



## *Ideological Considerations and Practice in Official Dubbing in Iran*

by Masood Khoshsaligheh and Saeed Ameri<sup>1</sup>

Although Translation Studies has generally benefited from cultural studies, audiovisual translation (AVT) has not fully explored its research potential (Chaume 2013; Díaz Cintas 2012a). As Zabalbeascoa (2010) states, concepts like polysystem theory and norms can broaden the scope of AVT studies and Chaume (2006: 8) considers that “the cultural impact of audiovisual texts, the generation of new types of texts in the receiving cultures and the necessary adaptations” are key factors in society.

Historically, dubbing has been used as an ideological tool by fascist governments, whose censorship policies on the content meant “manipulating certain remarks, deleting unwanted comments, adding more agreeable references and thereby gaining control of the language and its ‘purity’” (Ranzato 2011: 122). Danan (1991: 612) believes dubbing to be part of strong nationalistic systems that tend to be closed and reject outside influences: “Translation in a nationalistic environment must therefore be target oriented in order to make the foreign material conform as much as possible to the local standards”. The reason behind this is the fact that audiovisual materials are considered suitable and powerful vehicles “for the transmission, not only

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of factual information, but also of assumptions, moral values, commonplaces, and stereotypes” (Díaz Cintas 2012a: 281).

When it comes to ideological concerns, Calzada Pérez (2003: 3) defines ideology as “a belief or a set of ideas, especially the political beliefs on which people, parties, or countries base their actions”, and Fawcett (2003: 153) believes that cultural references in films are problematic since they are “most acutely the sites of ideological interference in film translation”. Following Schäffner’s (2003) point of view that all translations are ideological and determined and formed by social agents’ interests and aims, Ranzato (2012) asserts that in shaping the cultural landscape of a society, translations play an important role. Thus, societies may adopt their defensive stances (Hermans 2013) and attempt to protect the public from exposure to foreign influence or block the penetration of foreign culture if found inappropriate.

Despite the fact that AVT has played a pivotal role in the contemporary era, there is a dearth of research into the impact of ideology, power relations, censorship and manipulation when audiovisual materials are translated into another language or culture (Díaz Cintas 2012b: 275). According to Pérez-González (2014: 130), “research on the ideological dimension of audiovisual translation has clustered around three main themes: (self-)censorship, gender, and sociolinguistic variation”, though research on censorship or cultural appropriation in AVT is still inconclusive and requires further investigation (Remael 2010). It is then intriguing to find out how the translational activity is shaped under the influence of the various agents involved in the process. Of crucial interest is “the role played by patronage (people, institutions, broadcasting companies, TV channels, distributors, exhibitors) in this rewriting process” (Ranzato 2015: 3). The 2012 special issue of *Meta* has been heralded as a significant step in the systematic study of manipulation and censorship in AVT.

The notion of ideology in dubbing has been studied in some sporadic and insufficient case studies in the context of Iran (Ameri and Ghazizadeh 2015; Khoshsaligheh and Ameri 2014; Sedighi and Tabrizi 2012). Bearing in mind factors such as the professionals within the translation system, the patronage outside the system (Lefevere 1992) and the target audience, this study aims to address the following two questions: (1) which agents are responsible for ideological appropriation in official dubbing in the context of Iran? (2) How is this ideological appropriation exercised?

## 1. DUBBING IN IRAN

Traditionally, Iran has been and is a dubbing country, where practice is classified into professional and non-expert dubbing (Nord *et al.* 2015). Professional dubbing is done by national television studios (NTS) and by home entertainment distribution studios (HEDS). Dubbing is used commonly for localising foreign fiction genres, including animated movies. In the context of Iran, the process of dubbing by NTS and HEDS is alike although some differences can be observed. In both cases, professional agents include those who buy the original movies, translators, dubbing directors, voice talents, and sound engineers. However, for NTS, there is also an expert responsible for editing the translation and making sure that language sounds natural and that cultural and religious references are acceptable; whilst for HEDS, the dubbing director is



responsible for reviewing and revising the translation in terms of language and content. In the case of HEDS, prior to their public distribution, the final dubbed programmes are screened and evaluated by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. All cultural products, including original and translated literature, domestically made movies and audiovisual translations like dubbed versions need to get authorised for formal exhibition licensing and official distribution in the Iranian market.

## 2. DISTRIBUTION OF CULTURAL PRODUCTS IN IRAN

Right after the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance was established with the responsibility of managing and organising the distribution of cultural products, including domestically-produced materials (books and films) as well as translated foreign products of any kind. According to Article No. 24 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, “the publications and the press are free to state their ideas unless they are against the foundations of Islam or public rights” (in Azimi 2010: 24, our translation). The said ministry, responsible for safeguarding this legislation, cannot authorize the publication or distribution of any cultural products, including translations, which commit offences regarding (a) religion and ethics, (b) politics and society, and (c) individual and public rights.<sup>2</sup>

The sale and public screenings of movies containing the following are against the law in Iran (Azimi 2010: 403-405; translated by Naficy, 2012: 189-191):

- If they deny or weaken the principle of monotheism and other sacred Islamic principles, or if they insult them in any manner.
- If they deny, manipulate, or damage other fundamentals of the sacred religion of Islam.
- If they insult directly or indirectly the heavenly prophets, the innocent imams, supreme jurisprudent, the ruling council, or the jurisprudents.
- If they blaspheme the values and personalities held sacred by Islam and other religions recognized in the constitution.
- If they negate the equality of all people regardless of colour, race, language, ethnicity, and belief, or if they incite racial and ethnic differences or make fun of them.
- If they negate or violate the high value of humans.
- If they encourage wickedness, corruption, and prostitution.
- If they encourage or teach dangerous addictions and earning a living from unsavoury means such as smuggling.
- If they facilitate foreign cultural, economic, and political influence contrary to government’s ‘neither West nor East’ policy.
- If they express or disclose anything that is against the interests and policies of the country, which might be exploited by foreigners.

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<sup>2</sup> <<http://ketab.farhang.gov.ir/fa/principles/principles89>> (11 July 2015)



- If they show details of scenes of murder, violent crimes, and torture in such a way as to disturb or mislead viewers.
- If they misrepresent historical and geographical facts.
- If they present rough and abnormal images and sounds, be they caused by technical or other problems, in such a way that endangers the health and safety of spectators.
- If they lower the taste of spectators through low production and artistic values.

The issuing of exhibition licenses to programmes that comply with the provisions of the aforementioned regulations rests with the Supervisory Council, appointed by the deputy minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance and consisting of the following people: one cleric knowing artistic issues; three people with political, sociological, and Islamic understanding and also familiar with cinema and film issues; and one expert in domestic and foreign cinema issues (Naficy 2012: 151).

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Translation is a practice in which socio-cultural constraints determine the behaviour of the translator and justify the appropriateness and correctness of the target product (Schäffner 2010). Being norm-based, these expectations concern the translation of ideas and values of a source community into appropriate ones for a target culture, in a certain situation and time. Regarded as sociocultural constraints, norms are the shared ideas, values or beliefs which guide people on how to act, think, as well as translate at a particular time for particular people (Meylaerts 2008). Toury (1995) introduced three basic types of norms:

- Initial norms determine whether the translation is governed by source language norms or target language norms. Translation is adequate if it leans toward the original and is acceptable if it favours the target culture.
- Preliminary norms illustrate the translation policy and directness of the translation. The former determines the choice of original text types at any given time and culture, while the latter considers whether the translation was carried out through a third or an intermediate language.
- Operational norms can be divided into matricial and textual-linguistic norms. Matricial norms are concerned with the completeness of texts, including issues like omission and changes in segmentation. Textual-linguistic norms govern the choice of certain lexical items, stylistic features or the replacement of the original materials.

Chesterman (1997) also distinguishes between expectancy and professional norms. Expectancy norms, the most important in the context of the present study, are established by the receivers' expectations of a translation and are also subject to economic and ideological considerations as well as power relations between cultures. Such conceptualisation allows for the notion of correct translation which "fits the correctness notions prevailing in a particular system, i.e. that adopts the solutions



regarded as correct for a given communicative situation, as a result of which it is accepted as correct" (Hermans 1991: 166). Readers or viewers cannot be the only decisive factors as translations are also controlled by a 'double control factor': (a) professionals within the literary system, and (b) patronage outside the literary system (Lefevere 1992).

According to Lefevere (ibid.: 9), translation is "the most recognizable type of rewriting", and its role is significant since "it is able to project the image of an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their cultural origin". However, translation does not always project what its original reflects, probably because of ideological considerations imposed by the professionals within the polysystem of the target language. In a similar vein, Fawcett and Munday (2009: 137-138) refer to the essence of ideological intervention in translations as:

selections made during the translation process (not only by the translator but by all those involved, including those who decide the choice of texts to translate) [which] are potentially determined by ideologically based strategies governed by those who wield power.

Thus, it is inaccurate to blame the translator as the only individual responsible for intervention in translation as the influence of the dominant ideology can also lead to censorship of translations (Merkle 2010: 18). As highlighted by Mercks (2007), censorship exists in all societies even though the political, moral, and psychological effects might differ from one society to another. It tends to act out based on a set of specific criteria and values formulated by a dominant body (Billiani 2009), which responds to political and cultural agendas. For some, censorship is activated because "state ideology and the moral integrity of the people must be safeguarded" (Mercks 2007: 101). Billiani (2007: 3) underscores the negative nature of censorship, which she is as "an act, often coercive and forceful, that—in various ways and under different guises—blocks, manipulates and controls the establishment of cross-cultural communication".

Translation-related censorship can be classified into prior-to-publication and posterior-to-publication (Merkle 2010), or institutional and individual (Billiani 2009). Prior censorship happens before or during the process of translation. That is, before initiating the process of translation, the products in question need assessment in terms of their appropriateness for the target audience, and those which gain permission may undergo rewriting. With regards to posterior censorship, a translation may be boycotted or banned in a given society or may be forcefully withdrawn from the market after its publication (Merkle 2010). The typology introduced by Billiani (2009) is centred on the agents. The aim of institutional censorship, which is imposed by government and patronage (persons, institutions), is to prevent the circulation of translations which are ideologically destabilising. Individual censorship, also known as self-censorship, is practised by translators who censor their own works to conform to the expectations of society and is difficult to identify.

In the tradition-oriented and dominantly religious context of Iran, where many foreign films are imported and dubbed, cultural appropriation is seen as an aid for the protection of cultural identity. This study aims at investigating the professionals who practice this cultural appropriation in Iran and the ways in which it is exercised.





#### 4. METHODOLOGY

From an empirical research perspective, this qualitative inquiry intends to study ideological considerations and appropriation in official dubbing in the Iranian context. Considering the exploratory nature of the study and to address its objectives, two research questions have been formulated, and both product-oriented and participant-oriented research methods (Saldanha and O'Brien 2013) have been used for data collection and analysis.

In order to answer the first question, which explores the ideology-related agency in official dubbing in Iran, a participant-oriented methodology has been adopted and eight dubbing professional practitioners were identified and invited to contribute to the study, of whom four agreed to be interviewed. The participants were dubbing directors and translators with several years of experience working in Iran. Before conducting the interviews, they were informed of the topic of the research and were assured full confidentiality. Using an interview protocol, which included four leading questions and a few minor probing questions, semi-structured interviews (Dörnyei 2007) of approximately twenty minutes were conducted via telephone, audio-recorded, transcribed, and later analysed. Qualitative content analysis is a method of analysis of textual data for the purposes of "examining the categories that the data comprise and condensing them into fewer categories so that they are easier to understand" (Matthews and Ross 2010: 395).

A product-oriented research method has been employed in order to address the second research question which investigates the practice of cultural appropriation in official dubbing in Iran. The sample of the study has been selected based on a criterion sampling technique which, according to Saldanha and O'Brien (2013), is commonly used in qualitative research. A sample of films and TV series containing instances of appropriation practices, whether textual or visual, have been selected for the analysis. To widen the scope, a variety of genres makes part of the sample, including science fiction, horror, animation, crime, action, drama, adventure, comedy, and thriller, produced in different years between 1973 and 2013. As another criterion, only versions dubbed after the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 have been chosen, except for one film which was dubbed before 1979 and then redubbed after the revolution. The language combination and directionality is from English to Persian and the original English transcripts of the movies have been secured and checked for accuracy. Since no Persian transcripts or subtitles were available, the Persian dialogue has been carefully transcribed. Additionally, when instances of appropriation had been detected, a request was sent to the translators to provide the authors with a draft of their original translations for further analysis. The first translations of two movies were thus secured. The analysis includes exploring the problematic areas in dubbing, according to the guidelines set by the Ministry, and the manner in which they have been dealt with by the agents in question.



## 5. AGENTS

The results of the analysis of the data collected from the interviews with the Iranian dubbing professionals indicate that six groups of agents are involved in the formal process of dubbing, and are likely to ideologically intervene in, and exercise appropriations on, the translated products:

- A. Distributors, in particular those working in HEDS, are responsible for selecting the programmes that conform to the norms and expectations of the general public in Iran, and do not to violate the prescribed laws and regulations. They should be very cautious about the choices they make as the wrong decision would be very costly, especially in the private sector, since the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance grants permission only to the final version of the audiovisual production. If the Ministry declines permission for the distribution of a dubbed film, the relevant company will lose the entire budget they have spent on the movie and on the dubbing process. In the case of NTS, the distributors are affiliated to the Ministry, under which the national television channels operate. Thanks to their connections, they are well-informed about the criteria—which can at times be subjectively interpreted—concerning the choice of movies and other cultural products. They tend to select more conservative movies, which naturally avoids conflict or challenge with the powers that be.
- B. Translators of audiovisual productions are supposed to provide a complete and faithful translation, and are required to refrain from altering the content. Nevertheless, knowing the expectations of the general public in Iran and being aware of the set laws and regulations, translators are likely to intervene at the word level rather than larger stretches of language.
- C. Translation editors play a significant role in the manipulation of the movies dubbed by NTS as they are required to double check the content and language of the final version, and modify or edit what is deemed unsuitable in order for the dubbed version to conform to the expectations of the Iranian general public as well as the prescribed. For movies dubbed by HEDS, no special translation editor is assigned and the dubbing director is expected to take full responsibility for the final output.
- D. Dubbing directors, in addition to the usual technical tasks, are responsible for modifying the translation of the movie by revising or even omitting the inappropriate segments. At times, exclusion of visual segments is necessary, which may require further linguistic intervention to justify and compensate for the visual loss.
- E. The broadcasting section reviews the final dubbed version by NTS in relation to technical aspects and content. After approval, it authorises and issues a code for the film to be broadcast on a given channel.
- F. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance controls the publishing and broadcast of all literary and audiovisual translations, among other types of cultural products. Whenever a film is dubbed in the private sector, permission has to be required and approved by the Ministry for its distribution in the marketplace. The Ministry checks if the content is appropriate for the Iranian society and culture and, if any inappropriate material is detected, it is then sent back to the dubbing studio to be changed. On occasions, the dubbed movie is denied permission to be



commercialised, as in the case of the animation film *Monsters University* (Scanlon 2013).

- G. Critics are not directly involved in the process of dubbing but may affect the reception of the audiovisual productions with their reviews. Criticism can be targeted to the voice talents and dubbing directors rather than the translators' performance or the translation itself.

## 6. MANIPULATION

Various modes of intervention and manipulation in translation have been discussed in the literature. In the context of Iran, all translations, whether written or audiovisual, are assessed by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance before their official release. In the case of NTS, all TV channels are controlled and funded by the government, and the entire working staff is affiliated to the government. As a result, the dubbing performed by NTS is not revised by the Ministry. The translation of the dialogue of a film is first sent to the editors to be reviewed before passing it on to the dubbing director for its recording. Once the recording of the new translation has taken place, the final product is submitted to the broadcasting section, where the dubbing is reviewed from various angles, including the overall quality of dubbing and its appropriateness for the Iranian society and culture. If the broadcasting section finds any problem, the dubbed product is sent back to the studio to be corrected, who then sends it again to the broadcasting section. Once the final confirmation is awarded, the film receives the authorisation code, which indicates that it can be broadcast on the specified channel. In the case of HEDS, as no designated party is in charge of assessing the dubbed version for cultural and ideological appropriateness, private studios must submit the final product to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance for such assessment.

Decisions can be taken before the process of translation, which is related to what Toury (1995) knows as translation policy and Merkle (2010) coins as preventive censorship. Broadly speaking, audiovisual productions to be dubbed are not selected haphazardly as not all of them have the same chances to be distributed in the country. For instance, horror movies, regarded as advertising excessive violence, are rarely imported in Iran and while *Saw 1* (Wan 2004) was dubbed by HEDS, none of its sequels has ever been distributed.

Traditionally, Iran has given priority to US programmes and few are dubbed from other parts of the world. Such preference has its own reasons, among which the fact that many prominent film companies are based in the US and most Iranian translators are trained in English rather than other languages. However, interestingly, Iran has shown less interest in dubbing modern US sitcoms in recent years, even though it used to dub series like *Dr Quinn, Medicine Woman* (Bowman 1993), *The Adventures of Swiss Family Robinson* (Eames 1998), *The District Nurse* (Harper 1984) and so forth. In recent years, the only US series dubbed by HEDS were *Prison Break* (Ratner 2005), *Lost* (Abrams 2004), and *24* (Hopkins 2001); though they were never broadcast on national TV and are only available on DVD. Other popular series have not been dubbed in Iran for fear that they would promote the Western culture in the Islamic society of Iran.





Iran's NTS, on the other hand, have shown preference for dubbing historical Korean series, mainly about wars or everyday life, which are deemed to follow less controversial plots and show dressing styles more suitable for the religious society of Iran, thus requiring less manipulation.

Cultural appropriation also takes place during the process of translation. As mentioned before, although the translator may apply some changes, they are not the only agents responsible for modifications. Detecting manipulation carried out by translators themselves is very difficult, since "it is impossible to distinguish with certainty what changes have been made by the translator versus those made by a reviser, copyeditor or the publisher" (Merkle 2010: 19). However, in the context of AVT in Iran, translators are responsible for submitting a full, faithful translation and are not permitted to intervene in the message of the film as other agents are charged with that responsibility. This can be seen in the following examples, extracted from the first translation draft, where the translator provides a full translation regardless of the culturally inappropriateness of some of the solutions. In a scene of the movie *Johnny English Reborn* (Parker 2011), the protagonist is in a swimming pool with a girl. The scene contains nudity, another unacceptable scene to show in Iran, but the translator fully translated the dialogue even though the segment was excluded in the final version. In cases of minor manipulation, especially when dealing with taboo words, translators are expected to indicate in their work the segments that have been modified so that the dubbing director is aware and can take the final decision. Table 1 shows an example in which the translator has changed 'vodka' and 'rum' into the hypernym 'drink', since these terms are regarded as taboo words in Iran. As illustrated, the translator specified in his translation the nature of the English terms and his decision to change them:

Original Dialogue	Translation (with Notes in Parentheses) Submitted to the Editor/Dubbing Director for their Final Decision	Back-Translation
Now, what's your poison? Can I get you something? We've got <b>vodka, rum</b>	خب چی می خورید؟ چیزی میل دارید بیارم؟ ما هر جور نوشیدنی که بخواید داریم (یادداشت مترجم برای ویراستار/مدیر دوبلاژ: در اصل، وodka و رام داریم)	So, what would you like to eat? Can I get you something? We've got any kind of <b>drink</b> you wish to have (Translator's note for the editor/dubbing director: <u>Originally instead of drink, vodka and rum were used</u> )

Table 1. Example from *Johnny English Reborn*

In the following example from *Godzilla* (Emmerich 1998), it is not clear who has been responsible for the completely modified scene, since the researchers could only access the dubbed versions available in the market. In this case, the conversation between Audrey, who is a single woman, and her boss, who is a married man, has been toned down to a neutral conversation and the allusion to an affair, an immoral behaviour, has been left out:



Original Dialogue	Dubbed Dialogue	Back-Translation
Audrey: Did you talk with Humphries?	باهاش صحبت کردی رئیس؟	Boss, did you talk with him?
Caiman: This is not the place.	اینجا جاش نیست.	This is not the place.
Audrey: Just tell me. Did you talk with him?	فقط بگین باهاش صحبت کردین؟	Just tell me. Did you talk with him?
Caiman: <b>It's between you and Rodriguez.</b>	گفت باید فکر کنه ولی تو به دردش نمی خوری.	<b>He said he needs to think, but you aren't suitable for him.</b>
Audrey: You serious? He's going to consider me for the job? What else did he say?	جدی گفت راجع بهش فکر می کنه؟ دیگه چیا گفت؟	Did he really say he would think about it? What else did he say?
Caiman: <b>Why don't we talk about it over dinner tonight? Your place.</b>	خب چرا خودت نمی ری باهاش صحبت کنی؟ مستقیماً!	<b>Why don't you talk with him yourself? Directly!</b>
Audrey: <b>Mr Caiman, you're married.</b>	آقای کایمن من نمی تونم.	<b>Mr Caiman, I can't.</b>
Caiman: <b>Yes, and you're very beautiful. Have I ever told you that before?</b> ... <b>So have dinner with me tonight.</b>	پس با من کار می کنی صدات هم در نیماه فهمیدی؟ ... خب می تونی خودت بری تقاضا کنی.	<b>So you work with me and won't say anything, understood?</b> ... <b>Well, you yourself can make a request.</b>
Audrey: I can't	نمی تونم.	I can't.
Caiman: It's your choice.	میل خودته.	It's your choice.

Table 2. Example from *Godzilla*

In another example from the same movie (Table 3), the dubbed version does not reveal that Audrey and Nick were in a relationship and states, instead, that they have been engaged; and Audrey's comment on Nick's appearance has been neutralised in the translation:

Original Dialogue	Dubbed Dialogue	Back-Translation
Audrey: It's Nick.	اون نیکه.	It's Nick.
Lucy: Who is Nick?	نیک کیه؟	Who is Nick?
Audrey: <b>He was my college sweetie. He looks so handsome on TV.</b>	با هم نامزد شده بودیم. ولی خیلی وقته که ازش بی خبرم.	<b>We had been engaged. It's such a long time I haven't heard from him.</b>

Table 3. Example from *Godzilla*

In the next example extracted from *Zathura* (Favreau 2005), there is a conversation between Lisa and her father. While in the original movie Lisa is talking about going on a date, in the dubbed movie it has been replaced with 'being a guest' and 'party':



Original Dialogue	Dubbed Dialogue	Back-Translation
Dad: Lisa, honey get up. I need to go out, I need you to look after your two favorite people. Come one.	لیسا عزیزم پاشو. من می خواهم برم بیرون. می خواهم توو این فاصله از برادر های دوست داشتنت مراقبت کنی. پاشو دیگه.	Lisa, honey get up. I need to go out, I need you to look after your two lovely brothers during this time. Come on.
Lisa: <b>I can't, I have a date tonight.</b>	من نمی توئم امشب جایی مهمونم.	<b>I can't, I am a guest somewhere tonight.</b>
Dad: What time?	چه ساعتی؟	What time?
Lisa: We are hooking up at, like, 8.	ساعت هشت می زنیم بیرون.	We'll get out around 8.
Dad: It's two.	الان ساعت دو.	It's two now.
Lisa: So?	خب که چی؟	So what?
Dad: <b>So that's</b> six hours from now.	مهمونی تو شش ساعت دیگه است.	<b>Your party</b> is six hours later.

Table 4. Example from *Zathura*

In Table 5, Kevin and Jess, of *Dark Skies* (Stewart 2013), are talking about their girlfriends in the original though the Iranian audience never knows, as the topic of the conversation is totally altered in the dubbed version, and the coarse language has been standardised:

Original Dialogue	Dubbed Dialogue	Back-Translation
Kevin: <b>Hey, you know that girl Jennifer?</b>	خیلی تو فکری!	<b>You think too much!</b>
Jess: Yeah.	آره.	Yeah.
Kevin: <b>That bitch was on my jock.</b>	مشکلی پیش اومده؟	<b>Any problem?</b>
Jess: Really?	آره.	Yeah.
Kevin: <b>Yeah. What about you? You get any? I saw you with Shelly. Did you kiss her?</b>	چی؟ خب چرا به من نمی گی؟ بگو من هم بدونم چیه.	<b>What? Why don't you tell me that? Tell me what it is.</b>
Jess: Yeah	هیچی.	Nothing.
Kevin: <b>Did you feel her titties?</b>	یعنی چی هیچی؟	<b>What do you mean by nothing?</b>
Jess: Kind of, I guess.	ولش کن هیچی.	Nothing, forget it.
Kevin: <b>Shit, dawg! That's nothing! You got to go downtown. That's what I do with all my ladies.</b>	یعنی چی پسر؟ فک می کنی احمقم؟ چند روزی همتون بهم ریختید. بگو چته؟	<b>What do you mean dude? You think I'm stupid? You have not been in the mood for several days. Tell me what's the matter with you?</b>

Table 5. Example from *Dark Skies*

In the example in Table 6, the conversation between three boys in *Good Will Hunting* (Van Sant 1997) is about immoral behaviour, which is totally modified in the dubbed version:



Original Dialogue	Dubbed Dialogue	Back-Translation
Ben: Morgan! <b>If you're watchin' pornos in my mom's room again</b> , I'm gonna give you a fuckin' beatin'!	مورگان، اگه باز داری توو اتاق خواب من فیلم آشغال می بینی، میام پوستت را می کنم.	Morgan! <b>If you're watching junk movies in my bedroom again</b> , I'll kick your ass.
Morgan: What's up, fellas?	چی شده باز داد می زنی؟	What's going on here, why are you screaming?
Billy: <b>Morgan, why don't you jerk off in your own fuckin' house? That's fuckin' filthy.</b>	مورگان، واسه چی توو خونه خودتون ازین کار نمی کنی، آخرش می زنم ناقصت می کنم.	<b>Morgan, why don't you do that in your own house? Finally I'll give you a beating!</b>
Morgan: I don't have a V.C.R. in my house.	واسه اینکه توو خونمون ویدیو نداریم.	Because we don't have a V.C.R. in our house.
Ben: <b>Come on. Not in my glove.</b>	خاک توو سرت با اون خونت.	<b>Shame on you, with that house.</b>
Morgan: <b>I didn't use the glove.</b>	بسه بابا، داری اشتباه می کنی.	<b>Come on man, you are wrong.</b>
Ben: <b>That's my Little League glove.</b>	دست کش مسابقه من را واسه چی برداشتی؟	<b>Why did you take my League glove?</b>
Morgan: What do you want me to do?	می فرمایید چکار کنم؟	What do you want me to do?
Ben: I mean, what's wrong with you? <b>You'll hump a baseball glove?</b>	آخه تو چه مرگنه پسر. پاس به همه چی آدم دست بزنی.	What the hell is wrong with you? <b>You take everything one has.</b>
Morgan: <b>I- I just used it for cleanup.</b>	نه فقط داشتم همین جوری نیگا می کردم.	<b>No, I was just looking at it.</b>
Ben: <b>Stop jerkin' off in my mother's room.</b>	ایکبیری، بی اجازه توو اتاق خواب من میری همه جا سر می کشی.	<b>Asshole! You go into my bedroom without permission, and look at everything.</b>

Table 6. Example from *Good Will Hunting*

Modifications on spiritual grounds can also happen and, in *Life of Pi* (Lee 2012), the word 'Gods' has been substituted with 'symbols' as this is considered as blasphemy in the monotheistic society of Iran:

Original Dialogue	Dubbed Dialogue	Back-Translation
Pi: <b>The gods</b> were my superheroes, growing up. Hanuman, the <b>monkey god</b> . Lifting an entire mountain to save his friend, Laksh woman. Ganesh, the elephant headed risking his life to defend the honor of his mother, Parvati ....	نمادها قهرمان های داستان های بچگی من بودند. مثل هانومان نماد میمونها مثلا یک کوه بزرگ را بلند می کنه. یا نماد فیل که زندگیش را به خطر می اندازه از آبروی مادرش پارواتی دفاع کنه ...	<b>The symbols</b> were my superheroes in my childhood's stories. Like Hanuman, the <b>symbol of monkeys</b> , lifting an entire mountain or the symbol of elephant risks his life to defend the honor of his mother Parvati ...
Dad: Don't let the stories and pretty lies fool you, boys. <b>Religion is darkness.</b>	اجازه ندید این داستان ها و دروغهای شیرین فریبتون بده. بچه ها این کار اصلا درست نیست.	Don't let these stories and pretty lies fool you. Boys, <b>this is not really right.</b>

Table 7. Example from *Life of Pi*



Mention should be made of musical films, in which scenes with songs are on occasions removed from the dubbed version, especially if the singer is a female, as in the musical animation *Cinderella III* (Nissen 2007).

Not only are the kisses and hugs of a romantic scene omitted, but they are also deleted even if they are meant for greeting. In the beginning of *Prisoners* (Villeneuve 2013), the scene when Nancy kisses Keller and his son on the cheek has been omitted in the dubbed version. Manipulation is not restricted to sexual matters and acts like smoking cannabis can also be subject to deletion, as in the film *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* (Leiner 2004). Drinking alcoholic beverages is also considered immoral in Iran and such references are excluded in films like *Shutter Island* (Scorsese 2010), where a scene in which Teddy serves himself an alcoholic beverage has been eliminated from the dubbed version. Excessive violence, including killing and torturing, tends to be also omitted and a long scene at the beginning of *Eastern Promises* (Cronenberg 2007), in which the throat of a Russian man is cut in a Turkish barbershop, has been considerably shortened in the dubbed version. In addition, comments against Iranian national interests and policies are erased in dubbed movies and the Autobots attack on Iran's nuclear sites that takes place in the film *Transformers Dark of the Moon* (Bay 2011) has been omitted as it implies that the country runs secret nuclear plants.

Since the Islamic Revolution, no case of posterior manipulation has been observed in dubbing in Iran. The reason is that prior to the formal release of the dubbed movies, they are strictly controlled by the Ministry, and if any producer violates these regulations, they can be sued by the police. Some movies dubbed before the Islamic Revolution of Iran are never shown on TV channels or sold on DVD unless they have been redubbed according to the new regulations. Some of these redubbings have been done to improve the quality of the soundtrack while some others have been prompted by ideological considerations.

The animation film *Robin Hood* (Reitherman 1973) was first dubbed a few years before the Islamic Revolution and redubbed a couple of times after the Islamic Revolution. The second and third dubbings have undergone some strict manipulation, given that the established ideologies before and after the Islamic Revolution are very different. As Table 8 shows, the first dubbing follows the original very closely and no part has been deleted. However, the second dubbing is full of modifications and the viewer never knows that Robin Hood is romantically involved with Marian. The third dubbing is less conservative than the second one, yet the exchanges about kissing and having children have been manipulated:

Original dialogue
Rabbit One: Gee, you're very <b>beautiful</b> .
Rabbit Two: Are you gonna <b>marry</b> Robin Hood?
Rabbit One: Mama said you and Robin Hood are <b>sweethearts</b> .
Marian: Well, um—You see, that was several years ago before I left for London.
Toby: <b>Did he ever kiss you?</b>
Marian: Well, uh, no. But he carved our initials on this tree. I remember it so well.
Skippy: <b>Are you gonna have any kids?</b>





First Dubbing	Back-Translation
<p>به نظر من شما خیلی خوشگلید. شما با رابین هود ازدواج می کنید؟ مامان میگه شما و رابین هود همدیگر را دوست دارید.</p> <p>راستش- می دونید اون جریان مال چندسال قبل بود وقتی که به لندن نرفته بودم. رابین تاحالا شما را بوسیده؟ راستش نه. رابین هود روز اول اسممون را روی این درخت نوشت. اون روزا را خوب به یاد دارم. شما بچه دار هم میشید؟</p>	<p>I think, you're very <b>beautiful</b>. Will you <b>marry</b> Robin Hood? Mama says <b>you and Robin Hood love each other</b>. Well, You know, that was several years ago before I left for London. <b>Did Robin ever kiss you?</b> Well, no. On the first day, Robin Hood wrote our names on this tree. I remember those days so well. <b>You're gonna have any kids?</b></p>
Second Dubbing	Back-Translation
<p>شما خیلی مهربون هستید. شما تاحالا رابین هود را دیدید؟ مامان می گفت شما با اون آشنایی دارید. خب. این مربوط به سالها پیشه موقعی که لندن بودیم.</p> <p>بعدا دیگه ندیدینش؟ راستش نه. - حذف سکانس!</p>	<p>You are so <b>kind</b>. Have you ever <b>seen</b> Robin Hood? Mama says <b>you know him</b>. Well, that was several years ago, when we were in London. <b>Didn't you see him anymore later?</b> Well, no. Ø</p>
Third Dubbing	Back-Translation
<p>خدایا شما چقدر قشنگید. شما با رابین هود ازدواج می کنید؟ مامانم میگه شما و رابین از بچگی همدیگر را دوست داشتید. خب. اون مال چندین سال پیشه. قبل از اینکه به لندن برم.</p> <p>دیگه ندیدیش؟ خب راستش نه. ولی حروف اول اسممون را این درخت کنذیم. اون روز خوب یادمه. بالاخره باهاش ازدواج می کنید؟</p>	<p>Oh God, you're so <b>pretty</b>. Will you <b>marry</b> Robin Hood? Mama says <b>you and Robin Hood love each other since you were kids</b>. Well, that was several years ago before I left for London. <b>Didn't you see him anymore?</b> Well, no. But we carved our initials on this tree. I remember it so well. <b>Will you marry him one day?</b></p>

Table 8. Example from *Robin Hood*



## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Drawing on Lefevere's (1992) concept of control factors, initial attempts have been made to explore agency in the process of cultural appropriation and manipulation in official dubbing in contemporary Iran, in the private and state-run sectors. Given the large quantity of audiovisual productions imported in Iran from the West, and especially Hollywood, and considering the stark differences and conflicting world views between Iranian and Western ideologies, the dubbing of such products requires heavy interventions if they are to conform to the socio-cultural norms and expectations of the Iranian audiences. Since Iran is dominantly a dubbing country, foreign movies are dubbed both by the private sector and the state.

Agents in the private sector are not directly supervised by the government and their dubbed products must be officially authorised before their commercial distribution. Only movies that do not contravene the regulations set by the ministry in charge can be considered, confirming Toury's (2012: 82) claim that choices of this nature "will be found to have been non-random". The "selection automatically filters the representation of a given culture" (Wolf 2002: 50), which in the case of Iran vastly conflicts with that projected by the US in notions such as clothing, eating and drinking, premarital relationships, and spirituality and divinity, among others. The measures taken in the dubbing of foreign audiovisual products can entail drastic interventions such as obliteration of images and radical changes of the dialogue. Given the expensive process of dubbing, the private sector cannot afford to take any risks and the selection of foreign movies and TV series must be carefully guided by the requirements stipulated by the government. Thus, movies chosen for dubbing are made sure to conform to the country's socio-cultural norms in order to avoid denied permissions for their distribution.

When a movie is chosen to be dubbed but requires the modification of certain segments that are objectionable on cultural, political, or ideological grounds, such appropriations are practiced by a range of agents engaged in translatorial decisions, though the translators of movies are explicitly requested to be as literal as possible and not change the content of the original. If they do, they are required to notify the dubbing director of any changes, and the final decisions are taken by dubbing directors and editors.

Drawing on Merkle's (2010) discussions on appropriation, the results clearly show that dubbed products follow the norms of the target culture in Iran, and the translations are "acceptable" (Toury 1995) and conform to the expectancy norms of the Iranian society (Chesterman 1997). Acceptability of dubbing into Persian is also supported by previous studies whose results revealed that dubbings are more inclined toward the target culture norms, at least as far as taboo language is concerned (Ameri and Ghazizadeh 2015; Khoshsaligheh and Ameri 2014; Sedighi and Tabrizi 2012).

To sum up, this study has discussed the agents involved in official dubbing in Iran and illustrated the extent and nature of their ideological manipulation. The results revealed that appropriations can happen before, during and after the translation in dubbing processes. Although the study has generated fruitful findings, it was limited in a number of ways. The examples come from a variety of movies and series but the



corpus is not large enough nor randomly selected to make generalisable claims. As such, further research is necessary to supplement the findings and provide insight on the many more untapped areas and inconclusive questions that hover around official dubbing in Iran.

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**Masood Khoshsaligheh** is Assistant Professor in Translation Studies at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, where he teaches translation theory and research at MA and PhD programmes, and supervises theses in translation studies. He convened a conference on interdisciplinary approaches to language and translation studies in October 2015 (<http://tlts2.um.ac.ir>).

[khoshsaligheh@um.ac.ir](mailto:khoshsaligheh@um.ac.ir)

**Saeed Ameri** has a BA in English Translation and is currently working on his Master's thesis in audiovisual translation at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, where he is a member of the Elites Foundation and was selected as top student in Humanities in 2015. His research interests are audiovisual translation, translation of popular music, and translation by fans.

[saeed.ameri@stu.um.ac.ir](mailto:saeed.ameri@stu.um.ac.ir)