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KILLING TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE: TRANSLATION OF THE UNSEEN AND OFF-CAMERA SPEECH AND SOUNDS IN ENGLISH MOVIES SUBTITLED INTO PERSIAN

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Abstract

In this study, attempts have been made to elucidate how unseen and off-camera utterances and sound effects have been treated in Persian subtitles of three English movies to reach all sorts of viewers including the hearing impaired. In order to compare the above-mentioned elements with their Persian equivalents, a set of guidelines suggested by CMP (Captioned Media Program, 2004) was modified to suit the purpose of the study since they cover both translational and technical properties of subtitling. Altogether, 45 cases of unseen and off-camera speech and sounds were identified, comprising 17 instances of off-camera sounds and 28 cases of off-camera speech. After analyzing the data, it was revealed that the unseen and off-camera sounds have been totally ignored and the cases of unseen and off-camera speech were translated the same as any ordinary part of the films, i.e. on-screen parts. Finally, having applied the guidelines to the ignored and mistranslated elements, the researchers tried to specify the guidelines which should have been used by subtitlers, and proposed some appropriate alternatives which would satisfy both the hearers and the hearing impaired.

Key Words: Audiovisual Translation (AVT), Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (SDH), Off-camera, Translation Guidelines, Interlingual Subtitling, Intralingual Subtitling.

1. Introduction

In the globalizing world, audiovisual translation has had a great impact on human society. Although it is not long since subtitled CDs and DVDs have come into fashion, with the very beginning of Audiovisual Translation (AVT) and subtitling, a lot of studies have been inclined toward different linguistic aspects of subtitles and the equivalent translations in many languages. Researchers and scholars have realized the significance of AVT products firstly, because of the high number of people they reach, mainly through television. And secondly, due to the large quantity of translated products such as films, news, debates, documentaries, television series, etc. which are carried over to other cultures. The third reason for this significance is their direct reception by the

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consumer which makes them easy to use. In spite of all these, studies in this field have always been accompanied by some difficulties. Diaz-Cintas (2004) states:

The recurring question of whether we are faced with a case of translation or adaptation has led many people to avoid this field of study altogether, as they consider it outside the scope of translation. Many of the translation concepts and theories that have been historically articulated cease to be functional when scholars try and apply them to AVT. This has traditionally led scholars to focus on the analysis of less complex empirical phenomena, instead of complicating their academic life with the re-elaboration of existing postulates or the development of new theories capable of accounting for the specificity of AVT (p. 50).

However, it is obvious that there have been studies on AVT and that there will be many more in the upcoming years due to the widespread application of this interdisciplinary field. The willingness to conduct research into this area can be seen as the result of globalization and popularity of multimedia in human society both as a source of knowledge and entertainment.

Today, not only do films provide amusement for the people but also serve as a means of exchanging science and culture between nations, hence absorbing lots of customers and researchers around the world. As a result, film industry has called for different sciences to enhance its products both qualitatively and quantitatively and add to its popularity among the audience. Thus it has created a fertile ground for research and study in every related field, from technical issues to humanities. 'Translation studies' has not been an exception. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, the science of translation has easily got along with the film industry and consequently, audiovisual translation has come into existence with the collaboration of these two fields. Ramael and Neves (2007) believe:

In the 21st century, audiovisual translation(AVT), has grown exponentially and diversified to such an extent that it has exploded what were once considered to be its constraining technical features, its media-specific characteristics, its Eurocentric borders and its classic, interlingual translational and textual features. Indeed, AVT is mingling with multimedia translation and localization, and increasingly determining our access to information and entertainment, which themselves are in a sense, the two sides of one and the same coin (p. 11).

Having provided the films with subtitles in different languages both for understanding them and language learning purposes, translators working as subtitlers, have raised their credence among the audience and opened new windows to their flourishing career. Nevertheless, at times, poor and erroneous subtitles have distorted the understanding of the film plot and have changed the story line altogether. That is because translators involved in subtitling encounter some challenging problems other than those encountered in traditional text translation. AVT is something more than the mere linguistic translation of chunks of words. Since it involves a mixture of both visual and auditory channels and a change from an oral medium to a written one, translation task becomes more demanding. Therefore, from the very beginning of the emergence of subtitling, researchers in the field of translation have delved into this issue to identify such shortcomings and have struggled to find proper solutions to enhance the quality of subtitles. Gambier and Gottlieb (2001) write:

Among the features of an optimum quality in subtitling worth mentioning are spatiotemporal features (fonts, position and the length of the two lines of the screen) and textual features (division into semantic and syntactic coherent units; language register, etc.). Between these sets of features, subtitle punctuation establishes a certain rhythm in reading and makes immediate processing and comprehension of the subtitles easier. The viewer's comfort is the result of the legibility and readability of the subtitles (p. xvii).

Neves (2005) believes that audiovisual text is the result of the interaction of multi-coded messages that come together and they are essential and indispensable parts of a meaningful whole. She adds that "the full text will comprise sub-texts that may be seen as independent in their making but that are interlinked so as to build a perceivable cohesive construct. The inability to receive any such messages may imply the disruption of the communication act implied in the polysemiotic text" (p. 156).

An important point to bear in mind is 'Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing' (SDH). The hearing impaired lack the auditory channel either partially or completely, therefore, subtitles act as an aid for their comprehension and as a result, enjoyment and appreciation of the film. Therefore, great attention must be paid by translators to what and how they translate to satisfy the needs of this community. Neves (2005) puts that the translator must reconstruct verbal messages from the oral to the written mode by changing some parts to make the reading natural for the addressee. She adds that it is true for all types of subtitling, but more important for SDH because a great number of people with hearing impairment do not have good reading skills. Therefore, translators need to pay attention to all the messages that are conveyed through the soundtrack (voice identification and source, sound effects and music) and identify, interpret and re-encode them in a visual manner (p. 157).

Some people may think that SDH should only be done and discussed in intralingual subtitling and the principles of SDH cannot be applied to translation and research involving interlingual subtitling. But that is just a fallacy as Neves (2005) points out, "Until recently, subtitling for the hearing impaired was exclusively seen as being intralingual and/or provided as closed captions or teletext subtitling on television. It has often been placed in opposition to open interlingual subtitles for hearers." She further adds that "after the introduction of multiple tracks with intralingual and/or interlingual subtitling for the hearing impaired on DVDs [...], previously held frontiers are definitely blurred and it no longer makes sense to keep to notions that belong to the past" (p. 22).

In addition, Diaz-Cintas (2003) puts:

Failing to account for this type of [interlingual SDH] would imply a tacit acceptance of the fallacy that the deaf and hard-of-hearing only watch programmes originally produced in their mother tongue, when there is no doubt that they also watch programmes originating in other languages and cultures. This in turn would mean that they are forced to use the same interlingual subtitles as hearing people, when those subtitles are, to all intents and purposes, inappropriate for their needs (p. 200).

According to the definition of translation by Nida and Taber (1969) "translating consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style" (p. 12). Also, in 'Translation: Applications and Research', Brislin (1976) defines translation as, "The general term referring to the transfer of thoughts and ideas from one language (source) to another (target), whether the languages are in written or oral form; whether the languages have established orthographies or do not have such standardization or whether one or both languages is based on signs, as with sign languages of the deaf" (p. 1).

Obviously, as the two definitions suggest, no matter what the language medium is, translators must do their best to reproduce the same message and effect in the target language. This reproduction is not easy since in most translations two languages with different sets of linguistic features and cultural concepts are involved. The task becomes even more grueling, with regard to what was mentioned about the translation of subtitles and its application for people with hearing impairment.

In most films with subtitles in the same language i.e. intralingual subtitling, all speech and sounds, seen or unseen, are transcribed from the original soundtrack; however in interlingual subtitling, most off-camera speech and sounds seem to be mistranslated, underestimated, or totally ignored as they are taken for granted that they will be understood by the viewers easily. No matter what the reason is, this shortcoming in subtitles deteriorates the understanding of the viewers, for instance in a very noisy and crowded place, and especially in the case of the deaf and hard-of-hearing because they have no idea what is taking place in such scenes of the film, hence losing a great deal of the meaning and the message.

Neves (2005) maintains:

In the knowledge that the deaf receiver will have little (or no) access to many of the messages deriving from acoustic codes, the translator, who will need to be a proficient "reader" of intersemiotic text, will re-word both the verbal and non-verbal aural elements and find ways to express them through visual codes, usually written words, although they could also be of a different nature. When subtitling for these specific audiences, it is up to the translator to turn into visual codes both the dialogues that are heard and the sound effects that are only perceived in such a manner that they will be integrated with the whole in as natural a manner as possible (p. 132).

She further explains that one of the most important problems for subtitlers is that sound has a life of its own and it takes the viewer beyond the image by creating worlds outside those on screen which can only be used by the hearers. In her view, translators and scholars of translation are less aware of the transfer that takes place at a semiotic level and they need to develop specific interpretative skills if they intend to perform efficient audiovisual translations (Neves, 2005, p. 233).

With such points in mind, the focus of the present study was the translation of the unseen or off-camera speech and sounds which carry a part of the meaning and message in the totality of the film, and if ignored, lead to misunderstanding or even distortion of the story. In order to shed light on the importance of this issue, this study intended to investigate three randomly selected English films with Persian subtitles. English cases of the unseen and off-camera speech and sounds were extracted and compared with the Persian counterparts in order to enlighten how this subject has been treated by the translators.

According to Gambier and Gottlieb (2001) for two reasons language practices and most of all, those related to language transfer, are gaining more importance these years and increasingly affect the circulation of knowledge, the development of cultural identity, etc. The first reason is globalization which has some pretty direct implications for us all, as modern information and communication technology is changing a large part of our daily lives. The other one is communication itself which is becoming a product in the international marketplace.

Obviously, audiovisual translation is playing a significant role in globalization and dispersion of knowledge and culture around the world. Translators, in turn, are acting as catalyzers and facilitators in this process by creating concise and precise subtitles in different languages. Naturally, whatever research is carried out parallel to this trend is fruitful to globalization and leads to proliferation of knowledge. The present study intends to contribute to a better quality of subtitles and its results are hoped to act as an aid to the hearing people when they are watching films in such a noisy place that it is as if the acoustic channel is lost or the sound is so low that cannot be heard, and to the hearing impaired when watching foreign films so that they can enjoy watching films as do normal people.

Regarding the significance of sound which comes from off-screen sources, Neves (2005) explains that it is very important for translators working on SDH to realize the function of sound in

audiovisual texts because many programs include distinctive sound effects that are essential and fundamental to their dynamics and create emotional atmosphere in the films. She then adds that:

Some programmes have very few sound effects and depend solely on speech (e.g. interviews); others, depend heavily on sound that comes from off-screen sources (e.g. narration in documentaries), or that is overtly present in the form of on-screen singing (e.g. musical shows). Most programmes use music and sound effects in an integrated manner and the translator will need to weigh the importance of sound so that adequate rendering may be achieved (p. 179).

The present study aimed to find the extent to which unseen and off-camera speech and sounds are explicitly translated into Persian subtitles of English films and to find what procedures or guidelines have been used (or should be used) by Persian translators to render and clarify unseen and off-camera speech and sounds in subtitles.

It is hoped that by making the best use of the results of this study, translators and subtitlers would pay more attention to what must and what must not be translated in subtitles, especially those in the unseen and off-camera parts of the films which are taken for granted for normal people in normal circumstances but pose understanding problems for the deaf and hard-of-hearing in any situation.

2. Background to the study

The continually evolving advances in multimedia industry now provide the context for communication across the borders and across the cultures. Countries are using multimedia to scatter their intentions and beliefs parallel to the trend of globalization. Since movies and other audiovisual means are of high interest to people, they play a significant part in this trend. Cultures and societies can now show their visibility to an international public and provide a chance to anyone who has access to audiovisual goods. However, the obstacle of language still exists in this process. A high percent of people throughout the world are just familiar with their mother tongues and cannot catch the meaning of other languages used in audiovisual products. Therefore, a solution had to be found. The best way, obviously was providing the audiovisual products with translations that could be understood by the target audience. All this implied that translators needed to acquire a new set of skills to overcome this obstacle and facilitate the trend of globalization. Cooperating with experts in multimedia, professional translators started remaking audiovisual products so that they could reach beyond their own people and cultures. That is when AVT emerged and vast research was launched to enhance it.

Remael, De Houwer, and Vandekerckhove (2008) define audiovisual translation as follows:

Audiovisual translation (AVT) constitutes a sub-discipline of Translation Studies (TS) that is now in full swing, as witnessed by the numerous very recent publications dealing with this extremely volatile translation form. Having started out as a discipline focusing on the traditional forms of interlingual subtitling and dubbing, studies in AVT now embrace such diverse forms of text production as partial dubbing, consecutive and simultaneous interpretation (for television), off-screen narration, voice over, surtitling for opera and theatre, intralingual and interlingual subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH), and audio description for the blind and visually impaired (AD). Many researchers in the field are treating AVT as a form of 'accessibility', i.e., a form of text production that does not merely overcome linguistic and language-specific cultural boundaries, but also sensorial boundaries, boundaries of a quite different kind (p. 1-2).

They also add that AVT is a translation form with a strong technical component which is very susceptible to influence from technological developments that necessarily influence on how AVT is produced, and hence on its form. In many ways, they argue, AVT acts as a microcosm of

current text production especially mixing spoken, written, visual and aural modes. They state that this type of translation undermines traditional notions such as the linearity of verbal texts and relying on multiple forms of intertextuality (Remael, A. et al. 2008).

According to Karamitroglou F. (2000), audiovisual translation is a term which is referred to what has been also called 'screen translation' or 'film translation'. Among these terms he prefers audiovisual translation because it emphasizes the audio-visual dimensions of the communicative mode. Contrary to communication through books, radio, telephone, or sign language, audio-visual communication implies that both the acoustic channel through air vibrations and the visual channel through light waves are utilized at the same time (Delabatista, 1989, p. 196, as cited in Karamitroglou F. 2000).

Subtitling is a widely used way of domesticating a foreign audiovisual product. What most people normally use to understand a foreign movie is looking at the subtitles and trying to read them as the scenes go by. The Wikipedia website (2011) defines subtitling in this way:

Subtitling is the process of making textual versions of the dialog in films and television programs, usually displayed at the bottom of the screen. They can either be a form of written translation of a dialog in a foreign language or a written rendering of the dialog in the same language, with or without added information to help viewers who are deaf and hard-of-hearing to follow the dialog.

According to Kuhlitz and Littau (2007) the term screen translation may imply that the process of translation takes place between two languages but this is not always the case in subtitling. Generally subtitles are the translation of the original speech into a target language (interlingual subtitling). However, sometimes subtitles are in the same language as the spoken soundtrack of a film (Intralingual subtitling) and are normally associated with television subtitles for the deaf or hard-of-hearing.

Diaz-Cintas (2005) puts that from a linguistic perspective, there are two types of subtitles that have traditionally been identified. The first is interlingual subtitles which involve language transfer. In other words, the dialogs, songs and written inserts that are on the screen as well as other information necessary for the understanding of the original program are translated from the source language to the target with attention to the spatial and temporal limitations.

The other type, he adds, is intralingual subtitles also known as closed captions. In this type there is no change of language and the oral content of the program is converted into written form. While the first type, open subtitles, is an inseparable part of the program and always present on the screen, appearance of the intralingual type including closed subtitles depends on the viewer and is optional. This type is particularly intended to be used by the deaf and hard-of-hearing in order to extend their access to audiovisual programs. These subtitles also contain all paralinguistic information that contribute to the understanding of the situation and atmosphere which the deaf cannot perceive from the soundtrack, for instance the sound of a telephone, laughter, knock on a door, etc (Diaz-Cintas, 2005).

According to the ITC Guidance on Standards for Subtitling (1999) the following are some of the factors which contribute to the distinctive nature of subtitling:

- i) Comprehension and enjoyment of normal text are enhanced for the reader by the ability, if necessary, to re-scan the article. Comprehension of a television programme, however, is typically gained only at the time of viewing.
- ii) Readers normally have only text to absorb. By contrast the user of subtitles must take in simultaneously the action within the television image as well as the information provided by the subtitling.

- iii) The pace of programmes sometimes means that subtitles cannot reasonably be expected to convey the full range of information contained in the television image. However, deaf and hard-of-hearing people naturally expect to receive as much as possible of the information which is available to the general audience (p. 4).

Although audiovisual translation in general, and subtitling in particular have a great impact on the human society in the globalizing era, the amount of research done in these fields are not yet satisfactory. Many researchers try to avoid doing research on subtitling due to some difficulties regarding its multidimensional nature i.e. the message is transferred audio-visually. In this regard, Whitman-Linsen (1992) has emphasized the necessity to “to dispel the disdain of literary intelligentsia, who seem to dismiss film translating and the degree of difficulty involved in it as not worthy of their attention” (p.17). There are also other obstacles lying in front of researchers including limited access to materials, low quality subtitles, the time-consuming and tedious comparison of the subtitles with the soundtrack and etc. which discourage researchers from exploring this domain (Diaz-Cintas, 2004). It is obvious, nevertheless, that there have been some studies related to audiovisual translation, especially subtitling.

Hajmohammadi (2004) studied the theoretical issues relating to the viewership of subtitling. He has begun with some considerations regarding subtitling audiences, then, following Delabastita's model for film semiotics, discussed the cognitive demands on viewers of subtitled material. In this regard, he has compared and contrasted reading of translated literary texts and the viewing of subtitled film. He has also discussed the status of image in the subtitling process. Finally, building on Halliday's notion of situation and the theory of film developed by Balazs, he has suggested a viewer-oriented, image-bound approach to subtitling. This includes a critical review of current approaches, especially as regards emphasis on reading speed and the concept of loss in the reading of subtitles.

In the same year, shift strategies in translation of movie subtitles from English to Persian were identified by Sangargir (2006). He investigated the impact of shifts on providing the watchers of English movies with suitable adapted subtitles in Persian. The results of his research showed that in translating dialogs of English movies into Persian, linguistic shifts are not enough and other kinds of shifts such as semiotic, ideological, interlingual, and intercultural are crucially needed to give the subtitles a natural quality.

In his article 'Film Studies and Translation Studies: Two Disciplines at Stake in Audiovisual Translation', Chaume (2004) states that audiovisual texts are usually built according to the conventions of film language, a complex language that overcomes linguistic communication and has its own rules and conventions. He is trying to distinguish several signifying codes which complement and frame words and linguistic meaning. His paper has focused on the interplay of non-linguistic codes in film language and audiovisual translation. In the first place, he argues that for the analysis of audiovisual texts from a translational perspective at least the theoretical contributions of Translation Studies and those of Film Studies are necessary. Afterwards, he reviews the different models of analysis of audiovisual texts offered from the perspective of Translation Studies. Eventually he has introduced a new paradigm based on Film Studies, and presents the signifying codes that primarily affect translation operations in the transfer. He illustrated these codes with a number of non-linguistic signs and their representation in the text, and discussed the influence of such signs on translation operations.

In her very comprehensive and fruitful thesis, Neves (2005), has carried out a study on 'Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (SDH)' with a special focus on the Portuguese context. On the one hand, this study has accounted for a descriptive analysis of SDH in various European countries with the aim of arriving at the norms that govern present practices and that may be found

in the form of guidelines and / or in actual subtitled products. On the other hand, it has been the result of an Action Research project that wished to contribute towards the improvement of SDH practices in Portugal. These two lines of research were brought together in the proposal of a set of guidelines for the provision of SDH on Portuguese television. The researcher has made use of other fields of knowledge such as Physiology, Deaf Studies, Sociology, Linguistics, Audience Studies and Cinema Studies, among others. Special attention has been paid to a thorough understanding of the social, psycho-cognitive, linguistic and educational issues that characterize the deaf and hard-of-hearing as a specific minority with particular needs in opposition to who belong to the hearing majority. In her thesis she has investigated specific issues regarding SDH some of which include time constraints (synchrony and reading speed), text presentation(font, color, layout), verbal component (from speech to writing, paralinguistic information), non-verbal component(identification, description and location of human voice, sound effects, music).

3. Methodology

3.1. Materials

Three English movies subtitled into Persian were used in the present study along with their transcripts which are available on the internet. First the unseen and off-camera speech and sounds were extracted from the movies. Then their Persian counterparts were identified for comparison based on a modified framework. These films which are briefly explained below were selected through simple random sampling in order to yield maximum authentic results.

- 3.1.1. 'Avatar' is a 2009 American epic-science-fiction film written, directed by James Cameron
- 3.1.2. 'Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs', also known as Ice Age 3, is a 2009 3-D computer animation-adventure film, directed by Carlos Saldanha.
- 3.1.3. 'The Curious Case of Benjamin Button' is a 2008 American fantasy-drama film directed by David Fincher.

3.2. Framework of the Study

Due to the polysemiotic nature of subtitling which makes it to a great extent different from other texts, the strategies which are traditionally used in translation of the written or monosemiotic materials are not totally applicable to research and assessment of audiovisual products. Gottlieb (1992) has proposed 10 subtitling strategies namely, Expansion, Paraphrase, Transfer, Imitation, Transcription, Dislocation, Condensation, Decimation, Deletion, and Resignation. However, they could not either be of much use in the present study since they have not taken into account how one should deal with the issue of the unseen and off-camera speech and sounds in subtitling. A reason may be the fact that this study is partially related to the Deaf Studies and Cinema Studies and the researchers had to look for more specific strategies to cope with the issue under scrutiny, hence seeking help from the above-mentioned areas and AVT scholars (Neves, 2005) who had used those strategies in their studies. Therefore, after conducting more research and getting some enquiries from the scholars of AVT, some relevant and helpful guidelines were obtained to be used in the present study. They are: Guidance on Standards for Subtitling suggested by ITC (Independent Television Commission, 1999), Captioning Key Guidelines and Preferred Techniques suggested by CMP (Captioned Media Program, 2004), and Online Subtitling Editorial Guidelines suggested by BBC (2009).

The guidelines which were used to compare the unseen and off-camera speech and sounds in English movies with their Persian counterparts in the present study were chosen from the ones proposed by CMP (2004) due to the fact that they were more comprehensive and relevant to the matter at hand. The guidelines dealing with the aspects other than those pertinent to the focus of

this study have been excluded, and those utilized for the purpose of this study are presented and numbered below in a modified framework:

3.2.1. For off-camera sound effects

1. Sound effects necessary to the understanding and/or enjoyment of the video should be captioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A description of sound effects, in brackets, should include the source of the sound and a representation of it. b. If the presentation rate permits, also include an imitation or onomatopoeia of the sound
2. The description should be on the first line of the sound effect caption, separate from the onomatopoeia.
3. If description is used for off-screen sound effects, it is not necessary to repeat the source of the sound if it is making the same sound a few captions later.
4. If essential sound effects are used simultaneously with captioned dialogue, they must be placed at the top of the screen.
5. Italics should be used to indicate off-screen sound effects and music.

3.2.2. For off-camera speech

6. If speaker is off-screen, place captions to the far right or left, as close as possible onscreen to the off-screen speaker.
7. If off-screen speakers are speaking simultaneously, appropriate speaker identification must be added.
8. When a speaker cannot be identified by placement and his/her name is known, the speaker's name should be in parentheses. Also, the speaker's name needs to be on a line of its own, separate from the captions.
9. Caption the most commonly used character name for speaker identification, depending on how that character is introduced. Should "Smith" be spoken more often than "Bobby," use (Smith). If "Bobby" is used more often, caption as (Bobby).
10. When a speaker cannot be identified by placement and his/her name is unknown, identify the speaker using the same information a hearing viewer has: female #1, male narrator, etc.
11. Do not identify the speaker by name until the speaker is introduced in the audio or an onscreen graphic.
12. If there is one narrator, identify as (male narrator) or (female narrator) at the beginning of the video. It is not necessary to identify gender for each caption thereafter.
13. Italics should be used to indicate off-screen dialogue and narrator.
14. Do not use the "#" symbol, except for speaker identification such as (female #1).
15. When a person is thinking, dreaming, or the like, list the description in brackets and place italicized captions above the head.
16. Use quotation marks for onscreen readings from a poem, book, play, journal, or letter. However, use quotation marks and italics for off-screen readings or voice-overs.
17. If the speaker is not visible onscreen or visual clues as to emotional state are not shown, indicate the speaker's emotion.

4. Data Analysis and Results

After extracting the focused elements from the English movies, 45 cases were found altogether, comprising 17 instances of off-camera sounds and 28 cases of off-camera speech shown in the following table in details:

Table1: Number of the unseen and off-camera speech and sounds in the films

Cases of the Unseen and Off-camera Speech and Sounds in 3 English Movies	Unseen and Off-Camera Sounds	Unseen and Off-Camera Speech
1. Avatar	6 cases	12 cases
2. Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs	4 cases	4 cases
3. The Curious Case of Benjamin Button	7 cases	12 cases

Due to the space restrictions, only the cases found in the first movie 'Avatar' are depicted here and then the results of all three movies will be discussed.

4.1. Cases found in 'Avatar'



1.

If you feel nausea, please use the sacks...

اگه حالت تهوع داشتن از بسته های.....

Explanation: In this case the speaker is off-camera and to the right of the screen and identification of the speaker is necessary because it is not clear who is speaking.

Guidelines Used: None



2.

Me, I'm just another dumb grunt going someplace he's gonna regret.

من فقط یه احمق دیگه ای بودم که از رسیدن به اینجا احساس پشیمونی میکنه

Explanation: The prevailing point of view in this film is first-person narrative. In this example which is right after the previous scene the sentence belongs to the first-person narrator who is also the main actor of the film and considered to be unseen. Therefore identification of the speaker is needed.

Guidelines Used: None



3.

but I never figured I'd be going there.

اما هیچوقت فکر نمی‌کردم به روز به اونجا برم

Explanation: Here again identification of the speaker is necessary because the speaker is off-screen.

Guidelines Used: None



4.

It'd be a fresh start

این میتونه به شروع تازه باشه

Explanation: This sentence is the continuation of the words of a recruiter who is absent in this scene. Therefore, in order to avoid confusion, speaker clarification is needed.

Guidelines Used: None



5.

taking the money, working for the company.

پول می‌گرفتن تا برای شرکت کار کنن

Explanation: Speaker must be identified because none of the characters in the scene are talking in this scene.

Guidelines Used: None



6.

Back on Earth, these guys were Army dogs, Marines,

روی زمین، اینها سربازای ارتش بودن، تفنگدارهای دریایی

Explanation: This scene shows the soldiers and robots getting ready for war and the sound of unseen helicopters hovering can be heard giving more effect and sense to the situation, but no renderings have been provided to create this atmosphere. In addition speaker identification is called for because the narrator is speaking again.

Guidelines Used: None



7.

I love this putter.

من از گلف خوشم میاد

Explanation: Grace Augustine who is the head of the project is on the way to the lab and this sentence whose speaker needs to be identified, is heard from inside the lab. Otherwise it results in confusion.

Guidelines Used: None



8.

Explanation: Jake, the lead actor of the film is getting ready to go to another world by means of a machine which is making some noise that shows the operation is about to start, but no Persian renderings are presented for this sound effect.

Guidelines Used: None



9.

Explanation: After entering the Avatar's body for the first time, Jake is shocked and comes to while breathing heavily. This has no Persian renderings in the subtitle which must be provided.

Guidelines Used: None



10.

See you at dinner, kiddies.

موقع شام میبینمت بچه

Explanation: Grace, in another Avatar's body, is in charge of the dormitory for the Avatars and is commanding others what to do. If not clarified, the speaker of this sentence is not obvious since she is off-camera.

Guidelines Used: None



11.

Explanation: This place is a garage in which robots and other war equipments are being repaired and there is a lot of noise and sound from welding and turning. Therefore Persian renderings seem to be essential to construct the original atmosphere of this place which is absent in this scene due to lack of proper subtitles.

Guidelines Used: None



12.

Norm, you've contaminated the sample with your saliva.

نورم، تو نمونه ها رو با آب دهانت آلوده میکنی

Explanation: This sentence comes from Grace who is collecting samples from the roots of the trees with Norm, but in the Persian subtitle it is not clear who the speaker is.

Guidelines Used: None



13.

Explanation: Hearing the scream of some wild animal in the jungle, Jake is scared and turns around to see where it comes from. Lack of suitable renderings for this sound makes the context meaningless.

Guidelines Used: None



14.

Norm, go under.

نورم، برو پایین



15.

Grace didn't miss a thing.

گریس حواسش بود

Explanation: Jake is present in these scenes with his back to the camera but actually Grace Augustine is talking in the first one. In the latter, however, Jake is talking. Speakers cannot be identified unless clarification is done; a shortcoming evident in the subtitling of this film.

Guidelines Used: None



16.

What the hell are you doing, Jake?

چه غلطی داری می کنی، جیک؟

Explanation: Jake is thinking to himself in this scene and if proper translation along with identification of the speaker is not provided it leads to misunderstanding.

Guidelines Used: None



17.

Explanation: Jake is flying a dragon and everybody is screaming and escaping. The sound effects in this scene show the viewers that these people are very afraid of this creature. Lack of a suitable subtitle distorts this effect.

Guidelines Used: None

4.2. Results

Table 2: Guidelines used in Persian subtitles of English unseen and off-camera speech

English speech	Persian subtitles	Guidelines Used
If you feel nausea, please use the sacks...	اگه حالت تهوع داشتین از بسته های.....	None
Me, I'm just another dumb grunt going someplace he's gonna regret.	من فقط یه احمق دیکه ای بودم که از رسیدن به اینجا احساس پشیمونی میکنه	None
but I never figured I'd be going there.	اما هیچوقت فکر نمیکردم به روز به اونجا برم	None
It'd be a fresh start	این میتونه یه شروع تازه باشه	None
taking the money, working for the company.	پول میگرفتن تا برای شرکت کار کنن	None
Back on Earth, these guys were Army dogs, Marines,	روی زمین، اینها سربازای ارتش بودن، تفنگدار های دریایی	None

I love this putter.	من از گلف خوشم میاد	None
See you at dinner, kiddies.	موقع شام میبینمت بچه	None
Norm, you've contaminated the sample with your saliva.	نورم، تو نمونه ها رو با آب دهانت آلوده میکنی	None
Norm, go under.	نورم، برو پایین	None
Grace didn't miss a thing.	گریس حواسش بود	None
What the hell are you doing, Jake?	چه غلطی داری می کنی، جیک؟	None

Table 3: Guidelines used in Persian subtitles of English unseen and off-camera sounds

English sounds	Persian subtitles	Guidelines used
Helicopters flying	Blank	None
Machine operating	Blank	None
Jake breathing heavily	Blank	None
Equipments being repaired	Blank	None
Wild animal screams	Blank	None
People screaming fearfully	Blank	None

5. Conclusion

As it is seen in the explanations and the results of the analysis in tables 2 and 3, subtitles have failed to provide the English unseen and off-camera speech and sounds with adequate Persian counterparts. In the other two movies, i.e. 'Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs', and 'The Curious Case of Benjamin Button' the same result was found and none of the focused cases were properly rendered into Persian subtitles. Therefore, the main aim of good subtitling which is provision of comprehension and enjoyment for the viewers has not been achieved. Accordingly, having applied the relevant guidelines to each specific case, the researchers presented the suggested alternatives for the ignored and mistranslated elements for the first film which are listed below. These will be of great benefit to future subtitlers in rendering English films into Persian for the better understanding of the given viewers.

Table 4: Suggested Subtitles Using the Relevant Guidelines for Each Case

Picture No.	Relevant Guidelines	Suggested Subtitles
1	6, 8, 10, 11, 13 and 14	(#1 مذکر) اگه حالت تهوع داشتن از بسته های.....(سمت راست تصویر)
2	8, 10, 11, 12, and 13	(راوی مذکر) من فقط به احمق دیگه ای بودم که از رسیدن به اینجا احساس پشیمونی میکنه
3	8, 10, 11, 12, and 13	(راوی) اما هیچوقت فکر نمیکردم به روز به اونجا برم
4	8, 10, 11, and 13	(مسئول عضوگیری) این میتونه به شروع تازه باشه
5	8, 10, 11, 12 and 13	(راوی) پول میگرفتن تا برای شرکت کار کنن
6	1(a), 4,5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13	(بالای تصویر) [هلیکوپتر هادر حال پرواز] (راوی) روی زمین، اینها سربازای ارتش بودن، تفنگدارهای دریایی
7	8, 10, 11, 13, and 14	(#1 مذکر) من از گلف خوشم میاد

8	1(a) and 5	[دستگاه در حال روشن شدن]
9	1(a) and 5	[جیک در حال تنفس عمیق]
10	8, 9, and 13	(گریس) موقع شام میبینمت بچه
11	1(a) and 5	[تجزیات جنگی در حال تعمیر شدن]
12	8, 9, and 13	(گریس) نورم، تو نمونه ها رو با آب دهانت آلوده میکنی
13	1(a) and 5	[حیوانی وحشی جیغ میکشند]
14	8, 9, 12 and 13	(گریس) نورم، برو پایین
15	8, 9, 12 and 13	(راوی) گریس حواسش بود
16	8, 9, 13 and 14	[درحال فکر کردن]- [بالای سر قرار گیرد] چه غلطی داری می کنی، جیک
17	1(a) and 5	[مردم در حال جیغ کشیدن و فرار کردن]

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