

The Effect of Translators' Religious Ideology on the Transmission of Religious Concepts in Film Dubbing: A Case Study of a Religious-Islamic Context

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Abstract: *The effect of ideology on transmission of religious-specific terms and concepts in dubbing is a highly problematic issue in the area of Audiovisual Translation (AVT), especially in a religious-Islamic context. In Iran, as an Islamic country with a specific religious ideology, other religions are respected, but disseminating information about a specific religion and also a doctrine incompatible with the Islamic ideas is not allowed, specifically via mass media. Based on Pedersen's strategies (2011), this paper investigated how the translator has rendered the religious terms and foreign doctrines in the film "Life of Pi" (dubbed in Iran). This article concluded that the religious ideology hinders the transmission of foreign religious ideas and doctrines and, as a result, leads to religious, ideological manipulation during the process of translation and also makes the translator choose "omission" and "substitution" as the most common strategies for the benefit of the target culture for translating the religious concepts.*

Keywords: *Audiovisual translation, Film dubbing, Ideology, Pedersen's strategies*

1. Introduction

Since the early decades of the 21st century, ideology has entered translation studies and attracted many scholars' attention. Ideology functions as the superstructure of human progress including the tradition and society that make up the predominant thoughts of the public. Marx and Engels (1970) believe that ideology is the generation of thoughts, ideas, and concepts that one can imagine. Influenced by these political, religious, and ethical concepts and thoughts, the translators manipulate the source text in order to achieve the desired expectations and outcomes of the target society.

In Iran, the effect of ideology on the translation process has attracted the authors' attention in translating the literary genre and other ones as well as that of mass media, but they mostly focus on the political and social aspects not the religious ones. There is also a

dearth of literature toward the issue of religious ideology and its effect on film dubbing as one of the modes of AVT.

In the scope of AVT, Ameri and Ghazizadeh (2014) conducted a research on the methods of translating swearing and taboo language in dubbed and subtitled versions from English into Farsi (Persian). They (2014) concluded that the translators of the dubbed films create a dubbing which conforms to the norms of Iranian society but the translators of the subtitled ones do not show too much fidelity to the norms of the society.

In another study, Ghazizadeh and Mardani (2011) considered three American movies dubbed into Farsi in order to identify what strategies the translators employ when dealing with the taboo language. They concluded that Iranian translators made use of seven strategies including omission, substitution, under-translation, over-translation, compensation, and manipulation. In a similar study in the area of crime genre, Khoshsaligheh and Ameri (2014) showed that translators used omission as a main strategy for the translation of taboo language. Through analyzing the news stories being translated from English into Farsi in Iranian TV, Azodi and Salmani (2014) concluded that ideology is one of the main factors which affects the process of translating political discourse in mass media.

The main goal of this paper is to determine the effect of religious ideology on translators' attitudes in Iran, a religious-Islamic context, concerning the translation of religious terms and concepts in "life of Pi" film produced by Lee in 2012. Pedersen (2011) suggested the strategies based on investigation of one hundred Anglophone films and TV-programs and their Scandinavian subtitles; and he called his model Extralinguistic Culture-bound Reference (ECR). By applying his strategies, it is showed that substitution and omission are the most common ones used by Iranian translators which are for the benefit of the dominant religious ideology in the target society.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Film Dubbing

Translation studies as an independent field is growing with an incredible speed. As a part of this developing field, AVT has attracted the attention of the authors due to its consequential role in transferring the nations' cultural aspects during the last two decades. Bogucki (2013) mentioned that AVT was disregarded because of "the lack of a sufficiently broad paradigm" (p.

19) but it has found its place in translation studies. According to Díaz-Cintas (2013), there are three main modes of AVT: subtitling, voice-over (revoicing), and dubbing.

Based on Jacobson's (1959) tripartite classification, there are three kinds of translation, namely, interlingual, intersemiotic, and intralingual. Intralingual translation is related to the signs of one language, whereas intersemiotic translation involves translation between two different media, for example, from the verbal medium into musical and cinematographic ones, etc. He also defined interlingual translation (translation proper) as a type of translation which occurs between two different languages. Based on this classification, subtitling, voice-over, and dubbing can be classified on the category of interlingual translation in the area of film translation.

During the subtitling process, the translators provide a written translation of the source speech near the bottom of the frame, whereas in dubbing the replacement of the original sound track with a translated sound track of the original one is provided. It is worth mentioning here that despite Baker and Saldanha's (2009) statement which includes Iran as a poor country among some others tending to use subtitling rather than dubbing and lip-synchronized methods, this country is the one which has a long history of film dubbing and has been praised by so many countries in this regard. The fact that this country is inclined to dub most of its national AV materials is due to its Islamic doctrine which does not allow some films to be subtitled if they are against the Islamic norms.

2.2 Ideology and Translation

Calzada-Perez (2014) defines ideology as a set of ideas, values, and beliefs that rule over a society. Translators as mediators between the source and target culture, have the duty to perceive the religious concepts and transfer them to the target one, but no doubt that ideology affects the translation. Hatim and Mason (2005) believed that the ideological implications result from a particular strategy employed by a translator who belongs to a particular socio-cultural environment. In sense, it can be even said that translation is an ideological activity and the translator's choice is ideological. According to them, this can be called the ideology of translating. The terms *translation of ideology* and *ideology of translating* are used interchangeably in some books. Hatim and Mason (2005) distinguish

between them. They define translation of ideology as follows: The translator filters the text world of the source text (ST) through his or her own ideology.

Baker & Saldanha (2009) noted that the practice of translation deeply implicates the religious ideology. This can be supported in the unpleasant fate of Tyndale in Britain and Dolet in France; both of them burnt at the stake. Pellatt (2013) agreed that some factors, namely, power and ideology are very effective in the process of translation. These factors determine which text should be translated and governed based on the strategies of translation. He believed that ideology exists in all aspects of translation.

According to Schäffner (2003), all language use, including translation, should be interpreted under the influence of different ideologies, which means that translation is always a site for ideological encounters (as quoted in Calzada-Perez, 2014). In Iran, the religious context, Islamic ideology rules over all aspects of the society so mass media should accord with the Islamic ideology to the extent that translator's decisions are influenced by the dominant ideology which determines the final product of a translated text.

According to Bassnet (2002), a translator may be a liberator which means someone who frees the text from the fixed signs of its original shape making it no longer subordinate to the source text but visibly endeavoring to bridge the space between source author and text and the eventual target language readership. As a means for transferring the cultural and religious concepts, films are one of the common ways although there is a limitation toward this transmission, especially in Islamic context in which Islamic ideology is dominant. So dubbed AV products are not an exception and the dubbing producers as liberators have to meet the norms and expectations of the target society.

Film dubbing is one of the main modes of AVT. With the growing need for film dubbing especially in non-English speaking countries like Iran, people get familiar with other religious concepts, although there are some limitations toward this familiarity. Here in Iran, other religions including Judaism, Christianity etc. are respected; but translating some religious concepts is somehow problematic, especially in the mass media which is used by the large Muslim population. This study tries to shed more light on the religious reasons which form the ideology of translators leading to dubbing a foreign film based on the dominant religious ideology.

3. Methodology

For the purpose of this study, the researcher has chosen “life of Pi” film, dubbed and played in Iran, bearing dialogues full of the religious concepts and items. A part of this scenario narrates a story of a Hindu boy who investigates different religions and doctrines at the age of 14. Ebert (2012, p.23) stated that “this movie quietly combines various religious traditions to enfold its story in the wonder of life”. To show the impact of religious ideology on the process of Iranian translator’s decision making, some religious terms are extracted from the original dialogues of this film and their corresponding dubbed ones are presented.

According to Pedersen (2011), the strategies for translating extralinguistic culture-bound elements are of two kinds: source language (SL) oriented and target language (TL) oriented, each including three subcategories. Source oriented strategies include retention, direct translation, and specification. On the other hand, the target oriented ones consist of three subcategories including generalization, substitution, and omission. These strategies will be discussed in the next part.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

After watching and analyzing the original movie and the dubbed one, only those phrases and combinations which bore a religious background and were related to a specific doctrine were extracted. The counterpart dialogues were compared and the strategies adopted by the translator were detected. In this study, 60 religious dialogues were detected and compared with their Farsi counterpart ones in the dubbed movie. Then, the data were placed under the Pedersen’s selected strategies to see whether the selected strategies by the translator are mostly source or target oriented ones.

4.1 Source-Oriented strategies

- **Retention**

This strategy allows the translator to enter the same words or sentences derived from the source culture to the target one. As Pedersen (2011) states “retention is the strategy that displays the most fidelity towards the source text (ST), as the translator is loyal not only to the spirit, but indeed to every letter of the ST” (p. 78).

Since the retention of proper nouns such as Hanuman, Yashoda, Parvati, and Krishna would not harm the Islamic ideology norms, and due to the fact that removing these terms would bewilder the spectators, the translator retained them in the dubbed version of the movie.

- **Direct Translation**

This strategy is like the literal translation where nothing is added, and the semantic load of ST ECR would be intact. It comprises two kinds: a) calque which is stringent literal translation and seem odd to the audience. b) Shifted direct translation where the audience is familiar with the terms.

Since some dialogues bore some religious issues compatible with Islamic ideology, the translator rendered them directly and used the second category of direct translation during the process of translation:

Ex. 1

Original Dialogue: the compassionate, the merciful

Dubbed Dialogue in Farsi: خدای بخشنده، مهربان

Back Translation: God, the merciful, the compassionate

This phrase (in the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate) is a common religious one used by Muslims in Islamic context, so it has been translated literally because of its conformity with Islamic beliefs.

Ex. 2

Original Dialogue: If God is so perfect and we are not.

Dubbed Dialogue in Farsi: اگر خداوند اینقدر کامله و ما ناقص

Back Translation: if God is so perfect and we are not.

The idea “God is perfect” is an axiomatic in Islam and, as a result, the translator presented a literal translation with no change.

There was no example showing that translator has used the third strategy, namely, specification for the benefit of the source language and culture. So, this strategy is not defined in this paper.

4.2 Target-Oriented Strategies

- **Substitution**

This strategy entails removing SL culture-bound terms and replacing them with TL ones. This strategy are of two kinds, namely, the cultural substitution which means the source culture-specific item is removed and replaced by a different cultural term; and the paraphrase meaning rephrasing ECRs.

In Iran, as an Islamic context, monotheism is one of the main religious principles which forms the basic rule of the Islamic ideology. Muslims believe that there is only one God. As Dragon (2015) stated “the concept of Monotheism (known as Tawheed in Arabic) is the single most important concept in Islam. Islam calls to the absolute oneness of God and this is where Islam differs greatly from most other religions” (p. 8). Based on this Islamic ideology, the translator has manipulated the dialogues which bore some information about polytheism in Hindu as follows:

Ex. 3

Original Dialogue: we get to feel guilty before hundreds of Gods, instead of just one.

Dubbed Dialogue in Farsi: میدونی در هندوستان، صدها فرقه وجود داره با باورهای مختلف

Back Translation: you know, there are hundreds of denominations with different beliefs in India.

The word “Gods” which denotes polytheism in Hindu has been substituted with “denominations” in order to hide the polytheism concept before the Muslim audiences. The translator removed the source religious-specific term and rephrased it by another item in favor of the dominant religious ideology in Iran. There are too many examples of this sort which are beyond the realm of this study.

Ex. 4

Original Dialogue: The way of Karma

Dubbed Dialogue in Farsi: قضا و قدر دیگه

Back Translation: This is “Fate”.

Karma doctrine is one of the important beliefs in Hindu religion. Maguire (2001) mentioned that “Karma is a strong feature of Hinduism and the religions, like Buddhism and Jainism that were influenced by Hinduism” (p.47). In Hindu religion, they believe that human being has the opportunity to be born again and again (reincarnation) so as to experience the consequences of his good and bad actions. Fitzgerald (2008) stated that:

No religion originating in countries outside India subscribes to the cause-and-effect connection, nor to the reincarnation theory as one of its articles of faith. Indeed religions originating abroad hold beliefs contrary to this theory and strongly oppose the view that man is born again and again in order to exhaust his karma. (p. 14)

In Islam, Muslims believe that a man has only one birth, that when his soul departs on his death it dwells somewhere awaiting the Day of Judgment. Based on this Islamic theory, the translator has substituted this Hinduism concept with a more Islamic one, the “fate” word, which is more comprehensible for the target audience and conformed to their Islamic beliefs.

Ex. 5

Original Dialogue: we can understand God's son.

Dubbed Dialogue in Farsi: میتوانیم فرستاده اش را درک کنیم

Back Translation: we can understand his messenger.

In this scene of the movie, the main character (the Hindu boy) argues with a priest in a church. Based on Islamic ideas which are in contrast with Christianity, Jesus is only one of God's prophets and not the son of God. This matter has been emphasized several times in Qur'an (Ankerberg and Burroughs, 1996). This Islamic belief has impacted the translator's decision making for translating this dialogue and consequently forced the translator to repeat this substitution strategy for the other dialogues that saying “Jesus is the son of God”.

- **Omission**

In this strategy, the translator removes the ECR of ST completely. The translator has omitted the following dialogues and also the proper names which are related to other religions and foreign doctrines in the dubbed version of the movie.

Ex. 6

Original Dialogue: religion is darkness

As the dialogue denotes, religion has been considered as a dark way which is not a proper device for people to find their ways. In Islamic ideology, religion forms an integral part of Muslim's life and also is a way for finding the right path. So, the dialogue has been removed by the translator.

Ex. 7

Original Dialogue: I do teach a course on the Kabala at the university.

This dialogue has been deleted in the process of translating because the translator had to give more information about this doctrine. Since Kabala is considered as an improper doctrine in Iran, disseminating and giving information about it, especially through a film which has been broadcasted, is not possible. We can deduce that the translator has omitted this dialogue in order to refuse explaining and giving more information about kabala.

Some of the Proper names (the names of Gods in Hindu religion) such as Ganesh, Vishnu, Lakshman and other terms such as Swami Jesus, pope pi-us, the son of God, Abhinaya (a term related to Indian dance), etc. have been removed in the dubbed version of this movie. In the scenes where these terms had been used, the translator manipulated the dialogues in a way not to disturb the audiences' concentration on the main subject.

- **Generalization**

This strategy means replacing ECR referring to something special in ST by something general in TT. Based on Pedersen (2011), replacing a ST term referred to something specific by something more general is considered as a kind of generalization strategy. In the following

examples, the translator has used this target-oriented strategy for the benefit of the dominant religious ideology in Iran:

Ex. 8

Original Dialogue: drink the holy water

Dubbed Dialogue in Farsi: از اون آب بخور

Back Translation: drink the water

The term “Holy Water” is a religious specific one bound to Christianity which has been generalized to the word “Water” through the translation strategy. There is no exact equivalent for this term in Islam, so the author has used generalization for translating this religious-bound term.

Ex. 9

Original Dialogue: run into that church.

Dubbed Dialogue in Farsi: برو تو اون ساختمون

Back Translation: run into the building

The word “Church” has been replaced by a subordinate term “building” through the process of translation.

Ex. 10

Original Dialogue: are you going to Mecca this year?

Dubbed Dialogue in Farsi: امسال نمیخواهی بری سفر زیارتی؟

Back Translation: you are not going to pilgrimage this year?

The Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca has been generalized to the “Pilgrimage” word. In this scene, the main character has been mocked by his elder brother because of his wrong attitude, leaping from one religion to the next. The translator has respected the religious belief in Islamic context and generalized this sacred term to a more common one but refused to mention the exact word. The Hajj is an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, and a mandatory religious duty for Muslims that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime.

These examples have been extracted from the film to show the impact of Islamic belief of the translator on the process of translation. Through analyzing all the examples, the researcher noticed that the translator mostly has used the target-oriented strategies for rendering a dubbed movie based on Islamic ideology. The overall summary of the translation strategies used by the translator is shown in the following table:

According to the collected data, we can deduce that the Iranian translator, influenced by the Islamic ideology, has mostly chosen the target-oriented strategies for translating the film “life of Pi” dubbed in Iran, because the movie was full of non-Islamic concepts and terms which need to be conformed to the religious expectations of the target audience.

Table: 1

Number of Different Strategies appeared in the Dubbed Version

Source-Oriented Strategies	Retention	10
	Direct Translation	5
	Specification	0
Target-Oriented Strategies	Substitution	11
	Generalization	4
	Omission	30

Omission and substitution are the most common strategies used by the Iranian translator which help him to render a target-oriented dubbed version conformed to the Islamic ideology. In fact, the problems of translating thirty and eleven religious-based examples from among the sixty ones have been solved by using omission and substitution strategies, respectively.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed at investigating the impact of the translator’s religious ideology on the transmission of religious-specific terms during the dubbing process in the Islamic context. After extracting the religious terms and concepts of a foreign movie and matching them with their

corresponding dialogues in the dubbed Farsi version of the movie, the researcher analyzed the data which had been classified based on Pedersen's source-and target-oriented strategies and concluded that the Islamic ideas, beliefs and values of the translator, his ideology as a whole, affect his strategies for translating a foreign film which bore non-Islamic concepts and terms in its dialogues.

During the process of analysis, the researcher noticed that the Iranian translator has been influenced by the religious ideology dominant in Iran, the Islamic one. The concepts such as Monotheism, the reverence for Islam, the rejection of some foreign denominations, the position of Prophets and Islamic principles are some of the main ones that form the Islamic ideology in Iran; these matters are so integral part of the Islamic context which profoundly influences all agents of a society, especially the translators who are the mediators between cultures.

Another evidence of the effect of Islamic ideology in dubbing is the translation strategies which the translator has adopted. The number of target-oriented strategies applied in this dubbed film (substitution: 11, generalization: 4, and omission: 30) suggests that the film has been dubbed for the benefit of the target culture's ideology. The original movie was full of concepts and terms related to a specific religion and doctrine which were somehow not in accord with the Islamic ideology, whereas the dubbed version was a more conformed one with Islamic ideology. For further research, gathering a corpus of such films with religious subjects and analyzing them based on the dominant ideology in the target culture is suggested.

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