Translation of Graphic Codes: The Case Study of Two Official Persian Dubbed Versions

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Received: 02.04.2017 **Accepted: 18.07.2017**

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

One of the four channels of expression of meaning in audiovisual translation (AVT), with which translators have to deal, is verbal information in written forms on the screen. Although it has also been referred to in terms such as "integrated subtitles" (Fox, 2016) and "TELOP" (O'Hagan & Sasamoto, 2016), Chaume (2004a) prefers to use the term "graphic code" borrowing from the school of Film Semiotics for such verbal visual information on the screen. This school claims that cinema is composed of several meaning codes, thus Chaume (2004a, 2012) has worked on a taxonomy of film codes which apply to translation operations. Despite the considerable significance and rising number of graphic codes in an accurate understanding of the course of a dubbed movie, it has received relatively little attention in the literature on AVT. Hence, this study aims at examining and comparing the rendition of graphic codes in two of the methods, namely voice-off and insertion in two Persian versions of the new Sherlock Holmes TV series dubbed by an official Iranian TV network and a BBC Persian TV network. The study also attempts to provide answers to the research questions adopted from Chaume (2012).

The audiovisual text is a complex medium and the audiovisual translator ought to handle verbal and non-verbal information, meanings openly expressed and meanings that are inferred by subtler forms of communication such as a rise in intonation or a gesture accompanying the utterance (Pettit, 2004). Therefore, the screen products are made up of complex visual codes comprising elements such as costumes, gesture, body movements, and facial expressions, or as Chiaro (2009, p. 142) names them "polysemiotic" elements. In general, graphic codes may be classified into two categories: static graphic codes – written information in newspapers and on computers which cannot be separated from the screen – and moving graphic codes – pop-up written information on the screen (O'Hagan, 2010) which can be possibly separated from the screen. Most studies have only focused on graphic codes as one of the communication channels in AVT (e.g., Chiaro 2009; Delabastita 1989). Other

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studies have also investigated graphic codes from a non-translational and filmmaking perspective (Pérez-González 2013; Sasamoto 2014); a few others have also examined them in terms of translational functions (Khoshsaligheh & Fazeli Haghpanah, 2016; O'Sullivan, 2013). Additionally, some research has also studied graphic codes using eye tracking (Fox, 2016; O'Hagan & Sasamoto, 2016). They have also been the focus of some experimental research as well (Mehdizadkhani & Khoshsaligheh, 2018 in-press).

2. Methodology

This qualitative research is a case study which aims to investigate and compare two translation techniques, namely voice-off and insertion in the rendition of graphic codes in two official Persian dubbed versions of the case of *Sherlock* (Gattis, Moffat, & Vertue, 2010), a British TV series. The main reason for the choice of this case as the subject of the study was the availability of two professionally produced Persian dubbed versions, and in each version the graphic codes are rendered in the two different methods. The second reason was "the prominent role that digital technologies play in the actual adaptation of the series" (Pérez-González, 2013, p. 14) shown by moving graphic codes. Moreover, McMillan (2014) refers to *Sherlock* as the "best use" of graphic codes in the TV series. The researchers also classified moving graphic codes into three categories: SMS language, Sherlock's web searches, and his unverbalized inner thoughts.

3. Discussion

It was revealed that BBC Persian TV network rendered all of the graphic codes using the insertion technique. Voice-off technique, instead, was used by the Iranian TV network, but it left five scenes with graphic codes untranslated. The most common justification in such situations is the case of "code interaction" discussed by Chaume (2012, p. 107). That is, the voice-off method cannot be applied when graphic codes overlap with a close-up shot in which one or more characters are speaking.

The results also indicated that the rendered graphic codes in the insertion technique remained on the screen for a fair amount of time giving the opportunity of rereading (see also Szarkowska, Krejtz, Krejtz, & Duchowski, 2013). Hence, Mehdizadkhani and Khoshsaligheh (2018 in-press) argue that this fair amount of time in the insertion technique could lead to better comprehension of graphic codes in comparison to when the voice-off technique is used. However, if the rendition of graphic codes in voice-off could be considered as normal dubbing (see Koolstra, Peeters, & Spinhof, 2002), the findings revealed that the dubbing team have not dealt with problems such as lip-synchronization (see Chaume, 2004b, 2013). Therefore, in comparison with insertion, this technique allows the dubbing team more freedom in modifying the stress, tone, and accent, and it helps the viewers to better focus on the film content (Mehdizadkhani & Khoshsaligheh, 2018 in-press).

Iran is known as a dominantly dubbing country (Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2016; Naficy, 2011), but still in some cases, dubbers have to deal with (sub-)titles,

intertitles, and written texts on the screen. Despite numerous instances and relying on the significance of graphic codes for the complete comprehension of *Sherlock* series (Pérez-González, 2013; McMillan, 2014), the findings seem to recommend that when dubbing translators encounter "code interaction" (Chaume, 2012, p. 107), they may use the insertion technique in rendition of graphic codes.

4. Conclusions

It was beyond the scope of this study to examine the static graphic codes. On the other hand, to the researchers' best knowledge, no previous study has investigated the translation of these codes in AVT of Iranian context. Therefore, a further study is recommended to explore and compare strategies used in translation of static graphic codes in different modes of AVT, such as in subtitling based on the frameworks introduced by Gottlieb (1992), Bogucki (2004) or Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014). Moreover, this study did not address the translation quality of translated graphic codes. Although the two versions are professionally dubbed into Persian, the translation approach toward factors such as censorship and cultural references are very likely to be different. A further study on these issues with further focus on graphic codes is therefore suggested. Having divided the moving graphic codes into the three categories, the research questions that could be asked in audio description research area include how audio describers render those moving graphic codes and if the methods of translation of different types of graphic codes are similar.

Key Words: Audiovisual translation, Graphic codes, Voice-off, Insertion, Code interaction.

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