttered when Ursula is moving fast or turning away, so lip movement is not that much of an issue. However, if you look closely in the end, you can see that there are more syllables in *tentacles* than *hænder* as her lips keep moving for a brief moment longer than we can hear her talk in the Danish version. This could be an argument for translating *tentacles* with *tentakler* instead of *hænder*, but there may be more reasons against using this translation (cf. example 28 section 4.3.1.). But, then again, the utterance is fast-paced, and we quickly move on, because the story is taking an important turn.

4.2.3. Mismatch between image and Danish dialogue

There are a few cases where the Danish dialogue says something else than the visual side. Whether or not this causes a problem will be discussed below.

Example 24

Context: Sebastian is trying to convince Ariel that life under the sea is much better than above the surface.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
30	SEBASTIAN: ♫ What do they got? A lot of sand We got a hot crustacean band	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Oppe på land er der kun sand Mod os er de det rene vand

Throughout this song, almost every frame depicts what Sebastian is singing about, and in this example, we can see the whole *crustacean band* (cf. Appendix 12). In the Danish translation, Sebastian is singing about the insignificance of people above the surface (cf. example 15 in section 4.1.3.1.), which is now depicted by fish playing instruments. However, in spite of this, it is not very confusing, because the picture does not focus on any specific elements; it merely shows the overall ambiance of the song.

Example 25

Context: Sebastian is trying to convince Ariel that life under the sea is much better than above the surface.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
11	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Each little slug here cutting a rug here	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Hver lille reje Tager sin skalmeje

In example 14 in section 4.1.2.3., it is described how the dancing slugs turn into shrimp playing the shawm in the Danish translation (cf. Appendix 5). This may be a little confusing, since there has been correspondence between visuals and lyrics in the rest of the song, and, in this case, the visuals show a close-up of the dancing slugs with no musical instruments in sight. As with example 21, the lyrics were given priority over the visual side. Additionally, as the song and the visuals are fast-paced, viewers are unlikely to notice this unless they watch the film several times.

4.2.4. Partial conclusion

In section 2.4.1., it is explained that a dubbed translation is often more faithful to the original than other types of revoicing and subtitles, because it is supposed to be a reproduction that is not subject to the same restrictions in time and space as subtitles are. Therefore, the idioms in *The Little Mermaid* have, for the most part, been translated sentence by sentence (cf. section 2.4.3.) with the

exception of the songs. The songs have been translated more freely, because different limitations apply to them, such as rhymes, number of syllables, etc.

Generally, the Danish translations have been very well placed according to the visuals. There are only a few cases where the lip movements are noticeably different from the English dialogue, and, in those cases, you would probably have to watch the film several times in order to notice or look for it intentionally. It is unlikely that the Danish target audience will give it much thought during the first couple of viewings, because, hopefully, they are too caught up in the story to be thinking about lip movements.

4.3. Target audience

This section will discuss some examples where the Danish translation of idioms has been adapted from the original in consideration of the target audience. There will also be some examples where the translation is more difficult than the original, and it will be discussed whether or not this poses a problem. Although *The Little Mermaid* was officially recommended for children the age of seven and above, this analysis will assume that the main target audience consists of children between ages five and ten (cf. section 3.1.2.). Section 2.5. described some of the decisions that translators often make when translating for children. Some of the things that are most often changed in children's translations are complicated language and the removal of taboo elements. Therefore, this section will include examples where the linguistic style is different in the English and Danish versions, and it will also discuss the extent to which 'unsuitable' elements have been removed (or even added) in the translations.

4.3.1. Simplification of language

There are some cases where the Danish translation is slightly more simplistic and thus easier to understand than the English dialogue.

Example 26

Context: After Ariel and King Triton have an argument, because she went to the surface without his permission, Ariel storms off because she is upset, and Triton is left with Sebastian by his side.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
4	SEBASTIAN: Hm! Teenagers. Hm. They think they know everything. You give them an inch, they swim all over you.	SEBASTIAN: Hm! Teenagers. Hm. De tror, de ved det hele. Og at alle andre bare er dumme.

As mentioned in example 8 in section 4.1.2.2., this idiom has been translated as a paraphrase even though there is an equivalent idiom in Danish that says: *når man rækker Fanden en lillefinger, tager han hele hånden* [when you pass the devil a little finger, he takes the whole hand]. It was discussed how it would be awkward to introduce the devil out of the blue, but another explanation for not using this idiom could be that *Fanden* is a swearword in Danish, and it would be inappropriate for Sebastian to swear in a children's film. However, the Danish idiom could have been modified to for instance: *du giver **dem** en finger, og **de** tager hele hånden* [you give **them** a finger and **they** take the whole hand]. In this way, the issue about the devil disappears completely and it looks more like the English idiom without changing the meaning. However, it is still quite long and it is possible that not all children would understand the metaphor and the reference to the original Danish idiom, so, instead, Fleming found an even simpler way of communicating the message.

Example 27

Context: King Triton is worried about Ariel, because he does not know what happened to her when she leaves the ocean and becomes human.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
25	TRITON: Leave no **shell** unturned, no coral unexplored.	TRITON: Søg under hver en sten og i hver en grotte.

In this example, the English idiom has been modified to be more applicable under the sea. The original idiom says: *leave no stone unturned* and means to try absolutely everything in order to find or achieve something (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). The original form of the Danish idiom is: *at vende hver en sten* [to turn over every stone], and it is only changed slightly in order to make it more fluent [look under every stone].

What is interesting here is that the English idiom has been modified to the sea world, but the Danish idiom has not. At first glance, there would be no problem in translating the idiom as follows: *Søg under hver en **skal*** [look under every **shell**] or *Søg under hver en **musling*** [look under every mussel]. However, as there are stones as well as shells at the bottom of the sea, it is possible that

Fleming decided to use the original Danish idiom out of consideration of the target audience. The word *skal* is not used very often on its own in this connection, but is more frequently referred to as *muslingeskal* [mussel shell] or simply *musling* [mussel] in order to separate the word from other kinds of shell. Since these words would either be too long or too different from the original Danish idiom, Fleming presumably thought that child viewers would better understand the idiom in its original form. In addition, *musling* would not fit the lip movements either, because of the bilabial *m* that is not present in the English dialogue.

Example 28

Context: Ursula discovers that Prince Eric is very close to kissing Ariel, and thereby allowing her to stay human, so she decides to interfere in order to prevent it from happening.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
26	URSULA: Well, it's time Ursula took matters into her own **tentacles**.	URSULA: Det er på tide, at Ursula tager sagen i sine egne hænder.

As with the previous example, this Danish idiom could also have been adapted in the same way as the English one by using *tentakler* or *fangarme* (both are Danish translations of English *tentacle*) instead of *hænder* [hands] (cf. example 23 in section 4.2.2.). However, it is possible that *tentakler* would seem too foreign for Danish children and they would thus find it difficult to understand. The other Danish translation, *fangarme*, would be a better option when it comes to comprehension, but since it contains an *f* (labio-dental) and an *m* (bilabial), which are both very noticeable when pronounced, it would not look natural on the visual side. Using the original Danish idiom (*egne hænder*) has the best chance of being understood by the target audience, since child viewers are likely to be familiar with it, and thus it could cause confusion to modify this particular idiom if the word used as a substitute (*tentakler*/*fangarme*) is more difficult than the original (*hænder*).

4.3.2. More difficult language

Even though there are several instances in *The Little Mermaid* where the language in the Danish translation has been simplified in consideration of the target audience, it has also been made more complex or difficult in some places.

Example 29

Context: Ariel is completely absent-minded after having rescued Prince Eric, and she is dancing and humming to herself. Her sisters and her father, King Triton, watch her with wonder. Attina is one of Ariel's sisters.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
7	ATTINA: Oh, she's got it bad.	ATTINA: Hun er godt medtaget.

In example 6 in section 4.1.2.1., it was explained how the word *medtaget* is very rarely used in connection with being in love. This, and the fact that it is not a common word in general, indicates that young children are unlikely to know what it means. Therefore, one could argue that a different translation might have been better, but since the meaning is explained immediately after the word was uttered, and since this word suits the disease connotation described in example 6, it does not do much harm.

Example 30

Context: Sebastian is trying to convince Ariel that life under the sea is much better than above the surface.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
11	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Each little slug here cutting a rug here	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Hver lille reje Tager sin skalmeje

Example 25 in section 4.2.3. described how this translation was problematic with respect to correspondence between visuals and lyrics, but this is not the only issue that it brings. Particularly the word *skalmeje* is difficult to understand – and not just for children. The shawm is not a very common instrument, and it only occurs twice in the data from KorpusDK compared with *guitar* or *klaver* [piano] which occur more than 860 times each. This indicates that relatively few people are even aware of the shawm's existence, which means that children are even more unlikely to ever have heard of it. That being said, it is still an overall good solution, because it fits the mood of the song and it rhymes, which is, after all, what matters the most. Besides, if you favour the foreignisation strategy, which was described in section 2.5.2., it is only educational if children run into some words now and again that they do not already know.

4.3.3. Protectionism

There are very few examples of protectionism in the Danish version of *The Little Mermaid* in general, and no examples were found in the idioms. A reason why there are so few aspects in the film that required censorship could be that the film has already been censored extensively from Andersen's original fairy tale. As mentioned in section 3.1.2., the fairy tale has been thoroughly modified in Disney's animated film in order to make the story more 'suitable' for the target audience.

4.3.4. Anti-protectionism

Sections 2.4.3., 2.5.1. and 4.3.3. all explain how adaptations for children often involve removing or downplaying taboos in different shapes in order to protect the children from bad influences, fear, etc. However, it turns out that it can also be the other way around, as the following example suggests:

Example 31

Context: Ursula is about to convince Ariel to make a deal that will make her human, so she can live with Prince Eric.

#	**English dialogue**	**Danish translation**
17	URSULA: ♫ It's she who holds her tongue who gets her man.	URSULA: ♫ Det' den, der holder kæft, der får en mand.

The idiom *to hold your tongue* means to keep quiet even though you have something you would like to say (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). In this case, it is the keeping quiet part that is relevant, because Ursula wants Ariel to give up her voice. The metaphorical meaning of the idiom is appropriate in the song, but the literal meaning is, in fact, also spot on, since Ursula is singing this line whilst throwing an actual tongue into her cauldron.

In the Danish translation, a less metaphorical, but more 'naughty' expression is used: The equivalent translation of *hold kæft* [hold your mouth] in English is *shut up* and is considered a swearword in Danish – albeit a relatively harmless and commonly used one – in the same way as the English expression. It is interesting that Jesper Kjær decided to transform a completely harmless phrase into a swearword in Danish, since *hold mund* [hold your mouth] would also have been perfectly acceptable within the limits of the song (*mund* is the non-swearword equivalent of *mouth*).

It is possible that Kjær thought that the more 'tough' translation would be a better fit for Ursula's personality. However, he must also have felt that Danish children would be able to handle hearing a swearword in this situation – especially because it was only a weak one. As mentioned in section 2.5.1., children often enjoy it when taboos are violated, so this could be another reason why Kjær decided to make the Danish version a tad more interesting.

4.3.5. Partial conclusion

Generally, the Danish translation of the idioms is quite easy to understand for children. In many of the instances where the English dialogue is relatively complex, the Danish translation is more simplistic or explanatory, which indicates the use of a domestication strategy (cf. section 2.5.2.) or, in other words, target text orientation. However, there are also some cases where the translation is more difficult to understand than the English dialogue, but there is, for the most part, a good reason for using the more difficult words. For instance, *medtaget* (example 29) is explained almost immediately after being uttered, and *skalmeje* (example 30) may be foreign to many, but it is a fun word that fits perfectly with the ambience of the song.

Although translation for children is generally subject to censoring of 'unsuitable' elements, it has not affected *The Little Mermaid* to a noticeable extent. The main reason for this may be that the original version of the film has already been targeted at children, so there is not much that needs modification. On the contrary, Jesper Kjær seems to have felt that the film could do with a sharper edge when he inserted a swearword into Ursula's song (example 31).

4.4. Functional equivalence of names

As described in section 2.6., there are several different ways to deal with character names in translation, and, in the following, I will discuss which strategies were used in *The Little Mermaid* and whether satisfactory results were achieved. The translations will be considered successful if they maintain more or less the same function as the originals. Five of the ten strategies mentioned in section 2.6.2. have been used in the film, and they will be listed below with examples from the film.

4.4.1. Non-translation, reproduction, copying

The majority of the names in *The Little Mermaid* have been transferred directly, which means that they have not been translated at all (cf. section 2.6.2.1.). The following list contains the names that have not been modified at all in the Danish translation:

- Ariel
- Aquata, Andrina, Arista, Attina, Adella, Alana
- Diana
- Louis
- Max
- Sebastian
- Triton
- Ursula
- Vanessa
- Dinglehopper

As mentioned in section 2.6.1.4., it can turn out to be problematic to change the name of the main character in case the story will spread across different languages. This could be part of the explanation for letting Ariel keep her name in the Danish version. However, as it is easy to pronounce in Danish and it does not have any obvious connotations, there was really no reason to change it. The same applies to the rest of the above names except Triton. Triton is the name of the messenger god of the sea in Greek mythology (Greek Mythology), so his name does have some connotations. However, in Greek mythology, his name is also the same in both languages, so whatever connotations it may have in that connection will be the same in both versions of *The Little Mermaid*.

I have put *dinglehopper* at the bottom of the list, because it is not a character name, but it is still relevant to the translation of names, as it is a made-up word that Scuttle uses to describe a fork. It would seem that Edward Fleming thought that the word would have the same creative function in a Danish context as it did in the original version of the film, and therefore it did not need any modification.

4.4.2. Replacement by a counterpart in the target language (exonym)

As explained in section 2.6.2.5., some names exist across different languages, but they are sometimes written and pronounced differently.

- Eric → Erik
- Gertrude → Gertrud

These two names have Danish equivalents, where the spelling is slightly different, but the changes are so minor that they are hardly noticeable. However, some Danish viewers might have found it odd if these names had been transferred directly, especially if they were using subtitles. Although, even if *Eric* had not been adapted to the more common Danish name *Eri**k***, it is unlikely that it would have caused much confusion or wonder among Danish viewers. In this case, only the pronunciation really matters, because the main target audience is not likely to watch the film with subtitles anyway.

4.4.3. Replacement by another name from the target language (substitution)

Although this strategy is often used by substituting a real person in the source culture with another real person in the target culture, it can also be used with the names of fictional characters, as illustrated by the below examples:

- Carlotta → Laura
- Mildred, → Karen
- Rachel → Maria
- Glowerhaven → Knuthenborg

These names were presumably considered too foreign for Danish children, so they were replaced with some other names that would be more familiar. It is arguable whether or not some other substitutions would be more suitable, since these pairs are not very similar. For instance, *Carlotta* could easily have been replaced with *Charlotte*, which is a common name in Danish that is much more similar to *Carlotta*.

When Eric tries to guess Ariel's name (because she could not tell him due to the loss of her voice), he guesses *Mildred*, *Diana* and *Rachel* and Ariel's reaction to *Mildred* is obviously not positive, as her facial expression shows in Appendix 13. Therefore, the translator needed to find a name in Danish that would evoke the same reaction, and evidently *Karen* was chosen. According to Statistics Denmark (2016) (cf. Appendix 14), relatively few people were named *Karen* in Denmark in 1989 when the film came out. However, since *Diana* was used nearly the same number of times, it is difficult to tell from these numbers which name was more or less popular. *Maria* was evidently

very popular, which makes it an appropriate substitution for *Rachel*, which is a very common name in the United States.

Glowerhaven is a fictional place and the home of a princess that Eric once met and decided not to marry. This name is not natural in the Danish language, so some form of adaptation was necessary. Interestingly, Fleming decided to translate it as *Knuthenborg* which is a real place in Denmark. It was originally a Danish count's estate, but has now been turned into a safari park with exotic animals (Den Store Danske, 2011). Danish children who have visited the park are likely to think of it when they hear this line, and they may or may not be aware of the park's history as a count's estate. If they do not know *Knuthenborg* at all, there is no problem, but it may cause some confusion to children who have visited the safari park. Thus it would perhaps have been better to make up a new place that was more similar to the original *Glowerhaven* instead of referring to a real place.

4.4.4. Translation (of names with a particular connotation)

As mentioned in section 2.6.2.8., the translation strategy means that the name's specific connotation is translated directly into the target language.

- Flounder → Tumle

The direct translation of the verb *to flounder* is *at tumle* and it means to splash about or struggle either physically or metaphorically (Gyldendals Røde Ordbøger). The name Flounder is thus an appropriate name for the clumsy and nervous fish that he is, and the exact same connotations apply to *Tumle*.

4.4.5. Replacement by a name with another or additional connotation

As mentioned in section 2.6.2.9., it happens surprisingly often that translators add to or change the connotations of particular names instead of translating them directly, as the previous example illustrates. In *The Little Mermaid* this was the case with the following names:

- Flotsam & Jetsam → Bundslam & Skidtslam
- Grimsby → Onkel
- Scuttle → Skralde
- Snarfblatt → fløjtehorn

Flotsam & Jetsam are the names of the moray eels that accompany Ursula and spy for her. The two words are often used together to describe people or things that no one wants (The Free Dictionary). This expression comes from the terms *flotsam* and *jetsam* in the maritime world, which refer to two kinds of debris from vessels. *Jetsam* is deliberately thrown overboard while *flotsam* ends up in the sea by accident (National Ocean Service, 2014). The metaphorical meaning is successfully transferred to their Danish names *Bundslam & Skidtslam*, because *slam* [sludge] is also something that is usually unwanted. In addition, the final syllables in both the English and Danish versions sound alike, which makes the translation successful even though the literal meaning of the English names is not transferred to the Danish names.

Grimsby is Eric's loyal confidant and personal adviser, and he is always by his side. In the Danish version, however, he is suddenly his uncle (*Onkel*), which makes their relation even closer. It is possible that the name *Grimsby* would have some unfortunate connotations to Danish children, since *grim* means ugly in Danish, but it does not explain why he and Eric are suddenly related to each other. It would have been possible to find a suitable name in Danish, but perhaps Edward Fleming decided that it would make sense if Grimsby were Eric's uncle precisely because they are already very close. For viewers of the Danish version, who do not know his original name, it seems perfectly natural in the context.

Scuttle is usually an English verb that means to run with quick steps or to sink a ship deliberately by making holes in it (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). These connotations match the personality of Scuttle the seagull well, as he is a bit clumsy, even though it is unlikely that he would ruin something deliberately. In the Danish version, his name is *Skralde* (the English translation of *skrald* is trash, garbage, etc.). This means that the connotations are quite different in the two languages, but *Skralde* is not necessarily inappropriate, as he is a seagull, and they tend to be quite interested in garbage in case they can find something edible in it.

Snarfblatt, like *dinglehopper*, is a word that Scuttle makes up to describe a pipe. When describing it to Ariel, he claims that it is a musical instrument like a flute, but when she tries to blow into one later in the film, only soot comes out of it and no sound. The motivation behind the creation of this word is quite interesting, because it has some surprising connotations attached. *Snarf*, especially in North American English, is a verb that means to eat or drink something very quickly or in a way that people think is greedy (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries). To *blat* is American slang for someone who is talking very fast without content, in other words to prattle or gabble etc. (Gyldendals Røde

Ordbøger). While this reckless behaviour might be descriptive of Scuttle himself, it does not describe the pipe in any way, so Fleming presumably thought that instead of finding a close Danish replacement to the difficult word *snarfblatt*, it would be better to find a simpler word that described what Scuttle actually thought was the purpose of it. Therefore be came up with *fløjtehorn* [flute horn], which is really just a fun way of saying *fløjte* [flute]. In this way, he removed the original connotations, but underlined some other connotations that were also quite relevant.

4.4.6. Partial conclusion

Overall, the Danish names of the characters maintain the same function as in the English version. Most of the main characters' names have been transferred directly, which avoids any confusion in the translation. The names that have specific connotations also have functional equivalence, even if the connotations are changed in the translation process. For instance, *Scuttle* has different connotations than *Skralde*, but the fun and creativity remain. The names are also similar in expression, because they both begin with *s* followed by a *k* sound and they have the same number of syllables.

The names that cause the most confusion are *Grimsby* → *Onkel*, *Glowerhaven* → *Knuthenborg* and *snarfblatt* → *fløjtehorn*. Both *Onkel* and *fløjtehorn* make sense in isolation, and child viewers of the Danish version will not hear the English originals. *Knuthenborg* is therefore the name that is most likely to cause confusion because of its connotations to a Danish safari park. However, as it is only mentioned in passing, and the story quickly moves on, it is not that much of a problem.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to answer the following research question: *How successful is the translation of idioms and names in Disney's The Little Mermaid?* In order to answer this question, I presented a theoretical framework that explains the most relevant areas that the above question touches upon. Firstly, I described the general characteristics of idioms and the importance of being able to identify and interpret them correctly in order to provide a successful translation. A number of strategies for translating idioms were introduced, as presented by Baker (2011) and Gottlieb (1997). Secondly, I described dubbing as a means of translation and how e.g. gestures and lip movements play an important role in formulating an appropriate translation and placing the sound track strategically to match the characters' movements. Thirdly, I explained how the translation of texts for children is often subject to adaptations in order to protect the target audience from elements that are considered unpleasant or unsuitable. Finally, I examined a proposition of strategies for translating character names with different characteristics.

Before moving on to the analysis, I provided some background information on *The Little Mermaid* in order to introduce the reader to the film, the characters and the Danish translators.

In the first part of the analysis, I listed Gottlieb's (1997) translation strategies and provided specific examples from the film in order to assess their quality. The general impression is that the translations were quite successful, because the translators have managed to come up with close or identical idioms in Danish relatively often. However, in many cases, this has not been possible, so the literalisation strategies have been used most frequently. These translations, though, are also generally quite successful, because they render the meaning of the English idioms in a way that is natural and appropriate to the story. This is, of course, only the overall impression, but, as could be expected, there are a few exceptions where the translations might cause some confusion. In addition, the modified English idioms have not all been translated in the same way. In some examples, the modification is retained in the Danish idiom, but in others, the translation has used a Danish idiom in its original form, and thus part of the humorous effect is lost. However, in these cases, there is often a good explanation for not modifying the Danish idioms.

In the second part of the analysis, I assessed how well the translations of idioms were functioning along the visual side of the film. Even though it is an animated film, the gestures and lip movements are quite accurate in the original version, thanks to the technology used, but the Danish translators

have succeeded in making the translations appear natural in spite of this. The Danish sound track has often been placed in a way in which it exactly matches both the longevity of the utterance and most of the visible pronunciation, which means that Danish viewers are unlikely to give it much thought that the film was originally made in a different language. Even so, there were some examples where it has not been possible to match English and Danish vowels or consonants, which could confuse some viewers. But since it has happened so rarely (at least with the idioms), it is not likely to leave a lasting impression.

The third part of the analysis looked at the adaptations that have been made regarding the targeting at Danish children. As the original film has already been modified extensively compared to the fairy tale that it was based on, it was seldom necessary to censor anything away in the Danish translation. On the contrary, one translation was made slightly more provocative than the original dialogue. However, some of the linguistic elements in the translations were simplified slightly or explained in more detail through paraphrasing. But some of this simplification was cancelled out, since a few translations include words that are more difficult to understand than the English originals.

The final part of the analysis includes all the names that occur in the film, categorised according to the translation strategies that were introduced in the theoretical framework. The objective of this was to assess whether the translator had achieved functional equivalence between the English and Danish names. The overall answer is that functional equivalence was indeed achieved. Most of the names did not have any specific connotations, and thus did not need translation. The ones that did need translation because of the characteristics that accompanied them, were, for the most part translated quite successfully, even though not all connotations were transferred directly. Some of the names received other or additional connotations, but the functions of the names were retained in the translation. As with the previous parts of the analysis, this section also revealed a few exceptions, where the Danish names could have more precisely reflected the originals, but when the Danish version of the film is viewed in isolation from the original, the audience will not notice anything odd.

Although it is not possible to measure success, as it is a subjective assessment based on personal observations, the analysis of the idioms and names from *The Little Mermaid* shows that the Danish translators have considered the challenges that accompany the translation of idioms for children in an audiovisual context as well as the translation of names. Thus, despite a few bumps on the road, the translators have been quite successful in translating the idioms and names in a way that is

faithful to the original ambience of the film and creative when a direct translation would have been out of place.

6. Suggestions for further research

Although the translation of idioms and names in *The Little Mermaid* is an interesting subject, there are many other things that would be nice to look at in more detail. For example, Scuttle's character is very interesting because of his New Jersey accent and unusual vocabulary. Generally, he is using slang and very informal language, but occasionally, he uses complicated words that you would expect to be much too advanced for him. Particularly one of his lines illustrates this combination perfectly: *you got an aesthetically pleasing configuration of hair that humans go nuts over* (09:01). In this sentence, *aesthetically pleasing configuration of hair* is presumably not understood in full by child viewers (but could add an element of humour for adult viewers), but the expression *to go nuts over* is very informal, and the informality is further emphasised by his accent. What is especially interesting about this line is its Danish translation: *straks har du et over-super-lækkert punky-hår, som gør mennesker helt kulrede* [you immediately have some over-super-nice punky hair that makes humans go crazy]. In the translation, the pseudo-intellectuality is gone and Scuttle is just plain silly. This could very well have been simplified in order to avoid confusion among Danish children.

It was stated in sections 3.1.2. and 4.3.3. that most of the unpleasant or 'unsuitable' elements have already been weeded out in the animated version of *The Little Mermaid*, and thus there is very little left to censor away in the translated version. However, it would be interesting to see whether there are some examples in the rest of the dialogue that have been subject to censorship. For example, at one point, Ursula calls Ariel a *tramp* in the original version (1:00:16). Although the traditional meaning of *tramp* is like a *hobo*, it can also be an offensive word for a prostitute (Gyldendals Røde Ordbøger). In the Danish translation, Ursula uses the word *tøs* instead, which is an unflattering word for *girl*; in this case it is in line with *brat*. Thus, the original is far more offensive than the Danish translation in this example, but it is difficult to tell whether this translation was, in fact, chosen as a protectionist move or simply because the two words look alike in that each has one syllable and begins with *t*.

There are several culture-specific elements in most of the characters' voices and accents that are lost in the dubbed version, and therefore you get a different impression of them when you watch the

film in Danish. For instance, Sebastian has a Caribbean accent and Grimsby is British, which does not come across in the dubbed version. In Grimsby's case, it is probably a good thing that there is no difference in accent between him and Eric in the Danish version, since Grimsby is supposed to be Eric's uncle, and it might be considered odd if they were not from the same country.

Ariel's Danish voice has been recorded by two different people: Danish Marie Ingerslev is the voice behind Ariel's speech, while the Norwegian singer Sissel Kyrkjebø is the talent behind Ariel's singing. In the original casting of American voice actors, great care was taken to select actors who were a good fit for the characters and who could sing (Det Danske Filminstitut, 2016a). Evidently this was not prioritised in the same way during the Danish casting, because the main character had two different voices. This is further problematic because the singer is Norwegian, which is quite noticeable, and it is sometimes difficult to understand her pronunciation.

Another aspect that would also be interesting to study is the translation of jokes, puns and other humorous elements in addition to idioms, because they are also often part of culture-specific conventions, which makes them difficult to translate.

Additionally, the difference between the dubbed dialogue and the subtitles is also an interesting subject, as there are many more examples when you look at the general dialogue aside from the idioms. For example, when Ariel enters Ursula's cave, Ursula says: *"We mustn't lurk in doorways"* (37:23). In the dubbed translation, she says: *"Man lurer ikke i porten"*, which is a rather direct translation, but in the subtitles, she says: *"Gem dig ikke der"* [Do not hide there]. This example illustrates how viewers get a different impression of the same film depending on whether they are watching the dubbed or the subtitled version.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: English idioms

#	Time	English dialogue	Danish translation	Strategy
1	05:41	ARIEL: You're not getting cold fins now, are you?	ARIEL: Du har da ikke fået kolde finner, har du?	Congruence
2	05:43	FLOUNDER: And I think I may be coming down with something.	TUMLE: Og jeg tror faktisk, jeg er ved at blive forkølet.	Paraphrase
3	06:22	FLOUNDER: Danger lurking around every corner.	TUMLE: Farer, der lurer overalt.	Paraphrase
4	12:19	SEBASTIAN: Hm! Teenagers. Hm. They think they know everything. You give them an inch, they swim all over you.	SEBASTIAN: Hm! Teenagers. Hm. De tror, de ved det hele. Og at alle andre bare er dumme.	Paraphrase
5	15:42	ARIEL: ♫ Bright young women Sick of swimmin' Ready to stand	ARIEL: ♫ Der står kvinder Uden finner På egne ben	Equivalence
6	24:56	SEBASTIAN: I will stay in one piece.	SEBASTIAN: Og så redder jeg skallen.	Correspondence
7	26:32	ATTINA: Oh, she's got it bad.	ATTINA: Hun er godt medtaget.	Reduction
8	27:08	SEBASTIAN: Will you get your head out of the clouds and back in the water where it belongs?	SEBASTIAN: Hold op med at danse på de skyer, og kom ned i vandet, hvor du hører til.	Paraphrase
9	27:28	SEBASTIAN: ♫ The seaweed is always greener in somebody else's lake.	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Ja, søgræs er altid grønnest i naboens fiskedam.	Congruence
10	28:40	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Under the sea, we off the hook.	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Her er du fri og frisk og glad	Expansion
11	30:10	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Each little slug here cutting a rug here	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Hver lille reje Tager sin skalmeje	Expansion
12	30:34	SEBASTIAN: Somebody's got to nail that girl's fins to the floor.	SEBASTIAN: En eller anden skulle tage at sømme hende fast.	Paraphrase
13	37:36	URSULA: Now, then. You're here because you have a thing for this human	URSULA: Altså, du er her fordi du er blevet lun på det der menneske	Paraphrase
14	38:24	URSULA: ♫ Repented, seen the light and made a switch.	URSULA: ♫ Og jeg hjælper dem, der går med et kompleks.	Expansion

15	39:12	URSULA: ♫ Now, it's happened once or twice, someone couldn't pay the price. And I'm afraid I had to rake 'em 'cross the coals.	URSULA: ♫ Når en stakkel uden held ikke har betalt sin gæld, har jeg desværre måttet vise mig lidt studs.	Reduction
16	40:41	URSULA: You can't get something for nothing, you know.	URSULA: Der er jo ikke noget der er gratis skat.	Reduction
17	41:34	URSULA: ♫ It's she who holds her tongue who gets her man.	URSULA: ♫ Det' den, der holder kæft, der får en mand.	Paraphrase
18	41:59	URSULA: ♫ The boss is on a roll.	URSULA: ♫ Kontrakten er i hus.	Correspondence
19	43:54	ERIC: That voice. I can't get it out of my head.	ERIC: Den stemme. Jeg kan ikke glemme den.	Paraphrase
20	44:20	SCUTTLE: Well, look at what the catfish dragged in!	SKRALDE: Hvad er det, havtasken har slæbt med ind?	Congruence
21	44:43	SCUTTLE: I gotta admit I can't put my foot on it right now…	SKRALDE: Jeg må indrømme, jeg kan ikke komme på det lige nu…	Paraphrase
22	45:12	SEBASTIAN: My nerves are shot.	SEBASTIAN: Jeg kan ikke mere.	Paraphrase
23	52:11	LOUIS: Come out, you little pibsqueak, and fight like a man.	LOUIS: Kom ud, din lille pivert, og kæmp som en mand.	Congruence
24	52:40	GRIMSBY: Get your mind off...	ONKEL: Tænk på noget andet...	Paraphrase
25	54:28	TRITON: Leave no shell unturned, no coral unexplored.	TRITON: Søg under hver en sten og i hver en grotte.	Congruence
26	1:00:27	URSULA: Well, it's time Ursula took matters into her own tentacles.	URSULA: Det er på tide, at Ursula tager sagen i sine egne hænder.	Congruence
27	1:05:45	SEBASTIAN: Flounder, get her to that boat as fast as your fins can carry you.	SEBASTIAN: Tumle, få hende ned til det skib så hurtigt du kan svømme.	Paraphrase
28	1:08:35	URSULA: Poor little princess - it's not you I'm after. I've a much bigger fish to -	URSULA: Stakkels prinsesse - det er ikke dig, jeg vil ha'. Det er en langt større fisk, jeg -	Paraphrase
29	1:09:09	URSULA: Of course, I always was a girl with an eye for a bargain.	URSULA: Men, jeg har altid haft sans for en god forretning.	Paraphrase

Appendix 2: Compensation

#	Time	English dialogue	Danish translation	Strategy
30	30:00	SEBASTIAN: ♫ What do they got? A lot of sand We got a hot crustacean band	SEBASTIAN: ♫ Oppe på land er der kun sand Mod os er de det rene vand	Compensation
31	31:10	SEBASTIAN: I mustn't overreact	SEBASTIAN: Jeg må ikke tabe hovedet	Compensation
32	47:58	CARLOTTA: We'll have you feeling better in no time.	LAURA: Dig skal vi snart få på højkant igen.	Compensation
33	52:35	GRIMSBY: You can't spend all your time moping about.	ONKEL: Du hænger med hovedet hele dagen.	Compensation
34	1:04:37	VANESSA: ♫ Soon I'll have that little mermaid	VANESSA: ♫ Ariel er snart i nettet	Compensation
35	1:09:14	URSULA: The daughter of the great sea king is a very precious commodity.	URSULA: Den store Kong Tritons datter er et godt kort at have på hånden.	Compensation

Appendix 3: Timon & Pumbaa, *The Lion King* – 59:31 (Allers & Minkoff)

Appendix 4.1.: Information stand, *Shrek* – 21:38 (Adamson & Jenson)

Appendix 4.2.: Photo from information stand, *Shrek* – 22:20 (Adamson & Jenson)

Appendix 5: Slugs cutting a rug – 30:08 (Clements & Musker)

Appendix 6: You give them an inch... – 12:17 (Clements & Musker)

Appendix 7: Leave no shell unturned – 54:30 (Clements & Musker)

Appendix 8: Ready to stand – 15:49 (Clements & Musker)

Appendix 9: It's not you I'm after – 1:08:37 (Clements & Musker)

Appendix 10: Off the hook – 28:41 (Clements & Musker)

Appendix 11: A thing for a human – 37:33 (Clements & Musker)

Appendix 12: A hot crustacean band – 29:59 (Clements & Musker)

Appendix 13: Mildred – 58:32 (Clements & Musker)

Appendix 14: Barometer of names (Statistics Denmark, 2016)