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**Faculty of Literature and Humanities**

**English Department**

**Strategies used to translate the clichés and  
the related norms in dubbed movies**

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the**

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# **In the Name of God**

**Birjand University**  
**Faculty of Literature and Humanities**  
**English Department**

We hereby certify that this thesis by:

**Akbar Azarkamand**

**Entitled:**

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## Dedication

To my father, mother and my wife who insisted on my getting M.A.

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to appreciate all the people who helped me complete my MA degree. Dr. Ghorashi has been a wonderful mentor, advising and inspiring me in intellectual, professional, and persona matters. Dr. Alizadeh has provided me with thoughtful guidance as well. In addition, my family has been an incredible source of support. Thanks are due to my father, my mother, my wife, and my brothers for encouraging me to complete this degree. I would also like to appreciate my friends: Vahid mahmoodvand and Rooholah Nemati Parsa. Finally, last but definitely not least, I would like to appreciate and thank Dr. Araújo from State University of Ceará, Fortaleza, Brazil, who respected and encouraged my work. She scanned and sent me several important articles that I had not access to them.

## **Abstract**

This study attempted to investigate the strategies used to translate clichés of emotions in dubbed movies in Iranian dubbing context for home video companies. The corpus of the current study was parallel and comparable in nature, consisting of five original American movies and their dubbed versions in Persian, and five original Persian movies which served as a touchstone for judging naturalness of clichés in Persian. The clichés of anger were identified in both sets of corpus and categorized into four functions. In original American movies, over 100 clichés, and in original Persian movies nearly 300 clichés were identified. Then, the strategies used to translate the cliché were identified, and afterwards, constraints on dubbing as a mode of audiovisual translation, and the factors affecting the final outcome of the dubbing process (technical constraints, the role of professionals in dubbing process, and the cultural policy for foreign movies in Iran) were examined and discussed.

The in-depth analysis indicated that one norm governed the translation of clichés, which is unnaturalness. In other words, the results showed that two thirds of renderings in the final outcome of the dubbing process were not natural in Persian. This was mainly because of the constraints on dubbing for home video companies, factors affecting dubbing in Iran, and sometimes the translator's tendency to produce a faithful translation.

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## **List of abbreviations**

AVT: Audiovisual translation

F: Original American movie

M: Original Persian movie

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## 1. 1. Introduction

An enormous proportion of our daily conversation consists of those expressions which are merely repeated in a predictable way in different situations such as greeting, compliment, sudden rush of emotions, etc. (examples are *thank you, sorry, would you mind?*). However commonplace they may be, they do play a crucial role in communication. These expressions are predictive in a sense that one can say to some degree what people are going to utter in different situations. To give an example, one who goes to stadium to watch a football match may come across these expressions used by spectators when they get terribly angry with referee or footballers. What one may encounter is a huge range of repetitive sequences used by spectators to express their deep anger: *What the hell are you doing?, get out!, you bastard!, etc.*

Movies are replete with such expressions which due to repetitive use have become clichés. Everybody can predict what a character is going to say to express his/her emotion when s/he opens the refrigerator door and finds nothing to eat: not more than two or three clichés like *shit!, damn it!, what the hell!*. These expressions have been given different names in different domains of knowledge. In sociology they are called "clichés" and in linguistics are given the broad name of "formulaic sequences" (Wray, 2002, p. 9), or formulaic language which has been described as typifying film

dialogue due to the fact that they are often taken over from everyday language (e.g. Araújo 2004, Bucaria, 2008).

## **1. 2. Statement of the problem**

Iran seems to be among those countries which tend to prefer dubbing to other language transfer methods like subtitling, voiceover, etc. This is apparently true due to the considerable number of dubbed movies and programs broadcasted daily from Iranian national TV. If we take a brief glimpse at the movies distributed to market by home video companies, it will be obvious that a high proportion of products are allocated to movies which are of foreign origin. Thus film translation for television and home video in Iran is an activity of crucial importance.

Daily conversations abound with oral expressions which can be seen as a mirror image of a nation's cultural and social experience. The very moment one opens his/her mouth, s/he reflects the old cultural experiences in the form of different oral expressions. Some of these expressions typically belong to certain societies and social groups. Film dialogues seem to reflect daily conversations and are full of these expressions. The translation of such expressions may cause lots of problems to translators in the process of dubbing. According to Pavesi (1994, pp. 138-139, as cited in Bucaria 2008):

...it is clear that the most difficult choices for a translator/dialogue adaptor are not the ones related to the structure of the linguistic

code or those imposed by technical restrictions [...] It is the rendering of expressions carrying strong cultural or pragmatic connotations that require additional effort on the part of the translator. (p. 150, Bucaria's translation)

### **1. 3. Significance of the study**

This study tries to investigate the language clichés in American films and their translation in Persian dubbed versions. It is significant that it contributes to the growing body of research in the realm of clichés or formulaic sequences and their translation, and also to the growing body of research in Audiovisual Translation. It is also significant that it may shed light on dubbing translation in Iran and may help dubbing translators improve their rendering of clichés which cause lots of difficulties. Moreover, the significance of this study may be explained by the fact that if the hypothesis proposed in this study is confirmed, the translation will be the source of *innovation* or *enrichment* in Persian language. This research aims to verify the hypothesis that the creation of unnatural expressions is a norm among the translators of Iranian dubbing context for home video companies and not just a phenomenon restricted to one or two films.



#### **1. 4. Purpose of the study**

This study attempts to investigate the translation of clichés or situation formulas. The former is a term used in sociology and the latter in linguistics. The clichés to be studied here are "those expressions used by speakers of a certain language which have become stereotyped and commonplace due to repetitive use" (Tagnin, 1989, as cited in Araújo, 2004, p. 161). Thus, the object of this study is the language clichés used in the dialogues of the movies and their translation into Persian. The intention here is to investigate whether the professionals in Iranian dubbing context reflect the clichés by other clichés commonly used by Iranian native speakers, or create new expressions due to limitations encountered in this type of translation. This question arose in watching a few dubbed versions of American movies distributed to market by home video companies, whose brief analysis showed that the translators tended to create new words and expressions in Persian which were close to the forms used by English speakers. Although grammatical, these expressions are not part of the repertoire of the native speakers, i.e., they do not sound natural to the speakers of Persian. Pawley and Syder (1983) draw attention to the fact that the native speakers exercise only a limited numbers of structures, despite having at their disposal the full potential, to produce nativelike grammatical sentences. According to them, "only a small proportion of the total set of grammatical sentences is nativelike in form" (p. 193).

## **1. 5. Research questions**

In this study, the researcher tries to answer the following question:

*What are the strategies used to translate the clichés and the related norms in dubbed movies?*

## **1.6. Research hypothesis**

*Unnaturalness is a norm which governs the translation of the clichés of emotions in dubbed movies.*

## **1. 7. Definition of key terms**

**Clichés:** Tagnin (1989, as cited in Araújo, 2004) defines clichés as “those expressions used by speakers of a certain language which have become stereotyped and commonplace due to repetitive use” (p. 161).

**Norms:** Toury (1995, as cited in Munday, 2001) defines the norms as “the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community – as to what is right or wrong, adequate or inadequate – into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations.” (p. 113).

**Dubbing:** Luyken et al (1991, as cited in Baker, 1998) define dubbing as “the replacement of original speech by a voice track which attempts to follow as closely as possible the timing, phrasing ,and lip movements of the original dialogue” (p. 75).

## **1. 8. Theoretical framework**

This study is a descriptive study in that it describes translation of clichés and related norms that govern them in dubbing context. Kirkpatrick's (1996) and Yorio's (1980) classifications of clichés were used to distinguish clichés in American movies. Accordingly, situational clichés, a subcategory of Kirkpatrick's classification, and situation formulas, a subcategory of Yorio's classification along with situational formulas proposed by Tagnin (1987, as cited in Araújo, 2004) were used to identify clichés. And, the works by Coulmas (1979) and Lindenfeld (1993) in the realm of the translation of clichés through contrastive analysis contributed significantly to the theoretical framework of the current study. In a sense, the current study, in some parts, approached the contrastive study of clichés in two linguistic communities which is the base of the above-mentioned scholar's investigations.

Moreover, since the researcher seeks norms of translation for clichés, the theoretical framework of this study is a functional one. Accordingly, the researcher assumes that the function of translation, here, is to convey the clichés of emotions without the translated text sounding foreign or strange to the native speakers of Persian as the viewers of foreign movies imported to Iran. The emphasis on the target audience is a key factor in this study, since "the concept of norms ultimately gives priority to the target text, rather than the source text" (Baker, 1998, p. 165).

In addition, this study is to some extent based on the concept of norm proposed by Toury, which questioned the concept of equivalence. This study approaches Toury's model in that it attempts to investigate the factors and constraints that affect the final product of translation and dubbing process. These factors include human agents involved in dubbing process (translator, distributor, dubbing director, etc.), technical aspects of dubbing process, and the cultural consideration in target system (e.g. censorship imposed by government).