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**Introduction**

The odds are steadily increasing that, at some point in our lives, everyone has seen or heard of anime and manga; the television shows and books entered the West with quite a boom during the 1980’s, and their popularity seems ever increasing. Thanks to the bounds of modern technology, these forms of entertainment can be easily translated into foreign languages so that the entire world can enjoy the stories told.

But the language is not the only thing that changes between countries. Watching an anime or reading a manga in Japan as compared to in America, one may notices several things missing from the American version. It is common practice to edit out guns, or change cigarettes into lollipops when transporting an anime, and professionally printed manga can see some changes in certain scenes, depending on who the books are being marketed towards. Now, the general argument for editing these shows is that it makes the content easier for children to understand, seeing as many of these cartoons are marketed towards children in America. Removing the violence, or making the violence seem ineffective decreases the chances that they will follow suit. But some companies even go so far as to edit out cultural aspects, such as food items, or shrines from the shows, which can cause a lapse in understanding, and has us as a nation losing a valuable moment to teach our next generation about other cultures.

In short, as more and more animes are being exported and changed in an attempt to fit our own culture, we are causing more damage than good to those children watching it. This paper will attempt to show how the various levels of editing harm both the integrity of the story and those watching it.

**The Extent of Editing**

To fully realize the amount of editing done between national versions of a television show or comic book, one must watch them both. The following sections will explore two different types of augmentation: editing and censorship. To be clear, censorship is a subset of editing that refers to completely cutting out or redrawing the scenes to avoid what is deemed ‘inappropriate’ behavior. The other examples of augmentation are referred to simply as ‘editing’ to distinguish between the motive behind the change. Four wonderful examples of the amount of censorship that goes into the exported anime are the television shows *Pokemon, Yugioh, Naruto*, and *One Piece*, as they are the shows where the differences are most easily recognized. When it comes to other, cultural editing on the other hand, the shows to look toward are *Cardcaptor Sakura* and Hayao Miyazaki’s *Warriors of the Wind*.

**Censoring for Violence**

The most commonly seen changes between versions, and, from an American viewpoint, the most understandable, are the depictions of violence, weapons, and gore. In the Japanese edits, it is far more common to see blood, fighting, and characters with guns; generally these themes and plot devices are not seen as unfriendly to children, and have no measurable effect against them. In America, on the other hand, there is a deep set fear of what showing violence to children does to their developing minds. The most commonly cited theory is the media-effects theory: while this theory is a large umbrella for all kinds of media influence on those watching, the violence section holds that children who are exposed to copious amounts of violence in television shows and video games are desensitized to violence and may even try to commit acts of mass violence themselves. Naturally, whenever America has a school shooting or some other large, terror attack, particularly if the attack is committed by someone in their early twenties or younger, one of the first details explored about the killer is whether or not they played violent video games, or whether they were too caught up with their violent television shows, or something along those lines.

The other, often-censored topic in anime are the guns, with the results being the object of ridicule worldwide. In the anime *Yugioh*, the gangsters were generally seen in possession of guns; because they were the gangsters, and therefore the bad guys who were not to be idolized, and having the guns made sense for the storyline, one may think they would leave them in place. Instead, when dubbing the anime, 4Kids entertainment airbrushed the guns from the scenes, so that the gangsters looked like they were instead pointing 'invisible' guns. In other animes, such as *One Piece*, the guns owned by the characters--an acceptable weapon given the pirate theme of the show--are instead replaced with exaggerated water guns that cause no damage what-so-ever.

Now, let us look at children and their habits. Generally speaking, when children get an inkling of an idea about a subject we deem to be 'beyond' their comprehension, they will try to find out more about it, and they will be wrong in their conclusions. So when there are still scenes of violence in television shows, but the blood is edited out, what will cause more damage, the use of violence, or the new assumption that the violence won't leave any lasting mark on the victim? Sometimes the scenes of violence are edited out completely leaving holes in the storyline that could very well teach the child something even greater. It should be far more important to allow the child a chance to learn what is proper social behavior through seeing the inappropriate behaviors acted out in cartoons, instead of confusing them by editing out important story points in the favor of preventing them from ever seeing violence.

**Editing out the culture**

While the censorship of violence may be deemed necessary according to cultural differences, that seems entirely unnecessary is the editing of the plots of several animes when they are brought stateside. And yet, this habit of cultural streamlining takes place in several animes, often destroying any sense of native culture left in them. The examples have ranged from small edits here and there, to full blown restructuring of the plot.

The first example of a light edit is also one of the most frequently referenced; in the Pokemon animated series, the voice dub would refer to rice balls as jelly donuts. This is already, clearly, a ridiculous notion; onigiri are nearly the exact opposite of jelly donuts. But this sort of misdirection can cause the thousands of kids who watch the television show to believe that in Japan, donuts are made of rice, and, for some completely unknown reason, have seaweed strips on them. Now, apparently in response to the ridicule of these edits in the voice dub, the production company took it upon themselves to change the onigiri altogether, editing in a sandwich instead. This cultural ‘streamlining’ as it’s called takes place in order to make it appear as though the story takes place in a country similar to America. For television shows such as Pokemon, where the story takes place in a fantastical other world, this is plausible; but when the story takes place in Japan, and that detail is not changed in the dub, then all this editing accomplishes is making Japan appear to be something it is not. It is also denying the viewers a chance to actually learn about other cultures, instead encouraging them to stay in their little bubble of stereotypes.

The second example is a far stronger affront to the integrity of the story and the character of the audience; *Cardcaptor Sakura*, or, as it was retitled in America and other Western countries, *Cardcaptors*, was nearly entirely reshaped to market the show towards young boys instead of young girls, as it had been in Japan. One of the male sub-characters was elevated to a lead position equal of the female lead, and any episodes that did not feature a male character were entirely cut out. Aside from the glaring issue of the fact that the story was nearly completely rewritten to feature a male lead instead of allowing the spotlight to be solely on the female protagonist, there is the issue of stereotyping the audience. Despite America’s concerns about losing the male demographic by showing episodes without males, they seemed to be the only country to do so. When these english dubs premiered in other countries, all seventy episodes of the series were shown. *Cardcaptor Sakura* is by no means the only anime to run into this issue, but it is one of the most staggering.

The other, terrible example of super-editing between countries is the Miyazaki film, *Warriors of the Wind*; this movie was intended to be the sequel to the earlier hit, *Nausicaa and the Valley of the Wind*, and as such, the movie was supposed to have a deeply environmental theme and moral. What eventually premiered in America was a heavily cut edit that renamed Nausicaa, the ohmu were transformed into heavily aggressive enemies, and the narrative, in general, was lost. The voice actors had no idea what the movie was even supposed to be about, and the boxart depicted characters that weren’t even in the movie. Unlike the anime studios, Studio Ghibli had a much greater power when it came to maintaining control over artistic license of their films, and from that day forward, they established a strict ‘no cuts’ policy when allowing other companies to dub their films. While they are able to maintain the narrative integrity, even today, there are strong differences between the films as they appear in their traditional Japanese and the stories we get in the English dubs. Because many of these differences are regarding differences in cultural mindset, ideally these differences could be used to educate the masses rather than cater to and encourage the lack of education in foreign audiences; maybe then companies wouldn’t find it necessary to change rice balls into jelly donuts.

**Conclusion**

Even though anime is intended for entertainment, the fact that it originates in another culture presents us with the unique opportunity to learn while we are being entertained--often thought of as the best sort of environment to learn in. And yet, instead of allowing these experiences to come to us in their intended state, they are broken down and pieced back together in a manner that instead has us misunderstanding the foreign culture, if there is even any remnant of the culture left within. Times are changing, and now one is more likely to see voice dubs without the insane amount of editing found in the earlier decades of the anime boom. Because of the new attraction to ‘exotic’ things such as asian cultures, the more popular animes are the ones that manage to hold onto the foreign aspects of their stories rather than the stories that are transformed into homogenous tales.

Even still, one of the things I hear the most when it comes to watching animes is that regardless of how well done the voice dub is, I should watch the subtitled version instead. Now, in practice, I generally suggest that others do the same thing. Many times these ‘subs’ are created by fans and therefore fall into the category of pirated series that fail to provide money to the creators. I love watching and learning about the different culture from animes, as it is an amazing way to do it, but without the steady availability of unadulterated titles, there are very few choices for people like me.