

**In The Name of God**



**SHEIKHBAHAE UNIVERSITY**

SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE TYPES OF TEXT  
REDUCTION IN SUBTITLING: A CASE STUDY  
OF THE PERSIAN FILM 'GILANEH'  
WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF  
ARTS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

By

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

*To Rojan*

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
Acknowledgement .....	iv
List of Tables .....	v
List of Figures .....	vii
Abstract .....	viii
List of Abbreviations .....	ix

### **Chapter One: Introduction**

1.1. Overview .....	2
1.2. Introduction .....	2
1.3. Statement of the Problem .....	2
1.4. Research Questions .....	4
1.5. Significance of the Study .....	5
1.6. Definition of Key Terms .....	5
1.7. Outline of the Thesis .....	6

### **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

2.1. Overview .....	9
2.2. Audiovisual Translation (AVT) .....	9
2.2.1. Dubbing .....	11
2.2.2. Subtitling .....	12
2.2.3. Voice-over .....	12
2.3. Factors Involving in the Choice of AVT Mode .....	13
2.4. What Is Subtitling? (Translation or Adaptation) .....	15

2.5. Subtitles vs. Written Text Translation .....	16
2.6. The History of Subtitling .....	17
2.7. The Process of Subtitling .....	18
2.8. Subtitling Nature .....	20
2.9. Subtitling Advantages .....	21
2.10. Subtitling Types .....	22
2.11. Ideals in Subtitling .....	24
2.12. Conventions of Subtitling .....	27
2.13. Subtitling Constraints .....	30
2.14. The Role of Redundancy in Subtitling .....	31
2.15. Reduction .....	32
2.15.1. Common Features Subject to Reduction .....	36
2.16. Research Done on Subtitling in Iran .....	37
2.17. Summary .....	40

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

3.1. Overview .....	42
3.2. Restatement of the Problem .....	42
3.3. Materials .....	42
3.4. Procedures .....	44
3.5. The Framework of the Study .....	44

### **Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Results**

4.1. Overview .....	48
4.2. Cases of Reductions Identified in the Selected Movie .....	48

4.2.1. Omission at Word Level .....	50
4.2.2. Omission at Clause/Sentence Level .....	52
4.2.3. Condensation and Reformulation at Word Level .....	55
4.2.4. Condensation and Reformulation at Clause/Sentence Level .....	56
4.3. Descriptive Statistics of the Data .....	58
4.4. Descriptive Statistics of Text Reduction Outcome .....	60
4.5. Summary .....	62

## **Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion**

5.1. Overview .....	64
5.2. The Types of Identified Reductions and Their Possible Outcomes .....	64
5.3. Discussion of the Sample Data of the Selected Film .....	65
5.3.1. Omission at Word Level .....	65
5.3.2. Omission at Sentence Level .....	73
5.3.3. Condensation and Reformulation at Word Level .....	81
5.3.4. Condensation and Reformulation at Sentence Level .....	83
5.3.5. Omissions of Songs, Background Voices, TV and Radio Announcement .....	88
5.4. Conclusion .....	89
5.5. Implication of the study .....	90
5.6. Limitations of the study .....	90
5.7. Suggestions for further studies .....	91
<b>References</b> .....	93
<b>Appendix</b> .....	101

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<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>Page</b>
4.1. Distribution of verbal units in the film .....	49
4.2. Sample subtitles containing omission at word level and reduction outcome in terms of information, meaning and effect .....	51
4.3. Distribution of omissions at word level .....	52
4.4. Sample examples containing omission at clause/sentence level and reduction outcome in terms of information, meaning and effect .....	53
4.5. Distribution of omissions at sentence level .....	54
4.6. Sample examples containing condensation and reformulation at word level and reduction outcome in terms of information, meaning and effect. ....	55
4.7. Distribution of condensation and reformulations at word level .....	56
4.8. Sample examples containing condensation and reformulation at clause/sentence level and reduction outcome in terms of information, meaning and effect .....	57
4.9. Distribution of condensation and reformulations at clause/sentence level ..	58
4.10. Descriptive statistics of the text reduction strategies .....	59
5. 11. Types of text reductions and their possible outcomes .....	64
5.12. Examples containing omission of repetitious address term .....	65
5.13. Examples containing omission of descriptor or title .....	66
5.14. Examples containing omission of marked vocative .....	67
5.15. Examples containing omission of terms used to catch someone's attention .....	68
5.16. Example containing omission of referential vocative .....	68
5.17. Examples containing omission of primary interjection .....	69
5.18. Examples containing omission of secondary interjection .....	69

5.19. Examples containing omission of adverbs of time and place .....	70
5.20. Examples containing omission of adverbs of wishes .....	71
5.21. Example containing omission of adjective .....	71
5.22. Examples containing omission of emphatic words .....	72
5.23. Examples containing omission of verbs .....	72
5.24. Examples containing omission of repetitious dialogues within the same subtitle .....	73
5.25. Examples containing omission of repetitious dialogues in the previous or following subtitle .....	74
5.26. Examples containing omission of overlapping dialogues .....	75
5.27. Examples containing omission of redundant dialogues .....	76
5.28. Examples containing omission of introductory clauses .....	77
5.29. Examples containing omission of endearing clauses .....	78
5.30. Example containing omission of phatic expression .....	79
5.31. Examples containing omission of dialogues retrievable from image .....	80
5.32. Examples containing omission of unimportant dialogues .....	80
5.33. Examples containing generalizing enumeration .....	81
5.34. Examples containing generalization .....	82
5.35. Examples containing reformulation (changing mode of the sentence) ....	83
5.36. Examples containing reformulation (change of subject) .....	84
5.37. Example containing reformulation (passive into active) .....	84
5.38. Examples containing reformulation (use of pronouns and other deictic) ..	85
5.39. Examples containing condensation .....	85
5.40. Examples containing condensation (merging) .....	86
5.41. Examples containing rephrasing .....	87

<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>Page</b>
4.1. Distribution of existing units in the film .....	49
4.2. Descriptive statistics of the type of text reduction .....	59
4.3. Descriptive statistics of text reduction outcome .....	60
4.4. Distribution of text reductions not compensated .....	61
4.5. Text reduction outcome .....	61

## **Abstract**

In the process of film subtitling, the subtitler encounters many cultural and linguistic barriers in addition to technical constraints. To overcome these, the subtitler employs different strategies among which reduction is a common one due to the time and space limitations. The present study sought to investigate the types and outcome of reduction in the process of subtitling Persian films into English language. To this end, the following questions were addressed: 1) What are the different types of text reduction used in English subtitles of the Persian film ‘Gilaneh’? and 2) What are possible positive/negative outcomes of text reduction on the comprehension of the provided subtitles in terms of information/meaning loss or effect shift? To achieve this purpose, the Persian film, ‘Gilaneh’, with its English subtitles, was selected. The film was watched and the English subtitles in which text reduction had been used were identified. The extracted cases of text reduction were classified based on Diaz Cintas & Remael’s categorization of text reduction. Then, Brondeel’s equivalence model was used to investigate the negative or positive outcomes of reduction on the comprehension of the provided subtitles. The findings of the study indicated that both ‘omission’ and ‘condensation/reformulation’ at word and sentence level resulted in shorter texts. Furthermore, it was found that text reduction often leads to losing information, meaning or effect of some parts of the film when transferring speech to subtitles, while comprehension of the film was not necessarily under the influence of text reduction.

## **List of Abbreviations**

AV: Audiovisual

AVT: Audiovisual Translation

Con: Condensation

CT: Cotext

CX: Context

FL: Foreign Language

I: Image

Interj: Interjection

NTSC: National Television System Committee

PN: Punctuation

Ref: Reformulation

S: Soundtrack

SC: Source Culture

ST: Source Text

TC: Target Culture

TT: Target Text

VHS: Video Home System

SL: Source Language

TL: Target Language

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1. Overview**

The present chapter starts with an introduction on audiovisual translation and subtitling. Next, it will briefly state the problem and the purpose of the research. The research questions, significance of the study, and definition of the key terms will then follow.

## **1.2. Introduction**

The advent of Audiovisual Translation (AVT) was a response to language barriers arisen as a result of inclusion of sound into films in 1920s. What makes this form of translation even more popular in the modern world is an increased accessibility to audiovisual products due to technological advances. New improvements like DVDs, satellite and digital TV have created new opportunities for producers to find new markets and also consumers to use these products more easily (O'Hagan, 2005). There are different modes in Audiovisual Translation for making comprehensible what is unfamiliar in the original product to the target audiences. Subtitling, as one of the main ways of translating audiovisual products, has specific characteristics that result in its popularity in many countries (Diaz Cintas & Remael, 2007).

## **1.3. Statement of the Problem**

The differences between the linguistic systems and cultures of the SL and TL make the translation a challenging task. Translating audiovisual products is more challenging because poly-semiotic nature of these products imposes some constraints on their translations. Whether the selected form of translation is dubbing, voice-over or subtitling, the translator will encounter some problems in the process of translating. The restrictions on the subtitling are more comparing to other modes of Audiovisual

Translation. Space and time limitations are inseparable constraints in subtitling. Conveying the message in no more than 35-40 characters within the time duration of no longer than 6 seconds are restrictions that subtitler must always take into account (Bogucki, 2004).

To overcome the constraints in subtitling, the subtitler has to reduce the text volume to some extent. Therefore, s/he is always on the process of decision-making to decide what should be transferred to the target text and what can be left out. It is obvious that for appreciation of every film, there are non-linguistic and visual elements in addition to linguistic ones. So it is the subtitler's role to make appropriate decision as to which pieces of information to omit or to include (Kovacic, 1994).

According to Nida (1974), in transferring from one language to another, reducing some part of the text is inevitable. He classifies text reduction in written texts under seven categories. In comparison to written texts, reduction in subtitling context is a normal strategy due to the high degree of linguistic and situational (visual elements) redundancies in films. Kovacic (1991) uses the term 'compression' to describe the elimination of redundant elements in the films. She introduces a three level hierarchy in subtitling in which the second and the third levels are related to text reduction. Level two refers to partly unimportant elements which can be condensed optionally and the third level is those unimportant elements which can be omitted optionally (as stated in Georgakopoulou, 2009: 26). Gottlieb (1998) distinguishes three types of text reduction as condensation; decimation; and deletion. According to Gottlieb, translation of dialogues in film is basically dependent on the context of the film but due to technical constraints of subtitling, the redundancies of spoken dialogues cannot be conveyed in the written form. Lomheim (1999) is another scholar who believes that omission and compression (two subtitling strategies in his model) result in shorter



text and therefore, they can be called reduction. According to Diaz Cintas & Remael (2007) two types of text reduction are partial and total reduction. Condensation of the source dialogue is partial reduction and elimination or deletion is total reduction. They recommend elimination of what is not relevant to the comprehension of the message. The main concern of the present study is to find the types of reduction which occur in subtitling and to determine possible reasons for these reductions; actually, to see whether these reductions are due to the time and space limitations to give the viewer the opportunity to appreciate the film (by eliminating the redundancies in the spoken dialogues) or they are due to the linguistic and cultural differences between languages. In each case, the possible negative or positive outcomes text reduction has on the comprehension of the film will be examined. Whether text reduction results in losing information, meaning, or effect of some parts of the film or it helps movie viewers follow the film and enjoy visual context of the film, are actually the main points to be explored in this study.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

Based on what was stated above, the present study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

- 1) What are the different types of text reduction used in English subtitles of the Persian film ‘Gilaneh’?
- 2) What are possible positive/negative outcomes of text reduction on the comprehension of the provided subtitles in terms of information/meaning loss or effect shift?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

Technological advances in film production industry in the 20<sup>th</sup> century introduced new subjects in translation studies. With the advent of DVD, an interest in audiovisual translation and subtitling in particular came into existence. Among the reasons, one can say that compared to dubbing, subtitling was more economical and more interesting to those who like to hear the actors' original voices. This new branch of translation studies has created the need for more research. Now, many universities offer subtitling as a course for study and many conferences are held on the subject of audiovisual translation (Orero, 2004). The interest in this field shows its importance for research. Subtitling in Iran is nearly a new phenomenon because a vast majority of audiovisual products shown on Iran channels are dubbed. Recently, in some channels, some Persian films and TV series are subtitled into English. Also, subtitled films on DVD or video tape are accessible in video clubs. It seems that subtitling as a new subject in our country requires more research. The present study tries to investigate reduction in detail as an important strategy employed in subtitling, since there has been almost no study on this issue to focus on Persian films which have English subtitles.

### **1.6. Definition of Key Terms**

**Audiovisual Translation (AVT):** Audiovisual translation also called screen translation is “the translation of transient polysemiotic text presented onscreen to mass audiences” (Gottlieb, 2005: 13).

**Subtitling:** Subtitling is a type of audiovisual translation defined by Gottlieb (1992: 162) as a (1) written, (2) additive, (3) immediate, (4) synchronous, and (5) polymedial form of translation.

**Reduction:** Reduction is a common term used to refer to the same procedures as compression and omission (the elimination of the redundant elements in a filmic dialogue) (Diaz Cintas & Remael, 2007).

**Partial Reduction:** Partial reduction refers to “condensation and concise rendering of the ST” which is achieved through reformulation of what is relevant in a concise form (Diaz Cintas & Remael, 2007: 146).

**Total Reduction:** Total reduction refers to “deletion or omission of lexical items” and is achieved through elimination of what is not relevant for the comprehension of the message. (Diaz Cintas & Remael, 2007: 146)

## **1.7. Outline of the Thesis**

The present thesis, whose main goal was to examine text reduction in subtitling, is structured as follows. Chapter One provides a general overview of the study as well as its significance and purpose, the research questions, definition of the key words, and outline of the thesis as its last section. Chapter Two includes the theoretical background of the study, namely the nature of the audiovisual translation in general and subtitling in particular, the process and types of subtitling, the strategy of reduction and finally a review of previous studies on reduction. Chapter Three is concerned with the methodology, design, applied materials, analysis model and the procedures of data collecting and analyzing. The detailed analysis of the collected data is presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five interprets the major findings of the study and gives explanations of the results obtained in the research. Furthermore, it

will point to the limitations and implications of the study and provide some suggestions for further research.