

IN THE NAME OF GOD
THE MOST COMPASSIONATE
THE MOST MERCIFUL



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M.A. Thesis

Strategies for Harmonizing Translation and Genre in Dubbing

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To Farimah

The little princess who saved my life

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Taught me what love is

Abstract

This study focuses on a subcategory of audiovisual translation, namely dubbing, in the case of genre films. Identifying the film genre is among the very first steps an audiovisual translator must take prior to the process of translation. Different genres call for different translation methods and strategies since genres are in direct contact with the setting and theme of a given movie. Therefore, this study aims to provide a set of tentative guidelines for audiovisual translators in order to attend to genres effectively in dubbing. For this purpose, focusing on the extracted dialogues from 24 American movies representing different genres, together with their dubbed versions, the researcher made an effort to arrive at meaningful relationships between the genres of the movies and the linguistic elements of the script dialogues. By making descriptive comparisons between the selected samples and the dubbed versions, the researcher consequently identified the effective methods and strategies for attending to genres effectively in the case of translation for dubbing. These findings led to a tentative film genre model which can assist audiovisual translators in establishing basic assumptions prior to translating any given movie.

Key Words: Audiovisual translation, dubbing, genre, text type, translation strategies

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List of Abbreviations

AVT: Audiovisual Translation

Sci Fi: Science fiction

SL: Source Language

ST: Source Text

TL: Target Language

TT: Target Text

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Overview

It is the common belief among the scholars and researchers of translation studies that “the process of translation between two different written languages involves the translator changing an original written text (the source text or ST) in the original verbal language (the source language or SL) into a written text (the target text or TT) in a different verbal language (the target language or TL)” (Munday, 2001, p. 5). As broad a definition as it is, it does not cover all the angles, one of which being the case of audiovisual translation.

By definition, “audiovisual translation is a branch of translation studies concerned with the transfer of multimodal and multimedial texts into another language and/or culture” (Baker & Saldanha, 2009, p. 13). As mentioned in the definition, audiovisual texts are considered to be multimodal because of containing several semiotic resources such as music, image, sound, and color, which are generally referred to as modes. Such texts are also multimedial in nature as the so-called modes are presented synchronically through different kinds of media.

Dubbing is considered to be a prominent subcategory of audiovisual translation which involves replacing the original soundtrack of an audiovisual text with a synchronized TL version. Dubbing can be approached as a technical

procedure considering the involvement of dubbing actors, directors, and studio technicians. However, a significant part of dubbing deals directly with the process of translation as an input for dubbing studios which requires to be in a pre-established accordance with the technical procedure.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

One of the complexities in the process of dubbing is related to the overlapping notions of text type and genre and the strategies used to convey such genres. In fact, one of the first things a translator would have to do prior to the process of audiovisual translation would be determining the genre of the audiovisual product. According to Baker (1992), these notions are related to the way textual material is packaged on the part of the writer through patterns and manners familiar to the reader. Baker then classifies texts based on this definition in two categories, one being based on the contexts leading to institutionalized labels such as ‘newspaper editorial’, ‘scientific textbook’, ‘journal article’, and so on, and the other being a more subjective classification leading to less institutionalized labels such as ‘narration’, ‘exposition’, ‘argumentation’, and ‘instruction’. This study takes the first classification for film genres including drama, comedy, musical, historical, science fiction, action, thriller, and so on.

Genre in cinema shares many characteristics with that of literature since fiction and plot are considered to be important building blocks of both. Although many of the elements forming different genres in cinema and literature are non-linguistic (elements such as settings, clothes, and equipment), a significant part of each genre which reveals it to the audience is undoubtedly linguistic. These linguistic elements come through patterns which repeat themselves in each individual genre and that could be a thread to be followed in translation studies.

Being a multimodal and multimedial process, dubbing involves a great many difficulties. Many of these complexities are on the part of the translator since he has to convey the meaning and form and at the same time account for issues of the dubbing process the most important of which could be synchronization. It is beyond any doubt that the genre of the film is one of the key factors concerning decision making and the use of appropriate strategies through the process of translation for dubbing. Therefore, being aware of the potentially useful strategies for conveying genre in dubbing can help the translator manage through many of the translation obstacles and even post-translation complexities in the

process of dubbing. Needless to say, it makes the translation more colorful and gives it the same feeling as that of the original.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Audiovisual translation, also known as multimedia or screen translation, is of great importance in today's world. Along with the astonishing expansion of the movie industry throughout the world, more and more TV channels have been launched and started broadcasting in the recent years. This gives rise to audiovisual translation as an area of utmost importance and need, and calls for more comprehensive research accordingly. Despite all the similarities existing between interlingual and audiovisual translation, it seems necessary to focus on audiovisual translation independently since the differences between these two subdisciplines play key roles in establishing basic translation strategies. Together with subtitling, dubbing is one of the prominent forms of audiovisual translation mostly used in the case of movies and TV series. A quick glance at TV channels schedules and the vast variety of translated audiovisual materials in countries with English as a foreign language such as Iran reveals the importance of audiovisual translation, specifically dubbing, as the entertainment industry becomes more and more globalized.

Being an old practice in Iran, dubbing, also called lip-synchronized dubbing, has its own specific methods and strategies. These norms are bound to the limitations involved in the process of dubbing such as the original and the translated sound stream having to be synchronized and the lip movements to be in accordance. Therefore, it can be concluded that translation for dubbing exceeds beyond the limits of normal interlingual translation since it has to be in accordance with a whole lot of details of the dubbing procedure; and in the case of movies a balance between the original sound track and the translated version in the manner of genre can help the translator convey the same sense and atmosphere of the target culture in the dubbed version.

1.4. Research Questions

Film genres consist of many different elements not all of which are linguistic. The linguistic elements of genres must be in accordance with both the SL and the TL. This study seeks to identify and isolate these linguistic elements and account for them in translation for dubbing and consequently arrive at strategies in

translation that can convey these generic elements properly. Therefore, the following questions are to be answered:

1. What are the linguistic elements comprising the film genres?
2. What are the strategies used for transferring these elements in the Persian dubbed versions?
3. Is it possible to postulate a tentative model for these film genres?

1.5. Definitions of Key Terms

- **Translation:** “Often, though not by any means always, it is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text” (Newmark, 1988, p. 5).
- **Audiovisual Translation:** “The term audiovisual translation refers to the translation of texts contained in audiovisual products, i.e. products combining sound and video components, such as films and TV programs” (Palumbo, 2009, p. 12).
- **Dubbing:** “Lip-synchronized dubbing is, together with subtitling, the dominant form of language transfer in audiovisual translation, especially as regards films and TV fiction. It consists in replacing the original voice track with the voices of dubbing actors speaking in the target language, recreating the delivery pace of the original voices and synchronizing the target language voice track with the lip movements of the characters on screen...” (Palumbo, 2009, p. 39)
- **Genre:** “Conventional forms of texts associated with particular types of social occasion” (Hatim & Mason, 1997, p. 218).
- **Subtitling:** “consists of the production of snippets of written text (subtitles, or captions in American English) to be superimposed on visual footage – normally near the bottom of the frame – while an audiovisual text is projected, played or broadcast” (Baker and Saldanha, 2009, p. 14).
- **Synchronization:** being an essential part of dubbing, synchronization involves recreating the sentence length and lip movements of the original audiovisual product in the dubbed version.

1.6. Organization of the Thesis

Focusing on the notions of film genre and dubbing in the context of translation studies and audiovisual translation, this research embarks on searching for a number of strategies which can help convey genre appropriately in the translation of movie dialogs. For this purpose, in Chapter Two, the researcher introduces the topics under discussion by bringing a summary of the literature on audiovisual translation and genre. Subsequently, in Chapter Three the methodology under which the research will be conducted is put forward. In Chapter Four the data, which consists mainly of dialog samples is analyzed in order to arrive at the generic features and translation strategies intended. Finally, in Chapter 5, the results are discussed and conclusions, implications, limitations, and further research suggestions are put forward.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Translation studies can be considered as an area involving a great deal of subjectivity. This is basically due to the idea that translation is in fact a change of form (Larson, 1998). These forms can also be referred to as the surface structure of a language representing the deep structure in conveying a message. Linguistically speaking, deep structure can possess different manifestations in the surface structure meaning that in the process of translation the same message which can possess different forms in the source language can also possess different forms in the target language and therefore the choice from all these manifestations depends entirely on the translator. The translational judgment can vary from translator to translator and this leads to some inevitable level of subjectivity in this area. Decision making on the part of the translator may depend on aspects like context, social situation, and genre, providing guidelines on which can help translators reduce the level of subjectivity dealt with during the process of translation.

This gives rise to descriptive translation studies as developed in the Hymes-Toury model (Toury, 1995, p. 10 as cited in Munday, 2001). According to the model, product-oriented descriptive translation studies focuses on the existing translations, making an effort to broaden the scope of translation seeking