

**In The Name of Allah,**

**The Compassionate,**

**The Merciful**



**Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman**  
**Faculty of Literature & Humanities**  
**Department of Foreign Languages**

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**Translation of English Songs Used in Animations into  
Persian**

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**Prepared by:**

**Maryam Pedram**

**Supervisor:**

**Dr. Masoud Sharififar**

**Advisor:**

**Dr. Nezameddin Moeinzadeh**

**A Thesis Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Art in Translation Studies (M. A.)**

**September 2013**

## **Acknowledgments**

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Sharififar, for his valuable suggestions, support and patience, and I am sincerely thankful to my advisor, Dr. Moeinzadeh, for his precious advice and guidance throughout the writing of this study. I wish to express my profound appreciation to all lecturers in the foreign languages department at Shahid Bahonar University for their valuable instruction and encouragement in all these years. And finally I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to my beloved family and friends for their care and support, which meant a lot to me.

## **Abstract**

Translating songs, as a multidimensional type of text, is a complex task. In view of the increasing popularity of dubbed versions of cartoons with their songs, in Iran, this study was conducted to elucidate the process of translating and dubbing the English songs of cartoons into Persian. The study is an eclectic corpus-based one focused on macro- and micro-level analysis of the corpus in two phases. In the first phase of the study (macro-level) the corpus was analyzed to discover the extent to which the translators have considered the criteria suggested by Low and the second phase was to identify the frequency of Schjoldager's micro-strategies employed in translation of the second phase corpus. The results of the study showed that the neglected features of Low's Pentathlon in translation of the corpus which caused the failure of 6 out of 12 songs were sense (neglected in 4 cases), naturalness and rhythm (each neglected in 2 cases) and the most popular and frequent micro-strategy among Schjoldager's strategies was paraphrase (29.45 percent) while the least frequent one was permutation (1.55 percent). The results of the study lead to the conclusion that the translation of the studied corpus was a TT oriented process.

**Keywords:** song, cartoon, dubbing, translation strategies

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## List of abbreviations

AVT.....	Audiovisual translation
ST.....	Source text
SL.....	Source language
TT.....	Target text
TL.....	Target language

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Translation is one of the most important issues in modern society. As today's world is based on information sharing and communicative advances, the growth of need for translation of ideas from one language into another is inevitable. If the ideas are introduced in an accurate way as originally intended, different cultures and countries can communicate and build new relationships. Translation appears to play a vital role in inter-human communication between one nation and another.

Among the means of conveying notions and ideas, art plays a great role; translation of different art forms is necessary for global understanding and communication. Music, poetry, theater/cinema are some forms of art and books, plays, songs, and movies are some of today's popular means of presenting one's idea and attitude.

Translation of lyrics and songs started centuries ago, around the world in fields and texts such as folk, rap, and pop songs, operas, musical cartoons and films. Until quite recently, translation of lyrics has generally been disregarded within the field of translation studies, perhaps because it was considered unworthy to research or according to Susam-Sarajeva, the reason might be that people with a musical background are not familiar with "the concepts, tools and models available in translation studies" – while translation scholars might find musical matters quite complicated (2008, pp.189-190). But recently some attention has been paid to this ignored field.

Translation of lyrics is known by different names such as music-linked text translation in Golomb's terms (2005, pp.121-162) or vocal translation in Gorlee's words (2005, p.8). Gorlee's idea about vocal translation can give us a more clear understanding of the issue this study is about to discuss:

Vocal translation is an old art, but the interpretive feeling, skill and craft have expanded into a relatively new area in translation studies. Vocal translation is the translation of the poetic discourse in the hybrid art of the musicopoetic (or poeticomusical) forms, shapes and skills. This symbiotic construct harmonizes together the conflicting roles of music and language in face-to-face singing performances (ibid).

Since translation of lyrics is a very particular kind of translation, translators' opinions differ on how to produce the best translation of songs. This thesis is an attempt to explain the difficulties of song translation and the different views on the subject by comparing the dubbed version of songs and the original ones.

However the translation of songs brings the translators many big challenges because it relates to factors such as linguistic context, situational context and cultural context. Beside linguistic factors, translators also need to be aware of the influence of music in composing songs. Choosing the most suitable translation strategy, which is influenced by both musical and linguistic aspects, requires translators to have careful thinking and reasoning, especially about the strategies of choosing smaller units and translation methods to retain the style and impact of the original text and at the same time conveying full ideas of the writer.

Translating literary works in general and musical translation in particular is not an easy task so it requires the translators to learn and research carefully with their best efforts to grasp the text in SL and create a TL text that closely resembles the SL text.

Cinema, as an art form, has been in existence for more than a century. It came into being in 1890s and in the next two decades it spread all over the world. In a short time it developed into an industry, becoming a popular form of entertainment for audience throughout the world. Film, as a medium, has been used for education and propaganda as well as for entertainment. Today, audiovisual media not only occupy every moment of our life but also shape it. Thanks to audiovisual translation (AVT), cultures come closer and get to know each other, which may lead to overcome prejudice against different cultures.

However, film translation might be a danger for the target culture if the target culture is economically and politically less powerful than the source culture (Yücel as cited in Şahin, 2012). Films reflect the life style and culture of the countries in which they are made. Dubbing method rather than subtitling makes this situation easier because performers in films speak the same language as the audience. The audience sees the performers in films as one of themselves, so they adopt the target culture readily. So, films are complex phenomena with many aspects similar to other forms of visual arts.

According to Delabastita (1989) film is a multi-channel and multi-code type of communication. It is multi-channel because both the visual channel and the acoustic channel are simultaneously employed. This is the way the film

reaches us. To sum up, AVT translators should take into account these codes and channels to make a good translation.

On a global basis, we cannot think of film translation and film industry separately. Today, films are made to be shown not only at the national level but also at the global level. Thanks to globalization and developments and changes in technology, interest in AVT has been increased in recent years and the field has moved a long way towards being a discipline in its own right within translation studies.

On one hand, television and other forms of audiovisual media have become remarkable communicative phenomena, and on the other hand translation studies is a very large academic field which over the years has included a large variety of studies. So, many translation scholars are undertaking research in the field of audiovisual translation focusing especially on the phenomena of dubbing and subtitling. In the field of film studies television and home media (CDs, and DVDs) are considered as major channels. In short, the media and advanced technologies are popularly used to provide information and joy for the audience.

Nevertheless, it is fundamental to recognize the important role played by audiovisual media and translation in general in removing the language and cultural barriers and connect different parts of the world together.

Animations, as a subcategory of media, around the world, not only appeal to children and young adults, but are also popular among grownups. And as foreign cartoons have a remarkable audience in Iran, translating them properly seems an unavoidable task for Iranian translators.

The songs posed in cartoons play great roles in both the content and the form of cartoons, i.e. conveying the sense and message of the script and creating the intended style. So they are as important as other parts of the cartoons.

The dubbed versions of the cartoons were considered proper for the purpose of this paper. The audience of audiovisual translation has the ability to evaluate the quality of the product, in the case of subtitling, if the translation is not of a high standard, at least those viewers who have knowledge of both languages will be able to discuss the translation quality. Whatever the difficulties associated with evaluating the subtitles, translation quality assessment is more difficult in the case of dubbing for the simple reason that the source text is not available to the viewer and thus the quality of the dubbed translation cannot be judged by the audience on the basis of the target text. Consequently, dubbed texts tend to be evaluated by the audience according to such considerations as the standard of lip-synch but there is no chance of evaluating those aspects of the translated product which are related to the original text, such as the style or semantic content of the text.

Such aspects often only come to light when copies of both the original and the target versions are acquired to compare. This type of work is challenging but like all researches it is carried out to gain helpful insights to illuminate the process and perhaps feed back to professionals so as to influence in a positive, constructive way their future dubbing output.

Dubbing is the dominant method of audiovisual translation in Iran. Dubbing of foreign films into Persian has caused some improvement in film industry of Iran since 1943, when the first dubbing studio was established in Iran.

According to Issari (1989) when Hollywood productions dominated the screens and left no space for any local cultural activities dubbing was one of the few means of participation for Iranians in the film industry.

Raeisi (2008), a famous dubbing manager, referred to the 1960s and 1970s as the “golden era” of dubbing in Iran. Translating and dubbing of the most famous musicals of the time, such as *My Fair Lady* and *The Sound of Music* in Persian improved the dubbing industry of Iran. Since the 1979 revolution in Iran, professional translation and dubbing of songs in Iran have seemed to be declining, until recent years, where some dubbing studios began to translate and dub the songs of cartoon animations for children. Raeisi believed that “Iran ranks first in the world in terms of dubbing animations” (ibid, p.7). He counted dubbing the lyrics of animations as one the secrets of their success; he also considered this as an attempt to revive musical dubbing of Iran.

In Iran, many types of texts such as articles, text books, novels, short stories, and others have been translated from English into Persian by several translators. But songs or lyrics have not obtained the attention they truly deserve, either in academic or business environment.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

It can be said that a song is like a vehicle to convey a powerful message of deepest feeling within someone, so it is as important as other types of text. As Low declared “Translating is a complex activity, and the devising of singable texts is more difficult than most translating tasks.” (2008, p. 2)

Song translators are to deal with great complexities, since song translation entails not only relaying the ST message but also the ST style to a target audience



in the highest possible degrees and the additional complexity of song translation is the musical aspects of the SL song, thereby achieving a balancing between different aspects of song in the translated versions is the crucial task of song translators which is going to be discussed in this study.

An increase in number of cartoons translated into Persian and a massive audience who have access to these cartoons via television and internet has made cartoons an important type of audiovisual product and subsequently people's expectation in the field of cartoon translation has been raised. Not only can the audience have access to the translated versions, but also the original ones. So by comparing the ST and TT the deficiencies of the translation in general and specially in song translation becomes evident and serious attempt to prove the weakness of the translations are called for.

What's more, as mentioned before Raeisi (2008) believed that dubbing the lyrics of animations is one of the main reasons of their success in the industry of dubbing animations, but at the same point he was not happy with the translation made currently and considered the translations poor. So the need for improvement of translation is felt by the dubbing professionals too.

The difficulties and challenges of this type of translation have increased the examples of insufficient translation so the audience of TT is not able to enjoy the same impact as the audience of the ST. To be more precise by comparing the original version of cartoons and their translated versions into Persian it became evident that a great number of translators facing the challenge of translating songs eliminate the problem, by omitting the whole songs, instead of solving it. The other translators, who decide to translate the songs, face the difficulties of the task

differently. Analyzing the translated versions of the songs can provide a lucid perspective of the difficulties and applicable methods and strategies to confront the problems for the translators.

To sum up, the great role of cinema and television in today's life is undeniable and AVT is an important field of interdisciplinary research which should be deeply analyzed in order to develop both the translation and cinema industry. Among the different types of movies, animations are popular types which have both children and grownups as their audience. The majority of animations in Iran's market are foreign ones which are dubbed, and the songs as an important part of the animations cause serious challenges for the translators, which can be solved if the right strategies are chosen, so research on this issue is needed.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Music is truly an international language. When listening to song one will probably find it easier to remember the words and the music helps a great deal to convey the intended feelings. Susam-Sarajeva (2008, p.188) argued that no other non-religious 'text' moves people as deeply as the combination of lyrics and music; [it] becomes an intrinsic part of their lives, acts as a shortcut to their memories (scenes from one's childhood, holidays, previous relationships, close relatives who passed away etc.) and often bears witness to the various stages of their life.

This study is intended to help professional translators, and translation students know more about the occurrence of some challenges in translation of songs so that they can make decisions more consciously.

There is a great literature for translation studies but not for song translation, the need for systematic research is tremendous in this field so this study can contribute a great deal of information to this neglected area of translation studies.

What this project illustrates is the fact that translating and, in particular, dubbing songs involves textual and lexical manipulation. Sometimes changes identified are random but often translation patterns, either deliberate or unintentional, emerge. Identifying these patterns can provide insights into the practice of translating English songs into Persian, especially the strategies used for handling the difficulties of translating this type of text ,chosen from great and well known cartoons.

Nowadays audio-visual materials play an important role in people's life. They are used both to entertain and educate people. Cartoons as a popular type of these materials get involved greatly in the mentioned purposes. Many studies have been done about the translation of cartoons but to the best of the researcher's knowledge research on translation of songs in cartoons is completely new in Iran and not much considered in other countries. What's more most of the works done in this area are devoted to general concepts and other aspects of this type of text.

This study can be considered as one step towards more research of song translation, mainly in cartoons dubbed into Persian. Getting a wide and deep view of the challenges, process and the result of translating the songs of animations can be useful for both academic and practical purposes, i.e. the results of the study may be useful as follows: 1. The results could be used as a guideline to improve

the future translated works. 2. The translation strategies and translation features could be applied to teach students to practice translating English song lyrics.

The results of the study should identify the features of the translated songs and the strategies used in translating them into Persian and the frequency of each strategy being used. Plausible explanations for the translator's decisions and choices would be attempted. Interested people in translation would gain some ideas about translation features and strategies applied in translation of the English songs into Persian.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Research**

This study is an attempt to figure out how the songs of animations are translated from English into Persian. Song translators take different approaches and strategies to accomplish this crucial task. Some professional translators are aware of different complexities of translating songs and use their knowledge, experience, and creativity in order to choose the best strategies and ways to cope with the complexities, but it's not true about every translator or trainee.

Generally the objective of this study is to explore the constraints of translating selected songs and the strategies chosen, whether consciously or unconsciously by translators, as solutions for the constraints. To fulfill the purpose of this study the researcher will compare the source texts with the translated versions to find out if they fit into the Low's pentathlon, what's more the translated texts will be examined to find the frequency of Schjoldager's micro-strategies occurring in their translation process.

To sum up, the objectives are: 1. To study the translation of songs in general and the features of the translated song lyrics within the specified theoretical framework 2. To investigate translation strategies employed by Iranian