In the Name of God

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Aim and Scope

The aim of this journal is to provide a platform for scholars, researchers, and practitioners to explore and exchange cutting-edge knowledge, insights, and innovations in the dynamic fields of translation and interpreting. The journal fosters a comprehensive understanding of translation and interpreting, covering a broad range of topics, including but not limited to translation theory, translation practice, methodology, intercultural communication, translation technologies, and professional ethics. Contributions are welcomed that delve into the challenges, trends, and advancements in translation and interpreting, facilitating interdisciplinary discussions and promoting excellence in the field. By encouraging rigorous research, critical analysis, and practical implications, the journal serves as a catalyst for advancing scholarly discourse and professional development within the realm of translation and interpreting.

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Translation of Iranian Socio-cultural Image in Fansubbed Movies

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the representation of the Iranian Self in Persian movies through English fansubtitles, exploring how the subtitling process shapes the socio-cultural image presented to non-Iranian audiences. To this end, eleven award-winning Persian films produced by prominent Iranian filmmakers Asghar Farhadi, Majid Majidi, and Abbas Kiarostami and their English subtitles were analyzed using an integrated framework specifically developed for this research. Image-representative elements in the films were identified according to the framework, and the translation strategies employed in the English subtitles for rendering these image-representative elements were examined. The effects of these strategies on the representation of the image were then categorized into five observed outcomes: intensification of the image, weakening of the image, positive recasting of the image, preservation of the image, and omission of the image. The findings indicate that universally recognized elements were generally preserved in fansubs, while elements associated with Iranian religious or legal contexts were more frequently omitted or weakened, potentially diminishing the representation of these culturally distinct aspects for non-Iranian audience. This study highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and accuracy in audiovisual translation, offering valuable insights for fostering cross-cultural understanding and enhancing the portrayal of cultural identity in translated media.

Keywords: Self, Other, image, representation, fansubbing

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Introduction

The concept of Self vs. Other has been widely examined across various fields, with Otherness defined as a sense of difference. As Cole (1995, p. 35) notes, "Self is in fact produced by difference and by contrast, a search for an isolated and original Self is doomed to failure". The way Otherness is perceived by audiences varies depending on the context in which it is presented. Richardson (2010, p. 13) explains that "the 'Other' may be racially or culturally defined, determining the difference between particular groups or nations or between broader entities."

In recent decades, scholars in Translation Studies have broadened their focus to include cultural and social issues, such as the representation and image-making of the source culture through translation, a process shaped by translators and other agents involved (Milton & Bandia, 2009). In audiovisual translation, these representations are especially impactful. For many viewers who lack direct exposure to the Other, translated media forms their primary understanding of foreign cultures, often via stereotypical portrayals (Berg, 2002; Schweinitz, 2011). In movies, for instance, audiences encounter Otherness within a broader sense of identity and diversity, where "complex intercultural discourses and representations, not only of identity and diversity, but also of inclusion and exclusion" play a role (Bosinelli et al., 2005, p. 405). Audiovisual content is thus a potent means of shaping perceptions of the Other (Kuran-Burçoğlu, 2000) and through translation, the sense of Otherness depicted in audiovisual products can be intensified or mitigated.

The study of how nations and cultures are represented in translations is known as imagology, defined as the analysis of "national and cultural stereotypes from a translational and comparative point of view" (Doorslaer, 2019, p. 57). Imagology seeks to understand how such representations shape translation practices, sometimes amplifying the role of cultural stereotypes (Kuran-Burçoğlu, 2000, p. 144). Imagological analysis can apply to both textual and audiovisual translations, exploring the representation of cultures in various media.

Several studies have applied imagology to Translation Studies. Seifert (2005), for example, examined images of Canada in German youth literature, while Frank (2007) analyzed how Austrian culture was depicted in children's books. Both studies found that translation often simplified or stereotyped these images, prioritizing clichés over cultural nuances. Kuran-Burçoğlu (2000) explored the impact of the Other's image on different stages of the translation process. According to Kuran-Burçoğlu (2000, p. 145), this influence extends across "three stages of the translation phenomenon": the pre-translation stage, the actual translation process, and the reception of the translated text. While the image of the Other affects readers in the third stage, it impacts translators in the first two stages by shaping text selection and influencing translation choices, such as omissions, additions, or lexical adjustments based on the Other's image in the translator's mind.

As imagology considers the "genesis of the Other" within socio-cultural constraints (Kuran-Burçoğlu, 2000, p. 144), cultural differences are crucial to image studies. Although there has been limited research in Iran linking image studies with audiovisual translation, several Iranian studies have explored cultural differences in translation. For instance, Khoshsaligheh and Ameri (2014) examined strategies Iranian audiovisual translators used to handle taboo words when translating English into Persian. They found that translators often softened such language to align with Iranian cultural standards (Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2014, pp. 42-43). Similarly, Pakar and Khoshsaligheh (2020) analyzed cultural and ideological aspects in the Persian dubbing of *House of Cards*, noting that political, social, and religious considerations led to extensive censorship to meet audience expectations.

With a focus on the representation of the Other, Nemati Lafmejani and Parham (2016) developed a model to identify elements that convey the image of the Other in audiovisual media. Mollanazar and Nemati Lafmejani (2017) examined the portrayal of the Other in American animations dubbed into Persian, finding that translators often downplayed references to the Other.

While previous studies have addressed how Persian translations of foreign media represent the Other, there is a lack of research on how Persian films translated into English portray the Self for an international audience. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how Iranian fansubbers represent the Self in English subtitles of Persian prize-winning films and the ways these translations may alter or reshape this image for non-Iranian viewers. Specifically, the study addresses the following questions: 1) How do Iranian volunteer translators (fansubbers) strive to present the Self (Iranian society and culture) to the Other (English-speaking international audience)? and 2) What effects do image-representative elements have on the portrayal of the Self?

Methodology

The Corpus

The corpus for this study consists of eleven Persian drama films, totaling 994 minutes, directed by prominent Iranian filmmakers Asghar Farhadi, Majid Majidi, and Abbas Kiarostami. These films are paired with their corresponding English fan-made subtitles.

The selected films, each released internationally, have played a significant role in presenting aspects of Iranian society to audiences outside of Iran. Farhadi, Majidi, and Kiarostami are widely acclaimed in the international film community, celebrated for their compelling storytelling and cultural insight. Their work has received recognition at major film festivals, enhancing the visibility and influence of Iranian cinema worldwide. This acclaim gives their films added impact in shaping how international viewers perceive Iranian culture, values, and social dynamics. The corpus includes:

- *Dancing in Dust* (*Raqs dar Ghobar*), 2003, directed by Asghar Farhadi
- *The Beautiful City* (*Shahr-e Ziba*), 2004, directed by Asghar Farhadi
- *Fireworks Wednesday* (*Chaharshanbe Souri*), 2006, directed by Asghar Farhadi
- *About Elly* (*Darbare-ye Elly*), 2009, directed by Asghar Farhadi
- *A Separation* (*Jodai-e Nader az Simin*), 2011, directed by Asghar Farhadi
- *Taste of Cherry* (*Ta'am-e Gilas*), 1997, directed by Abbas Kiarostami
- *Children of Heaven* (*Bache-ha-ye Aseman*), 1997, directed by Majid Majidi
- *The Color of Paradise* (*Rang-e Khoda*), 1999, directed by Majid Majidi
- *Rain* (*Baran*), 2001, directed by Majid Majidi
- *The Willow Tree* (*Bid-e Majnoun*), 2005, directed by Majid Majidi
- *The Song of Sparrows* (*Avaz-e Gonjeshk-ha*), 2008, directed by Majid Majidi

These films were chosen because they depict the intricacies of everyday life in Iran, making them relevant for analyzing how Iranian self-image is presented to international viewers. The English subtitles for these films were sourced from Subscene.com (www.subscene.com), a widely-used platform in Iran. Subscene.com is commonly used by both fansubbers and viewers and is even utilized by some local video-on-demand services, providing a central hub for sharing subtitles across multiple languages, including Persian.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was guided by an integrated model that combines multiple theoretical frameworks to examine how image-representative elements in Iranian cinema are conveyed through Persian-language films and their English subtitles.

To identify these image-representative elements, Weber's (1968) model of society which consists of political, cultural, and economic dimensions was used as the primary framework. Since the cultural dimension is essential for understanding the societal values and norms represented in the films, only this dimesnion was included in this study, while the political and economic dimensions were excluded.

To operationalize the cultural dimension, Anderson and Taylor's (2007) model of culture was utilized, which identifies five core components of culture: morals, beliefs, values, folkways, and language. All five components were analyzed in this study. The language component was further operationalized based on Wardhaugh's (2006) framework, which highlights taboos and euphemisms as two main aspects of language crucial for conveying cultural significance. Additionally, Qanbar's (2011) classification was employed to identify specific categories of taboos within the films' dialogues. The integrated model is presented in Figure 1.

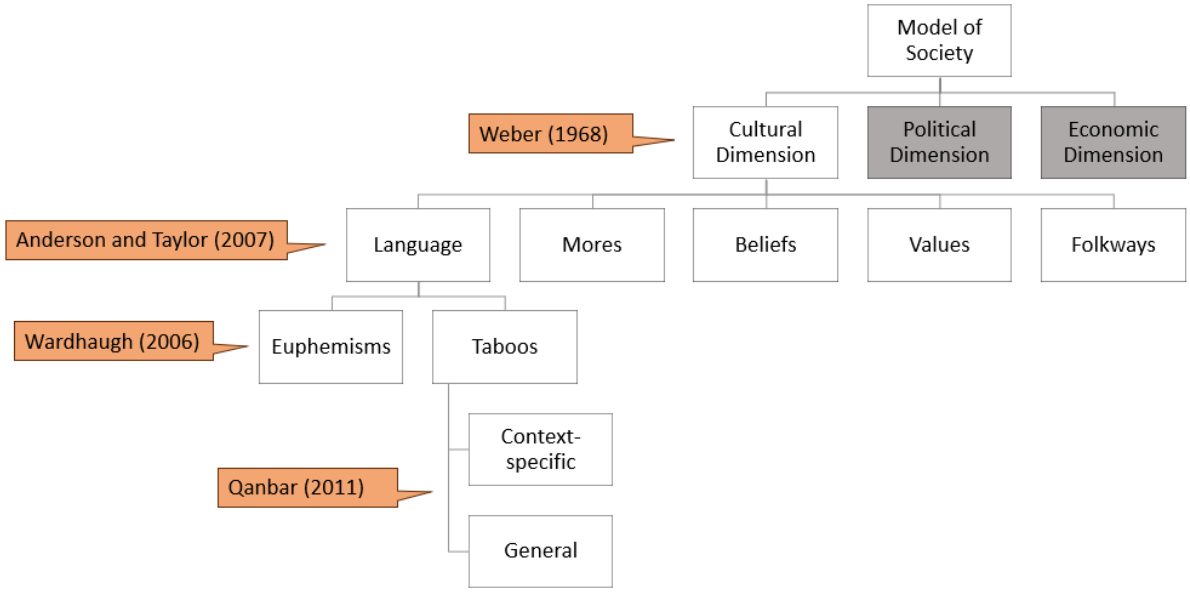

Figure 1. Integrated Model of Society for the Identification of Image-representative Elements

In the integrated model of analysis, "**folkways**" are defined as "the general standards of behavior adhered to by a group of people" (Anderson & Taylor, 2007, p. 62). This category includes ordinary customs observed by different cultural groups, such as ways of greeting, home decoration, or food preparation.

"**Mores**" refer to "norms that are widely observed and have great moral significance". Mores usually address issues of right and wrong, good and bad, and are often enforced through formal sanctions such as laws or social rejection (Anderson & Taylor, 2004, p. 57). Examples include formal laws, religious doctrines, prohibitions against theft, respect for authority, honesty, patriotism, and respect for the elderly.

"**Beliefs**" are shared knowledge collectively held by people in a given culture. Beliefs provide "a meaning system around which a culture is organized" (Anderson & Taylor, 2007, p. 63) and may stem

from religion, myth, folklore, or science. The American folklore belief in the legend of Bigfoot serves as an example.

"**Values**" are defined as "abstract standards in a society or group that define the ideal principles of what is desirable and morally correct" (Anderson & Taylor, 2007, p. 63). While abstract, values provide a framework for behavior, with examples including ideals like freedom and equity. Societal norms often reflect these underlying values.

The "**language**" component in the integrated model is explored based on Wardhaugh's (2006) theoretical framework which sees taboos and euphemisms as windows into culture. "**Taboo**" is defined as "the prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior believed to be harmful to its members in that it would cause them anxiety, embarrassment, or shame" (Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 239). Taboos can be either context-specific or general (Qanbar 2011).

"**Context-specific taboos**" are words that are neutral in their general meanings but become taboo in certain contexts. For example, while the Persian word *sag* (meaning "dog") is neutral when referring to the animal, it becomes a taboo word when used to address a person. Similarly, terms related to physical or social defects or characteristics are not inherently taboo but can become so when used derogatorily, as with *kachal* (meaning "bald").

On the other hand, "**general taboos**" are words that are either absolutely forbidden or can only be used with mitigating expressions to reduce their illocutionary force (Qanbar, 2011, p. 92).

The films in the corpus were reviewed to identify image-representative elements in the Persian dialogue that align with the components of the integrated model. Then, the corresponding English subtitles for these elements were examined to observe how they were treated in translation.

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis of the selected films was guided by the aim of examining how elements representing the image of the Self (Iranian society and its people) are translated for the Other (non-Iranian audiences) through English subtitles. After identifying the image-representative elements in the Persian dialogue based on the categories outlined in Figure 1, the corresponding English subtitles were analyzed to observe how these elements were translated.

The first step was to categorize the translation strategies used for each identified image-representative element, drawing on Baker's (1992, pp. 25-29) typology of translation strategies. This typology includes eight strategies: deletion, addition, attenuation, neutralization, substitution, generalization, paraphrase, and loan word. By identifying which strategy was employed for each instance, we could assess how the image-representative elements were handled in English subtitles.

Non-verbal elements were not taken into consideration during this analysis, as the focus was solely on the verbal components of the films.

Following the analysis of translation strategies used for each image-representative element, it became evident that the impact of these strategies on the representation of the Self could be classified into five categories:

- *Intensification of the Image*: The translation made the image-representative element stronger or more intense compared to the original, emphasizing that aspect of Iranian society more strongly.
- *Weakening of the Image*: The translation rendered the image-representative element less intense or softened compared to the original, diminishing the emphasis on that aspect of Iranian society.

- *Positive Recasting of the Image*: The translation made the image-representative element more positive or refined, presenting the Self in a more favorable light compared to the original.
- *No Change to the Image*: The image-representative element was translated without any changes, preserving the original representation of the Self.
- *Omission of the Image*: The image-representative element was omitted entirely, removing the reference to the Self in the translation.

This classification allowed us to determine whether the translation of image-representative elements in the films preserved, omitted, weakened, intensified, or even enhanced the portrayal of Iranian society and values when presented to an international audience.

Results

The data analysis showed that the elements in the films representing the image of the Self were handled in translation according to one of five categories: Intensification of the Image, Weakening of the Image, Positive Recasting of the Image, No Change to the Image, and Omission of the Image. A few examples for each category are provided below.

The first example is a scene from *Fireworks Wednesday* (2006), directed by Asghar Farhadi, at the timestamp 12:48. In this scene, Morteza, the husband, receives a call from his office. His wife, Mozhdeh, who suspects he is having an affair with their neighbor, asks him to stay and talk (see Figure 2). In a hurry, Morteza responds rudely, saying, "منم می‌گم تو چرا زر می‌زنی وقتی یارو اونجا زنگ می‌زنه التماس می‌کنه می‌گه فرس ماژره، بعد من باید وایسم به شر و ورای تو گوش کنم؟" which literally translates to "I'm asking you why you're babbling when the guy is calling over there, begging, saying it's an emergency, and I have to stay here and listen to your nonsense?" This sentence contains taboo words, classified as a 'language' element in the study's integrated model of analysis. In the corresponding English subtitle, however, the line reads: "The guy begged me to come and help him. It is urgent, and you want me to stay?" This translation softens the tone by omitting the taboo words "زر می‌زنی" (equivalent to "why are you babbling?"), "یارو" (a casual or disrespectful way to refer to someone), and "شر و ور" ("nonsense" or "bullshit"). The absence of these impolite terms in the English subtitle presents the characters in a more positive light, improving the image of the Self as perceived by the Other (i.e., the non-Iranian audience). Thus, this instance falls under Positive Recasting of the Image.

Figure 2. *Fireworks Wednesday* – Positive Recasting of the Image

Another instance of Positive Recasting of the Image is found in *About Elly* (2009). In a scene at timestamp 23:03 (see Figure 3), Ahmad's friend urges him to eat more, joking that he will not find such gourmet food in Germany. The original line reads, " بزن احمد جون که از این چیزا تو آلمان گیرت نمیاد کوفت کنیا," which literally translates to, "Eat up, dear Ahmad, because you won't get stuff like this in Germany to choke down." This phrase contains a taboo expression (کوفت کنیا) classified under the 'language' element in the study's model of analysis. However, in translation, the line is softened to "eat up", omitting the crass tone. This absence of offensive language in the English subtitle portrays the characters more positively, thus enhancing the image of the Self for the Other.

Figure 3. *About Elly* – Positive Recasting of the Image

The third example is a scene from *A Separation* (2011), directed by Asghar Farhadi, at the timestamp of 1:01:30. Nader, the film's male protagonist, faces an accusation that he caused Razieh, his father's caregiver, to miscarry her baby after he forcibly removed her from his apartment, causing her to fall down the stairs. During a court hearing, the judge informs Nader that his alleged crime requires the payment of forty million tomans as *Diya* (see Figure 4). In Persian, the line reads: "چهل میلیون دیه است" which literally translates to "The Diya is forty million tomans."

Under Iranian-Islamic law, Nader's act is treated as attempted murder, obliging the accused to pay *Diya* as a form of restitution. *Diya* is a customary payment made to a victim or their next of kin as financial compensation for bodily harm or death, grounded in Islamic law principles that aim to achieve justice through reparative payment.

According to this study's analytical framework, this scene includes an instance of "mores (legal rules)". Based on Baker's translation strategies, the Persian term *Diya* was translated into English as "blood money", employing the strategy of paraphrase, which rephrases a source concept in a different form in the target text. This translation intensifies the image of the Self in the English subtitle by more explicitly conveying the meaning and legal-cultural weight of *Diya*.

Figure 4. *A Separation* – Intensification of the Image

The fourth example comes from another scene in *About Elly* (2009), capturing a tense moment at timestamp 1:25:57 (see Figures 5 and 6). Elly's friends are beginning to lose hope of finding her after she goes missing, so they contact a man they believe to be her brother. However, Sepideh, Elly's close friend, reveals that he is not her brother but her fiancé. When the truth is revealed, the following exchange occurs:

- این اصلا برادرش نیست نامزدشه.

- مگه نامزد داره؟

- یا علی!

In the English subtitle, the dialogue is translated as:

- He is not her brother at all. He is her fiancé.

- She has a fiancé?

- Damn!

In the final line, Peyman cries out in shock and disbelief, "Ya Ali!" In this context, "Ya Ali" is an exclamation invoking Imam Ali, a figure highly revered by Shia Muslims, and serves to express both shock and a sense of religious gravity. The translation renders this line as "damn!" which conveys the shock but omits the religious reference and cultural depth embedded in the original expression. This instance, categorized as "beliefs" in the study's integrated model, was translated using the strategy of substitution. The result is a Weakening of the Image, as the religious significance of the original expression is lost in translation.

Figure 5. *About Elly* – Weakening of the Image, Part 1

Figure 6. *About Elly* – Weakening of the Image, Part 2

Another similar instance occurs in *A Separation* (timestamp 17:08), where Razieh, the caregiver, notices that the elderly man has urinated in his pants (see Figure 7). She warns her daughter to leave the area and to put on slippers, explaining that the place is "najes" because of the urine. The Persian dialogue reads "برو تو، درم ببند. یه دمپایی هم بپوش. می‌بینی که اینجاها نجسه!", which literally means, "Go inside, close the door, and put on some slippers. Can't you see the area is impure!" In the English subtitle, this line is rendered as, "Go get your shoes. You can't see the floor is wet!". "Najes" is a religious term indicating ritual impurity and is categorized as "mores (religious rules)" in the study's model of analysis. Here, it is translated using a neutralization strategy as "wet," which removes the religious undertone of the original term. This omission of the religious reference results in a Weakening of the Image.

Figure 7. *A Separation* – Weakening of the Image

In the following example, the image-representative element is conveyed accurately in English without any change. The scene in Figure 8 is from *The Beautiful City* (2004), which takes place in a prison where there is a discussion as to why a teenage inmate – who committed murder at age 16 – was upset when his fellow inmates arranged an 18th birthday party for him. Under the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the death penalty cannot be imposed on offenders under 18. Since age 16, he has been held in a juvenile detention center, but now, upon turning 18, he is legally eligible for execution.

The image-representative element here is the reference to execution, which falls under the category of "mores (legal rules)" based on the study's analysis model. The Persian dialogue reads: "امروز هجده سالش تموم میشه. یعنی وقت اعدامشه", which is translated as, "He's turning eighteen today. Meaning it's time for his execution." This scene, therefore, exemplifies "No Change to the Image."

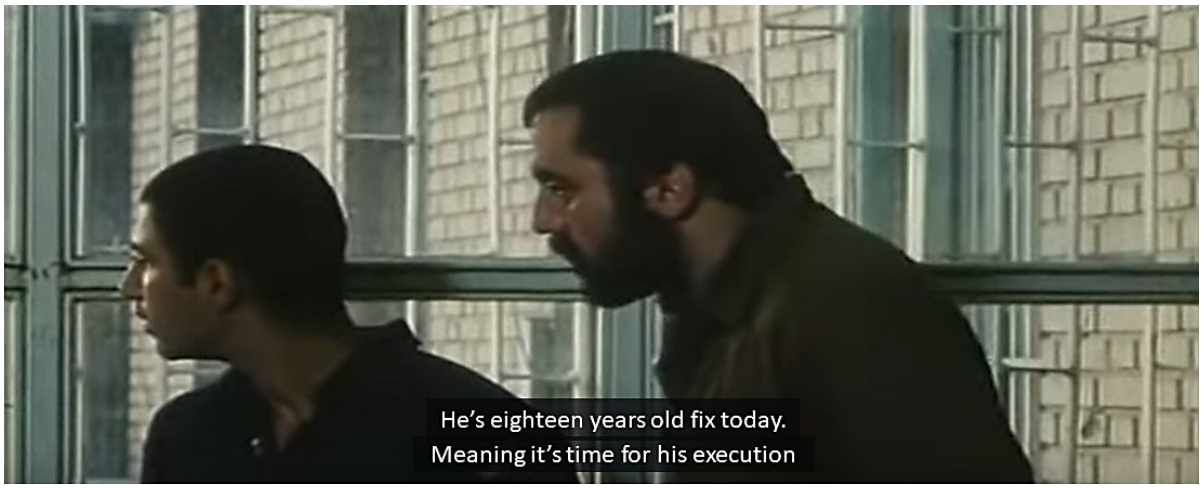

Figure 8. *The Beautiful City* – No Change to the Image

The final instance is from *Fireworks Wednesday* (50:48), where students stand in the schoolyard reciting the traditional Iranian New Year prayer, "یا مقلب القلوب و الابصار" (Figure 9). This prayer, in which

people ask God to improve their circumstances for the best, is an integral part of Iranian culture. According to the study's model of analysis, it falls under the category of "beliefs" and is translated using the deletion strategy. This omission results in a case of "Omission of the Image."

Figure 9. *Fireworks Wednesday* – Omission of the Image

Examination of the corpus led to the identification of 127 instance of image-representative elements in Persian movies, belonging to one of the five major categories of language, folkways, mores, beliefs and values. These elements were marked and their corresponding English subtitles were analyzed to assess how these elements were translated and what effect the translation had on the image of Self (Iranian society and culture) presented to Other (non-Iranian audience). Table 1 below presents the results of analysis, illustrating the impact of audiovisual translation on the representation of each category of image-representative elements.

Table 1. Effect of Translation on Image Representation

Image-representative Elements	Intensification of Image		Weakening of Image		Positive Recasting of Image		No Change to Image		Omission of Image	
Language	0		0		22		4		0	
Folkways	0		3		0		1		0	
Mores	7		7		0		22		22	
Beliefs	2		4		0		15		6	
Values	0		3		0		8		1	
Total	9	**7%**	17	**13%**	22	**17%**	50	**40%**	29	**23%**

As Table 1 indicates, in 40% of the cases, the image of Self in the Persian movies has remained intact after translation into English subtitles. However, 23% of image-representative elements were omitted, resulting in the loss of certain nuances of Iranian society and culture (the Self). Additionally, in 13% of cases, the image was weakened due to the translation strategies employed by fansubbers. Together, omissions and weakening account for 36% of the total data, indicating that in these

instances, the Other is provided with a more distant and diminished access to the cultural aspects and everyday life of the Self.

Conversely, 17% of the cases feature a positive recasting of the image, which enhances the portrayal of Iranian society, presenting a more favorable or refined perspective. Finally, in a smaller portion of cases (7%), the image is intensified, with certain cultural or societal elements being emphasized more strongly than in the original. This could influence the audience's perception by drawing attention to specific traits or values of Iranian culture.

Table 1 further illustrates that the image of the Self is predominantly manipulated in terms of mores, which largely include religious and legal elements. The high frequency of "Omission of the Image" within the mores category may reflect an attempt to bridge the cultural gap between the Self and the Other, potentially enhancing accessibility for the target audience by omitting religious elements. This aligns with Kuran-Burcoglu's (2000) observation that, in intercultural contexts, individuals may downplay certain beliefs to foster acceptance.

In the beliefs category, of the 27 cases analyzed, 15 remained unchanged while 12 were altered. Among these, ten instances involved omission or weakening by fansubbers, supporting Venuti's (1995) assertion that dissimilarities are sometimes minimized to meet the expectations and belief systems of the intended audience.

For values, out of the total cases, eight were translated without modification, while four were either weakened or omitted. The preserved instances mostly reflect values that resonate universally across cultures, suggesting that fansubbers may have sought to underscore common ground between the Self and Other by retaining or emphasizing these shared values.

The overall effect of translating mores, language, beliefs, values, and folklores on the representation of the image of Iranian society is summarized in Figure 10 below.

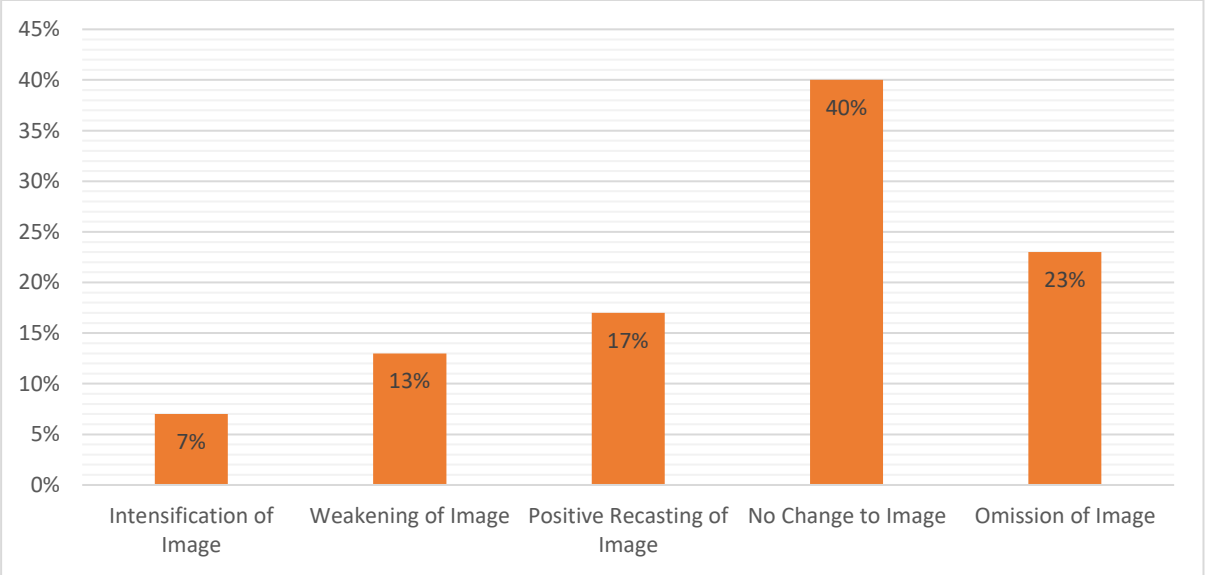

Figure 10. Representation of Iranians as Self to Non-Iranians as Other

Table 2 illustrates the relationship between the translation strategies used for image-representative elements and their impact on the representation of the Self. In 50 out of 127 cases, the image remained unchanged. However, in the remaining 77 cases, the image was altered through one of four processes: intensification, weakening, positive recasting, or omission. Each of these effects resulted from specific translation strategies. For instance, intensification was primarily achieved through strategies of addition and paraphrasing. In contrast, weakening often resulted from

neutralization, substitution, and, notably, generalization, which negatively affected the portrayal of Iranian society.

Positive recasting was primarily accomplished through deletion and attenuation. Deletion enhanced the image in cases where taboo language in the original dialogue was omitted in the English subtitles, reducing the undesirable impact of certain expressions; however, while this sometimes increased the politeness of the dialogue, it occasionally reduced its sense of intimacy. Attenuation also contributed significantly to positive recasting by adding minimizers or mitigating offensive language.

A possible explanation for cases of image omission is provided by Faiq (2004, p. 35), who notes that societies may "negate, even suppress" distinctions when engaging with other nations or cultures. Subtitles may omit certain distinctions to facilitate understanding for the target audience or to promote a more favorable cultural image. In this regard, deletion and substitution were the primary strategies contributing to image omission.

Table 2. The Relationship Between Translation Strategies and Image Representation

Translation Strategy	Intensification of Image	Weakening of Image	Positive Recasting of Image	No Change to Image	Omission of Image
Deletion	0	0	**8**	0	**24**
Addition	**3**	0	0	0	0
Attenuation	0	0	**10**	0	0
Neutralization	0	**3**	0	0	0
Substitution	0	**2**	**4**	0	**5**
Generalization	0	**12**	0	0	0
Paraphrase	**6**	0	0	**50**	0
Loan Word	0	0	0	0	0

Conclusion

Analysis This study examined the representation of the Iranian Self in Persian movies through English fansubtitles, aiming to understand how the subtitling process affects the cultural image conveyed to English-speaking audiences. By analyzing eleven Persian films and their subtitles, a total of 127 image-representative elements were identified and categorized based on five observed effects: intensification, weakening, positive recasting, preservation, and omission. The findings indicated that while more universal or widely recognized image-representative elements were often left intact, elements unique to Iranian religious or legal contexts were more likely to be omitted or weakened, potentially diminishing the portrayal of these distinct aspects of Iranian society and culture.

These observations imply a selective approach in translation, where certain elements are emphasized, minimized, or excluded to cater to the target audience's background and expectations. This selective process may stem from power imbalances, cultural differences, the desire to appeal to Western audiences, or a need to sidestep sensitive topics. Translation, in this context, functions not merely as a linguistic exercise but as a transfer of cultural meaning shaped by the translator's own values and beliefs. Ideology and translation are therefore closely intertwined, as translation choices can promote, modify, or suppress ideological beliefs and practices. For instance, the frequent omission of religious references in the mores category reflects an effort to reduce the perceived

cultural distance between the Self and the Other, often favoring universal values over distinct cultural markers. This finding resonates with Merkle (2010), Kenevisi et al. (2016), and Khoshsaligheh and Ameri's (2016) observations that ideological manipulation is a common feature in audiovisual translation.

This study examines image portrayal to illuminate how media representations involve processes of selection, emphasis, and exclusion. Hall (1997) emphasizes that such representations are shaped by cultural and social contexts, which, in turn, influence audience interpretations. Here, the subtitled versions of Iranian films serve as constructed representations, where particular elements are either emphasized or omitted, shaping how Iranian society is perceived by non-Iranian audience. This selective encoding and attenuation significantly impact the construction of meaning and cultural identity for English-speaking viewers.

The findings of this study reveal that image-representative elements related to religious or legal mores were frequently omitted or attenuated, likely to avoid unfamiliar or polarizing topics for the target audience. In contrast, values with universal resonance were preserved, possibly to highlight similarities between the Self and the Other and to foster cross-cultural understanding. While these choices can facilitate accessibility to Iranian culture, they also risk diminishing cultural authenticity by erasing differences that contribute to cultural richness. This underscores the translator's complex role in shaping cultural representations, as decisions about selection and adaptation directly impact cross-cultural perceptions. As Doorslaer (2019) notes, translation choices are often influenced by national and cultural image-building, consciously or unconsciously. These findings also resonate with Tymoczko's (2003) view of the translator as an ethical agent of social change, where translation choices bridge cultural gaps by adjusting cultural disparities between source and target contexts.

This research was limited to the study of fansubtitles and did not encompass official subtitles, leaving room for further studies to compare the ideological underpinnings across different subtitling contexts. Additionally, since only verbal elements were analyzed, future research could explore how non-verbal cues contribute to cultural representation in subtitled media. Overall, the study reinforces the importance of cultural context in media translation and the translator's influential role in shaping cross-cultural communication through strategic representation of the Self in translation.

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A Study of Conflict Resolution Strategies in Translation Prefaces

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Abstract

In the aftermath of conflict, the role of translation extends into the realm of conflict resolution. This study examines how translation prefaces address conflict resolution in the context of post-revolutionary Iran following the Iran-Iraq War, focusing on the resolution strategies employed. To achieve this, criterion sampling was used to select three English books on the Iran-Iraq War, originally written from Iraqi or Other perspectives and translated into Persian by Marz-o-Boom Publications. Data were collected from the prefaces of these translations, emphasizing their treatment of the war and the contentious themes in the source texts. Using Salama-Carr's (2007) and Webne Behrman's (1998) definitions of conflict, conflict cases were identified and categorized based on Thomas and Kilmann's (1974) conflict resolution model. The findings indicate that the competing strategy was predominantly employed (44.4%–54.6%), reflecting strong assertiveness in promoting Iranian state perspectives. The compromising strategy was used to a moderate extent (18.6%–34.4%), indicating some engagement in negotiation, while the collaborating strategy ranged from 18.1% to 33.4%, reflecting fluctuating openness to diverse viewpoints. The accommodating strategy appeared only once (2.3%), highlighting a reluctance to embrace alternative perspectives, while the avoiding strategy was entirely absent, suggesting a deliberate effort to confront the complexities of the conflict. Overall, the findings reveal a pattern of using collaboration within a competitive framework as a nuanced approach to conflict resolution in sensitive translation contexts. This strategy demonstrates a strong commitment to constructive dialogue, enriches the discourse on the conflict, and enhances readers' understanding of its multifaceted nature.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, Other, Self, Iran-Iraq War

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Introduction

In our contemporary global landscape, the intricate relationship between translation and conflict has garnered significant academic attention, particularly in the context of post-conflict societies. The Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980 to 1988 is considered one of the longest and deadliest conflicts of the 20th century. This war not only resulted in profound human and material losses but also left a lasting impact on the political and cultural fabric of the region (Mosaffa, 2018). The narratives surrounding this conflict are multifaceted, often reflecting divergent political views and historical interpretations. As such, translation agents working in post-war Iran usually find themselves at the intersection of these narratives, tasked with the responsibility of conveying complex and often contentious themes to target audiences.

A substantial body of literature exists on the notion of conflict in the field of Translation Studies (e.g., Baker, 2006; Salama-Carr, 2007). Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, these studies mainly examine the role of translation in wartime, conflict, and peace efforts, with scholars focusing on specific conflict situations across various contexts as it is believed that translation plays a crucial role not only in conveying information but also in shaping narratives and influencing public perception during and after conflicts.

Baker (2006) highlights the agency of translators, emphasizing how their choices can shape narratives and influence the framing of events within conflict scenarios. She sheds light on the ways translation could participate in the institution of war as well as the ways translators could circulate or resist narratives that create the intellectual and moral environment for violent conflicts. Many scholars have also engaged with Baker's theory, applying her analytical model to various corpora (e.g., Yalsharzeh, Barati, & Hesabi, 2019; Khalili & Mollanazar, 2020). They mainly aim to demonstrate how different reframing strategies have been used in their examined translations to serve political and ideological functions in guiding reader interpretations within a particular context, such as the Iranian context.

Salama-Carr (2007) further explores the ethical responsibilities of translators, arguing that their work can either contribute to peacebuilding efforts or exacerbate tensions, underscoring the profound implications that translation choices can have on public perception and understanding of conflicts. She asserts that the ethical responsibility of the translator and the interpreter may take various forms, which is not merely limited to the familiar dominions of professional ethics and good practice, as it also entails the translator's and the interpreter's awareness, testimony, and open ideological commitment and involvement.

The dynamics of translation also extend into conflict resolution, where understanding the strategies employed by translators can unveil how narratives are crafted and contested in sensitive contexts. Researchers have explored the multifaceted nature of conflicts, investigating their origins, manifestations, and resolution strategies (e.g., Tang, 2007; Pérez, 2007). Iranian scholars, in particular, have offered insights into the adopted conflict resolution strategies, especially in the context of historical events such as the Iran-Iraq War (Mollanazar & Maddahi, 2017; Maddahi & Mollanazar, 2021), providing a deeper understanding of the implications of conflict resolution strategies for both national and global contexts.

However, the existing body of research addressing the Iranian context has not investigated how translation prefaces (translators' or annotators' prefaces) approach conflict resolution in the context of post-revolutionary Iran after the Iran-Iraq War. None has focused on the adopted resolution strategies. This suggests a pressing need for such analysis, particularly as Iran continues to face a complex array of conflicts, emphasizing the necessity for translators to navigate an environment rife with sensitivity and divergent political views. The implications of translation in such a context are

profound, as translators have the power to influence perceptions and understanding among diverse cultural and political groups. As they engage with texts that reflect the narratives surrounding these conflicts, the strategies they employ become crucial in determining how these narratives are interpreted and understood by target audiences.

This study aims to fill this existing gap by examining how translation prefaces approach conflict resolution in post-Iran-Iraq War, with a particular focus on the resolution strategies employed. Specifically, it utilizes Salama-Carr's (2007) and Webne-Behrman's (1998) definitions of conflict, along with Thomas and Kilmann's (1974) typology of conflict resolution strategies to analyze the conflict resolution strategies articulated in the Persian translation prefaces of a body of English books addressing the Iran-Iraq War from the Iraqi or Other perspective. This investigation will enrich our understanding of the interplay between conflict and translation, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on conflict resolution in sensitive translation contexts.

Methodology

This study is a corpus-based, descriptive-explanatory type. For conducting the study, criterion sampling was employed to select three English books along with their Persian translations that were available in the market of Iran, with criteria including their being originally written in English on the Iran-Iraq War from Iraqi or Other perspective, and being translated into English by Marz-o-Boom Publications (affiliated with Revolutionary Guards Sacred Defense Documentation and Research Center). The translations were assumed to reflect the Iranian official perspectives on the war. Table 1 presents the bibliographical information of the English books and their translations.

Table 1. Corpus of the Study

No.	English Source Texts	Persian Translations
1	Cordesman, A. H., & Wagner, A. R. (1990). *The lessons of modern war, volume II: The Iran-Iraq War*. Westview Press.	Cordesman, A. H., & Wagner, A. R. (2011a). *Dars-hā-ye jang-e modern: Jang-e Irān va eraāq* (Jeld-e 1) *[The lessons of modern war, volume II: The Iran-Iraq War].* (H. Yekta, Trans.). Marz-o-Boom (Original work published 1990).
		Cordesman, A. H., & Wagner, A. R. (2011b). *Dars-hā-ye jang-e modern: Jang-e Irān va eraāq* (Jeld-e 2) *[The lessons of modern war, volume II: The Iran-Iraq War].* (H. Yekta, Trans.). Marz-o-Boom (Original work published 1990).
2	Joyner, C. C. (1990). *The Persian Gulf War: Lessons for strategy, law, and diplomacy*. Connecticut: Greenwood.	Joyner, C. C. (2011). *Darsh āyi az r āhbord-e hoqooq-e diplom āsi dar jang-e Irān va eraāq [The Persian Gulf War: Lessons for strategy, law, and diplomacy]*. (D. Olamayi Koopayi, Trans.). Marz-o-Boom (Original work published 1990).
3	Willemse, M. (2006). *The most powerful partner in crime: How the United States took sides in the Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988* [Master's thesis, University of Utrecht].	Willemse, M. (2013). Q*aviytarin sharik-e jorm: Mavāze'e jānb-dārāneh-ye āmrikā dar jang-e Irān va Erāq [The most powerful partner in crime: How the United States took sides in the Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988]* [Master's thesis, University of Utrecht]. (M. A. Khorrami, Trans.). Marz-o-Boom. (Original work published 2006).

All the translations that comprise the corpus enjoy an almost lengthy translator's or annotator's preface. To be more precise, the Persian translations of T*he Persian Gulf War: Lessons for Strategy, law, and Diplomacy*, and *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume II: The Iran-Iraq Wa*r have prefaces

written on them by Shamkhani and Alaei, respectively. It is also noteworthy that *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume II: The Iran-Iraq War* has been translated into two volumes, and Alaei has written a separate preface on each, which will also be analyzed individually in this paper. However, the preface available in *The Most Powerful Partner in Crime: How the United States took sides in the Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988* is written by the translator himself. This study treats them in a similar way. The data for the current study came from these prefaces.

Data analysis included a content and thematic analysis of the translators' or annotators' prefaces based on Hsieh's (2014) theory of translation that metaphorizes translation as conflict (dispute) resolution to propose that translators assume the role of dispute resolvers between cultures and/or languages. It also relied on Thomas-Kilmann's (1974) proposed analytical model for the classification of conflict resolution strategies to review and classify translators' and annotators' applied strategies of conflict resolution.

Based on Thomas-Kilmann's (1974) model, the following operational definitions were provided to detect the textual manifestation of each conflict resolution strategy in the corpus under study:

1. Competing strategy: statements that are assertive and prioritize the interests of the state of Iran over the other.
2. Compromising strategy: statements that acknowledge both states have different priorities and need to make concessions and find a middle ground.
3. Accommodating strategies: statements that prioritize the needs and preferences of the other state over the state of Iran.
4. Collaborating strategy: statements that are inclusive and seek to find a mutually beneficial solution for both countries, addressing the concerns and benefits of both states.
5. Avoiding strategy: Statements that deflect or avoid conflict altogether to maintain peace.

The prefaces were examined to identify their treatment of the Iran-Iraq War and conflict cases (based on Webne-Behrman's (1998) definition) in the source texts. The collected data was then analyzed and the conflict resolution strategies were classified based on Thomas-Kilmann's model (1974).

Data Analysis

A sample of the data analysis, featuring one example for each strategy used in the prefaces, is provided here. Additionally, a separate table presents the frequency of conflict resolution strategies used in each preface, offering insights into the most or least frequently employed strategies in addressing the war and managing conflict cases, ultimately addressing the research question.

Collaborating Strategy

The following example is a case of collaborating strategy from *The Persian Gulf War: Lessons for Strategy, Law, and Diplomacy*, where the annotator reflects on the key conflictual elements of one of the main English book chapters.

Example 1:

فصل سیزدهم (ایران و عراق و مذاکرات آتش‌بس) که مبین خواسته‌های بلندپروازانه عراق در طول مذاکرات است، اطلاعات و مطالب مفیدی دارد. (Shamkhani, 2011, p. 19)

English Translation: Chapter Thirteen (Iran and Iraq, and ceasefire talks) represents Iraq's ambitious demands during the talks and has useful information (Shamkhani, 2011, p. 19).

Analysis: In this sentence, first the annotator appreciates the useful information included in Chapter Thirteen of the book. For doing so, he shows his openness, and willingness to listen to the Other's narrations of the events, and his attempt to build trust. However, he acutely addresses Iraq's demands as ambitious and clarifies his critical stance towards Iraq's demands during the ceasefire talks. It seems like adopting a win-win approach and using the collaborating strategy.

Competing Strategy

The second example demonstrates how the translator has used competing strategy in his preface on *The Most Powerful Partner in Crime: How the United States Took Sides in the Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988 to* highlight Iran's unique ideological stance during the Islamic Revolution.

Example 2:

انقلاب اسلامی ایران در جهان دوقطبی حاکم در دوران جنگ سرد میان دو ابرقدرت و در دنیای مادی‌گرایانه دو اردوگاه سوسیالیسم و کاپیتالیسم، صدایی دگرگونه بود و اصول، ارزش‌ها و اهداف آن با نظم حاکم بر روابط بین‌المللی هم‌خوانی نداشت. ایران که خود را از اردوگاه غرب رهانده و قدرت حاکم بر آن را به چالش کشیده بود، به اردوگاه شرق نیز نپیوسته و با محور قرار دادن شعار «نه شرقی، نه غربی»، جمهوری اسلامی را بر پایه آن بنیان نهاده بود. (Khorrami, 2013, p. 10)

English Translation**:** *<u>The Islamic Revolution of Iran</u>, when the world was bipolar and the Cold War existed between the superpowers and the materialist world was governing the two camps of socialism and capitalism, <u>was a different voice and its principles, values, and objectives were not compatible with the established order in the international relations</u>. Iran, which had liberated itself from the West and challenged its governing power, had not joined the camp of the East either. It established the Islamic Republic by focusing on the motto "<u>Neither the East, Nor the West</u>"* (Khorrami, 2013, p. 10).

Analysis*:* The translator's emphasis on the Islamic Revolution's different voice, principles, values, and objectives which have been incompatible with the established order in international relations is a signal of using the competing strategy. The translator does not show any interest in adopting a relationship orientation or yielding. He directly addresses the differences.

Compromising Strategy

Example three illustrates how the annotator has employed compromising strategy in his preface TO the translation (the first volume) of *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume II: The Iran-Iraq War* in discussing the diverse perspectives of scholars and writers on the Iran-Iraq War.

Example 3:

پژوهندگان و نویسندگان در نوشته‌های خود با توجه به «نوع علائق»، «چارچوب فکری»، «زمان تدوین»، «نوشتار گفتمان غالب بر عصر تدوین نوشتار» و احیانا «وابستگی‌هایی که به مراکز مختلف قدرت» داشته‌اند، بـــا دیدگاه‌های مختلفی به جنگ ایران و عراق نگریسته‌اند. «انگیزه» آنان در تألیف کتاب‌های جنگ و همچنین «نوع تخصص» آنها موجب شده است تا نوشته‌هایشان از دیدگاه‌های مختلف تاریخی، نظامی، سیاسی، حقوقی، ژئوپلیتیک، فرهنگی و … تدوین و ارائه گردد. به همین دلیل است که تفسیر رویدادهای جنگ از دیدگاه مورخی که از حوزه علم اقتصاد به آن می‌نگرد با تحلیل‌گری که دارای دانش نظامی است و نیز با مورخی که از حوزه علم سیاست و یا جغرافیا موضوع را بررسی می‌کند، تفاوت‌های عمده‌ای دارد. هر کدام از آنها یک «واقعیت معین» را ممکن است متفاوت ببینند و به صورت مختلفی مورد بررسی و ارزیابی قرار دهند. بدیهی است «واقعیت جنگ» موضوعی پیچیده و بغرنج است و هر پژوهنده‌ای بر اساس «فهم و

درک»، «پیش‌فرض‌ها» و «روش تحلیلی» خود به بررسی رخدادهای جنگ می‌پردازد و تفسیر و تبیینی را ارائه می‌دهد. گرچه معمولا «حقیقت تاریخی» ثابت و یکسان است، اما معرفت آن، برای افراد مختلف، متفاوت است. تا زمانی که مورخان و تحلیل‌گران گرفتار محدودیت‌های اطلاعاتی و معرفت شناختی‌اند، نمی‌توان انتظار داشت تا به عمق حقیقت یک واقعیت تاریخی دست یابند. بنابراین توجه به تنوع نگرش‌ها و دیدگاه‌های مختلف نویسندگان می‌تواند خوانندگان را از پیش‌داوری در مورد جنگ برحذر دارد و به آنها دید جامع‌تری در خصوص یکی از مهم‌ترین تحولات معاصر خاورمیانه بدهد. پس لازم است تا از نوشته‌های مختلف استقبال شود، ولی در استفاده از آنها با عنایت به آیه «فَبَشِّر عِبادِ الذِینَ یَسْتَمِعُونَ القُولَ فَیَتَّبِعُونَ أحْسَنه» (زمر: ۱۷ و ۱۸) اقدام کرد. (Alaei, 2011a, p. 28)

English Translation: Scholars and writers in their writings have seen the Iran-Iraq War from different perspectives according to their type of interest, conceptual framework, time in which they have done their writing job, the dominant discourse at the time, and possibly their attachment to various power centers. Their motivation in writing war books as well as their specialty have caused the formulation and presentation of their works from different historical, military, political, legal, geopolitical, and cultural perspectives. Thus, there are major differences between the analysis of the war events from the perspective of a historian looking at it from the field of economy, with analysts who have military knowledge as well as with historians of science politics, or geography. Each of them might see a given fact and investigate and assess it differently. Obviously, the reality of war is a complex subject and each researcher investigates and explains it based on his knowledge and understanding, assumptions, and analytical method. Though the historical truth is usually fixed, its perceived knowledge is different for different people. As long as historians and analysts are caught in intelligence and epistemological limitations, they cannot be expected to reach the truth depth of a historical fact. So, paying attention to the diversity of attitudes and different views of the authors, one should warn readers of pre-judging the war, and give them a broader perspective on one of the most important contemporary Middle East developments. So, it is necessary to welcome different writings, but they should be used concerning the verse “Give good tidings to My servants, those who listen to the word, and follow the best” (Az-Zumar: 17 and 18) (Alaei, 2011a, p. 28).

Analysis: The segments that are underlined in this paragraph such as the complexity of the reality of the war, and the diversity of attitudes toward its analysis, warning the readers of pre-judging the war, and giving them a broader perspective could be the signs of the compromising strategy. The annotator does admit that there are different perspectives towards the Iran-Iraq War events, some of which may not be fair. Thus, one should not pre-judge them but should be open to them, and benefit from them.

Accomodating Strategy

The last example shows how the annotator has used accomodating strategy in his preface on the translation (the first volume) of *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume II: The Iran-Iraq War* to emphasize harmony with the other party.

Example 4:

از طرفی، از زمان نگارش این کتاب، حدود بیست سال می‌گذرد؛ در این مدت اطلاعات جدیدی در مورد وقایع و واقعیت‌های جنگ منتشر شده است که می‌تواند نگاه و تحلیل نویسنده و خواننده را دگرگون سازد. اسناد و مدارکی که امروزه با گذشت نزدیک به سی سال از آغاز جنگ ایران و عراق، در اختیار پژوهش‌گران قرار گرفته است، می‌تواند زوایای بیش‌تری از ابعاد مختلف جنگ را روشن کند. بر همین اساس می‌توان گفت که پژوهش و تحقیق درباره رویدادهای تاریخی بی‌پایان است و با گذشت زمان می‌توان از یک واقعه تاریخی، تصویرهایی روشن‌تر ارائه کرد. (Alaei, 2011a, p. 34)

English Translation: On the other hand, almost twenty years have passed since this book was written; in the meantime, new information has been released about the events and realities of the war that can change the opinion and analysis of the writer and the readers. Evidence that today, nearly thirty

years after the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War, is available to the researchers, could shed light on more aspects of different dimensions of the war. Accordingly, one can say that research on historical events is endless, and clearer images of any historical event emerge as time passes (Alaei, 2011a, p. 34).

Analysis: In this paragraph, acknowledging the authors' limited access to the documents and information at the time of writing the book, the annotator accepts it as an excuse for their incomplete covering of the events of the war which he had previously criticized and considered as a conflicting point. Thus, the annotator has adopted the accommodating strategy.

Results

The analysis of the data indicates that all prefaces, with the exception of the one accompanying the second volume of *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume II: The Iran-Iraq War*, share several overarching themes. A closer examination reveals that the observed variations largely arise from the distinct characteristics of the respective source texts. Regarding conflict resolution, these prefaces lay the groundwork for addressing the existing conflicts within the translational context. They provide a concise history of the Iran-Iraq War, elucidate the causes of the conflict, delineate the cultural, ideological, and political stances of the involved parties, and offer commentary on the book's content to facilitate the reader's comprehension.

In contrast, the preface to the second volume of the translation is limited in scope, concentrating primarily on the content of chapters nine through fifteen. It offers only brief commentary on each chapter, lacking the broader thematic engagement characteristic of the other prefaces. This suggests that the entirety of this preface could have been integrated into that of the first volume, given its narrower focus and limited contribution to the thematic discourse.

Table 2 presents the results of the statistical analysis of the translators' or annotators' prefaces across the books. As illustrated in the table, a combination of conflict resolution strategies has been employed by the translators and annotators, likely aimed at maintaining the conflict at a level where diverse perspectives can be effectively articulated. Among these strategies, *competing* strategy emerges as the most frequently employed, while *avoiding* strategy is the least utilized in all the examined texts. Notably, the strategy of *accommodating* is absent from the prefaces, except for its minimal occurrence (2.3%) in *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume II: The Iran-Iraq War-1*.

Table 2. Conflict Resolution Strategies in Translators' or Annotators' Prefaces

Book Titles	*The Persian Gulf War: Lessons for strategy, law and diplomacy*		*The most powerful partner in crime: How the United States took sides in the Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988*		*The lessons of modern war, volume II: The Iran-Iraq War-1*		*The lessons of modern war, volume II: The Iran-Iraq War-2*	
Strategy	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Avoiding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Accommodating	-	-	-	-	1	2.3	-	-
Competing	4	44.4	6	54.6	21	48.8	4	44.4
Compromising	2	22.2	3	27.3	8	18.6	3	34.4
Collaborating	3	33.4	2	18.1	13	30.3	2	22.2
Total	9	100	11	100	43	100	9	100

Discussion

The findings indicate that, with the exception of the preface accompanying the second volume of *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume II: The Iran-Iraq War*, the analyzed prefaces share overarching themes. Variations between them can largely be attributed to the distinct characteristics of the source texts. These prefaces serve a pivotal role in addressing conflict resolution within the translational context. They provide readers with a concise history of the Iran-Iraq War, explore the root causes of the conflict, outline the cultural, ideological, and political positions of the involved parties, and offer interpretative commentary on the content of the texts to enhance understanding.

The preface to the second volume of *The Lessons of Modern War* diverges from this pattern. Its limited scope focuses exclusively on chapters nine through fifteen, offering brief commentary on each chapter without engaging in the broader thematic discourse evident in the other prefaces. This narrower focus diminishes its contribution to the overarching narrative, suggesting that its content might have been better integrated into the preface of the first volume to achieve greater thematic coherence.

The statistical analysis, summarized in Table 2, further highlights the conflict resolution strategies employed in the prefaces. Translators and annotators have utilized a combination of strategies, likely aiming to manage the conflicts in a way that facilitates the articulation of diverse perspectives. Among these strategies, *competing* is the most frequently used, while *avoiding* is the least employed. The strategy of *accommodating* is notably absent. This suggests a general preference for engaging directly with conflicts rather than yielding to opposing perspectives.

Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of prefaces in shaping the readers' engagement with translated texts, particularly in contexts involving politically and ideologically charged content. By employing various conflict resolution strategies, translators and annotators navigate the complexities of representation and interpretation, ensuring that multiple perspectives are preserved and accessible.

The absence of *accommodating* strategies in most prefaces reflects a deliberate approach to engage with contentious ideas rather than concede to alternative viewpoints. Furthermore, the thematic inconsistencies observed in the second volume of *The Lessons of Modern War* underline the importance of maintaining coherence in paratextual elements to enhance the interpretative framework offered to readers.

Overall, this research underscores the significance of analyzing paratextual components, such as prefaces, to better understand the strategies and decisions underlying the translation of sensitive and contentious material. Future studies could build on these findings by exploring how these strategies influence readers' perceptions and interpretations of translated texts.

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The Relationship Between Working Memory, Delivery Rate, and Pauses in Consecutive Interpreting

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Abstract

Given the importance of consecutive interpreting as a key mode of communication, various factors influencing its effectiveness must be examined to enhance overall performance. This study explored the relationship between working memory (working memory), interpreting delivery rate, and the number of pauses. To achieve this, two working memory tests and a consecutive interpreting task were administered to 30 MA translation students. The analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between one working memory measure (reading span) and interpreting delivery rate. However, no significant relationship was found between working memory and the number of silent or filled pauses in the interpreting output. Additionally, working memory was identified as a predictor of interpreting delivery rate. These findings suggest that while working memory may be associated with certain variables, such as delivery rate, it may not be linked to others, such as the number of pauses in consecutive interpreting.

Keywords: Consecutive interpreting, interpreting delivery rate, silent and filled pauses, working memory

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Introduction

Consecutive interpreting (CI) is a widely used mode of communication in settings such as press conferences, police stations, and courtrooms. It involves rendering the source speech segment by segment, allowing the interpreter to take notes during pauses (Pöchhacker, 2004). Various factors influence CI performance, with some playing a more critical role than others. While certain aspects, such as prosody awareness training and note-taking, have been studied, others—such as working memory, pauses, and delivery rate—require further investigation. Additionally, exploring the relationships between different variables in interpreting can provide valuable insights that may enhance interpreter training and performance.

Working memory (WORKING MEMORY) is recognized as a key cognitive ability that plays a crucial role in interpreting (e.g. Amini, et al., 2020, 2022; Bajo, Padilla & Padilla, 2000; Chmiel, 2016; Darò, 1989; Dong, Liu & Cai, 2018; Timarova, 2008; Wen & Dong, 2019). However, its relationship with various aspects of interpreting, such as delivery rate and pauses, has not been systematically examined. Originally introduced by Baddeley and Hitch (1974) as a reconceptualization of short-term memory, WORKING MEMORY was later expanded by Baddeley (2000) into a multi-component model comprising four main components: the central executive, the phonological loop, the visuospatial sketchpad, and the episodic buffer. Each component plays a distinct role in storing, processing, and retrieving information. This model has been widely applied in research on WORKING MEMORY in the context of interpreting.

Assessing interpreting quality is inherently challenging due to its subjective nature, making complete objectivity unattainable. Experts have developed various assessment scales based on their definitions of quality, while audiences may apply their own criteria. Nonetheless, factors such as accuracy, fluency, pauses, delivery rate, and faithfulness play a significant role in quality assessment (e.g., Mahmoodzadeh, 1992; Viezzi, 1996).

Speaking Rate and Interpreting Delivery Rate

People vary in their speaking styles, and multiple factors influence the perception of speech rate. Speech rate, measured in words per minute (WPM), refers to the speed at which one speaks. Laver (1995) notes that speaking rate and articulation rate are often used interchangeably. However, perception of speech speed may be inaccurate when based solely on listening (Roach, 1998). Additionally, languages differ in their use of pauses and hesitations (Ofuka, 1996). Li (2010) suggests that an optimal speech rate for English is between 100 and 120 WPM.

Interpreting is a form of speech; therefore, the same criteria used to measure speech rate can be applied to interpreting delivery rate. Galli (1990) examined the effects of speech rate on three professional English-Italian interpreters and found that a higher speech rate was associated with increased omissions and errors. Shlesinger (2003) conducted an experiment with sixteen professional simultaneous interpreters, who interpreted the same six source texts at two different speeds—120 and 140 WPM. She found that interpreting performance improved at a higher speech rate. However, Chernov (2004) argues that an interpreter's speed does not increase proportionally with that of the speaker.

Regarding the association between speaking rate, interpreting delivery rate, and interpreting quality in the English-Persian language pair, Rostami (2009) examined the relationship between interpreters' speaking speed in their second language (English) and the quality of their consecutive interpreting, reporting a positive and significant correlation. Similarly, Shirinzadeh (2013) found a positive relationship between simultaneous interpreters' speaking speed in Persian (their mother tongue)

and their interpreting quality from English into Persian. In contrast, Hoseinzade (2006) found no significant correlation between simultaneous interpreters' speaking speed in Persian and the quality of their simultaneous interpreting from English into Persian. Additionally, Amini (2015) investigated the relationship between interpreters' speaking speed in their mother tongue (Persian) and the speed of their CI from English into Persian, reporting a positive and significant association. However, Hasanshahi and Shahrokhi (2016) examined the relationship between simultaneous interpreters' speaking speed in Persian and their interpreting quality, finding no significant association.

Despite these studies, the relationship between working memory (WORKING MEMORY) and interpreting delivery rate remains unexplored. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate this association in the context of CI.

Silent and Filled Pauses in Speaking and Interpreting

Pauses and fillers in spoken language have been defined and described in various ways by different scholars. According to Hargrove and McGarr (1994), pauses are defined as periods of time during which no acoustic signal is produced, lasting at least 200-270 ms. Additionally, Simone (1990) categorizes pauses as silence, hesitation, or juncture.

Erten (2014) states that fillers are discourse markers speakers use when they think, or hesitate during their speech. According to Bygate (1987), fillers are expressions used in speech to fill in pauses. Furthermore, Nordquist (2015) defines filler as a meaningless word, phrase, or sound that marks a pause or hesitation in speech. During speech, speakers are likely to use expressions such as "well", "I mean", "actually", "you know", and "let me think" to create a delay to overcome difficulties in speech (Richards & Schmidt, 2012; Yenkimaleki & Van Heuven, 2021; 2022). In fact, pauses and fillers are crucial cognitive functions that allow the next stage in language processing to be planned (Yenkimaleki et al., 2023).

A number of studies have compared pauses in interpreting with those in the source speech. For instance, Alexieva (1988) examined pause patterns in simultaneous interpreting performed by student interpreters and found that pauses in the simultaneous interpreting output were less frequent and shorter in duration than those in the source speech. Similarly, Pöchhacker (1995) reported that pauses were significantly less frequent in the German interpretation compared to the English source speech. Wang and Li (2015) found that while pauses were less frequent in Chinese-English simultaneous interpreting, they were longer in duration than in the original speech. Other studies have reported similar findings. For example, Tissi (2000) observed that the occurrence of silent pauses in interpreting delivery correlates with those in the source text. Ahrens (2005) noted that there are fewer but longer pauses in target texts than in the source texts.

Other studies on pauses in interpreting have focused on the relationship between pauses, interpreting expertise, and directionality (Mead, 2000; 2002). For instance, Yang (2011) found that novice interpreters pause more frequently than expert interpreters. Expert interpreters, she observed, had proportionally fewer pauses before sentences and clauses, within phrases, and notably fewer pauses between the subject and the predicate. Similarly, Yin (2011) concluded that beginning learners of consecutive interpreting tend to overuse fillers and repeat words.

The relationship between working memory capacity and pauses in interpreting delivery rate has not been systematically investigated. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by examining the association between working memory capacity and pauses in interpreting delivery rate. The findings could contribute to interpreting studies, interpreter training, and performance improvement. In this study, the definition of pauses by Brown and Yule (1989) was used to calculate the number of pauses in consecutive interpreting.

Research Questions

This study examines the relationship between working memory and interpreting delivery rate, as well as the association between working memory and the frequency of silent and filled pauses. Additionally, it investigates the predictive capacity of working memory concerning these variables. As previously noted, WORKING MEMORY serves as a critical prerequisite for interpreting, while delivery rate and pauses play a pivotal role in consecutive interpreting performance, influencing its overall quality. The following research questions guide this investigation:

1. Is there a significant relationship between working memory and interpreting delivery rate in consecutive interpreting?
2. Is there a significant relationship between working memory and the number of silent and filled pauses in consecutive interpreting?
3. Can working memory predict interpreting delivery rate and the frequency of pauses in consecutive interpreting?

Prior research (Amini et al., 2020, 2022; Yenkimaleki & Van Heuven, 2017) supports a positive correlation between working memory and consecutive interpreting performance, particularly between working memory and delivery rate in consecutive interpreting.

Method

Participants

Thirty Persian-speaking MA translation students (14 males and 16 females) aged 22–30 were randomly selected from the University of Isfahan. Participants were drawn from a pool of approximately 50 students who met two criteria: (a) achieving a minimum proficiency score of C2 (55+) on the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), and (b) scoring below 2.5 on a self-report questionnaire. This dual screening ensured a homogeneous cohort in terms of language proficiency and interpreting experience. The final sample thus comprised 30 proficient bilinguals with comparable English proficiency levels and similar theoretical and practical familiarity with interpreting.

Tasks

Working Memory Tasks

(Auditory and Forward) Digit Span Test: This test assesses verbal working memory capacity. The study utilized the Persian version of the test developed by Khodadadi and Amani (2014), which features fully automated administration and scoring procedures through specialized software.

Reading Span Test: This test measures general working memory. The Persian version of this test (Khodadadi, Asad Zadeh, Kalantar Ghoreishi, & Amani, 2014), developed and validated based on Persian language criteria, was used with an automatic scoring procedure in this study. The test scores both storing and processing abilities, which were summed to obtain the final score.

Consecutive Interpreting Task

The consecutive interpreting task utilized a 4.48-minute recorded video lecture in English on the topic *Why should we learn a new language?* delivered by a native American English speaker. The lecture contained no technical terminology, requiring only everyday language proficiency for accurate interpretation. The source text comprised 702 words delivered at a rate of 146.25 words per minute (WPM). Following each short segment, the researchers paused the video (e.g., for 40 seconds) to allow participants to complete their interpretation before proceeding. Participants were required to interpret each segment from English into Persian during these pause intervals.

Scoring the Interpreting Tasks

The interpreting tasks were evaluated using the revised version of Carrol's Scale (Tiselius, 2009), a holistic rubric comprising two components: intelligibility and informativeness. This non-componential rubric facilitates straightforward scoring while ensuring consistency. Three independent raters, all holding PhDs in interpreting and translation studies with at least five years of experience in the field, assessed the tasks. Each participant's final score represented the average of the three raters' evaluations. The scoring procedure demonstrated high reliability, with an inter-rater reliability coefficient of $r = .897$ ($p < .001$).

Procedure

Participants completed the data collection individually in a quiet classroom setting. Each session began with the Digit Span test, followed by the Reading Span test, and concluded with the consecutive interpreting task. The working memory tests were administered and scored automatically through a laptop computer in this predetermined order. For the consecutive interpreting portion, participants interpreted a recorded video lecture played on the laptop, providing their translation during each designated pause period. All interpreting performances were recorded using a digital voice recorder for subsequent analysis.

The recorded interpreting tasks were first transcribed verbatim by one of the raters, who listened carefully through high-quality headphones and reviewed each recording multiple times to ensure accuracy. Three qualified raters then independently scored the transcribed interpretations using the revised version of Carrol's Scale (Tiselius, 2009). Following the the Tiselius method, each interpreting unit was printed on separate pages with the interpreted version positioned at the top and the original text at the bottom. The intelligibility scale appeared at the top of each page, while the informativeness scale was placed at the bottom, maintaining a consistent format throughout the evaluation process.

Calculating the Interpreting Delivery Rate

In order to calculate the interpreting delivery rate, the raters listened to each interpreting task through a headset and used a chronometer, and calculated the duration of each interpreting task. Then, the number of words in each interpreting task was divided by total duration of the interpreting.

The WPS (Words per Second) scale was used to calculate the interpreting delivery rate, and the result was calculated based on WPM (Words per Minute) (Barik, 1973):

$$\text{Speaking Speed} = \frac{\text{Number of Words}}{\text{Time (Seconds)}}$$

Calculating the Number of Silent and Filled Pauses

The study adopted Brown and Yule's (1989) categorization for analyzing silent pauses in consecutive interpreting. Their framework categorizes pauses into three distinct types: (1) extended pauses (3.2-16 seconds), occurring when speakers provide sufficient information for comprehension or note-taking; (2) long pauses (1-1.9 seconds); and (3) short pauses (0.1-0.6 seconds). All silent pauses lasting at least one second were identified and included in the analysis. Raters carefully listened to each interpreting performance and systematically marked these pauses in the transcripts for precise quantification.

For filled pauses, the raters established consensus criteria for identification before analysis. They collaboratively determined which vocalizations qualified as filled pauses, then annotated all instances in the transcripts. Using these coded transcripts, raters conducted final tallies of both silent and filled pauses for each participant's performance.

Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted in two sequential phases. In the initial phase, descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables, with examinations of both skewness and kurtosis confirming normally distributed data. This normal distribution was further verified through a test of normality. Based on these results, the second phase employed parametric analyses. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was applied to address research questions 1 and 2 regarding variable relationships. Subsequently, simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive relationships posed in research question 3.

Results

Descriptive statistics for all study variables are shown in Table 1. These variables include Consecutive Interpreting performance, Reading Span, Digit Span, Interpreting Delivery rate, number of silent pauses, and number of filled pauses.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of All Variables

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
CI Performance	30	9.79	1.75	6	12	-1.23	0.15
Reading Span	30	76.72	10.12	50	94.40	-.67	.72
Digit Span	30	7.93	1.25	5	10	-.64	.31
Interpreting Delivery Rate	30	128.03	12.69	100	144	-.70	-.58
Number of Silent Pauses	30	66.27	20.56	37	100	.11	-1.54
Number of Filled Pauses	30	28.47	9.18	12	41	-.39	-1.20

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

A Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the association between working memory and interpreting delivery rate, as well as between working memory and consecutive interpreting performance. According to the results, there was a significant and positive relationship between Reading Span and interpreting delivery rate while there was no significant association between Digit Span and interpreting delivery rate. Furthermore, there was a positive and significant relationship between both measures of working memory and consecutive interpreting performance (see Table 2).

Table 2. Pearson Correlations Among Variables

Variables	CI Performance	Reading Span	Digit Span	Interpreting Delivery Rate
CI Performance	1	-	-	-
Reading Span	.880(**)	1	-	-
Digit Span	.643(**)	-	1	-
Interpreting Delivery Rate	-	.714**	.311	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

A Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the association between working memory and number of silent and filled pauses. According to the results, there was no significant relationship between either measures of working memory and number of silent and filled pauses (see Table 3).

Table 3. Pearson Correlations Among Reading Span, Digit Span and Number of Silent and Filled Pauses

Variables	Reading Span	Digit Span	Number of Silent Pauses	Number of Filled Pauses
Reading Span	1	-	-	-
Digit Span	-	1	-	-
Number of Silent Pauses	.324	.046	1	-
Number of Filled Pauses	-.092	-.132	-	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Given the nonsignificant Pearson correlations between (a) Digit Span and interpreting delivery rate and (b) both working memory measures and pause frequency, these variables were excluded from the regression model. A simple linear regression was conducted with interpreting delivery rate as the dependent variable and Reading Span as the independent variable. The model was statistically significant, $F(1, 29) = 29.114$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .492$, indicating that Reading Span significantly predicted delivery rate ($\beta = .714$, $t = 5.396$, $p = .000$; see Table 4).

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression

Model 1	β	T	P	R^2 adjusted
Constant		4.633	.000	.492
Reading Span	.714	5.396	.000	

Note. Dependent Variable: Consecutive Interpreting Delivery Rate

Discussion

The first research question examined the relationship between working memory and interpreting delivery rate. The results revealed a significant positive correlation between reading span (one measure of working memory) and delivery rate, while no significant association emerged between digit span (the other working memory measure) and delivery rate.

The significant relationship between reading span and delivery rate may be attributed to the reading component inherent in consecutive interpreting, particularly when processing notes. As reading span represents a complex measure of general working memory capacity, these findings suggest that interpreters with higher working memory capabilities tend to maintain faster delivery rates. In contrast, digit span – which specifically assesses verbal working memory (phonological loop) – showed no significant impact on delivery rate. This implies that phonological processing alone may not substantially influence interpreting speed. However, further experimental studies are needed to validate these observations and support broader generalizations.

The second research question investigated the relationship between working memory and the frequency of silent and filled pauses in consecutive interpreting. The analysis revealed no significant correlation between these variables, suggesting that interpreting students with varying working memory capacities do not produce different pause patterns in their output. This finding represents an underexplored area in interpreting research, as no prior studies have specifically examined this relationship. The absence of existing literature on this topic highlights a potential gap for future investigation. Further research in this domain could contribute valuable insights to the field, ultimately informing pedagogical approaches to enhance interpreting performance.

The third research question examined whether working memory capacity could predict interpreting delivery rate and pauses in consecutive interpreting. Simple linear regression analysis demonstrated that reading span – as a robust measure of working memory – significantly predicted interpreting delivery rate. These results indicate that interpreters with greater working memory capacity consistently achieve higher delivery rates compared to those with more limited working memory capacity.

Working memory demonstrates a significant positive association with consecutive interpreting performance. However, its relationship with other consecutive interpreting components – particularly interpreting delivery rate and pause frequency – remains indeterminate. While greater working memory capacity correlates with faster delivery rates and enhanced overall performance, it does not necessarily reduce pause frequency. Working memory is perceived as "a multicomponent system responsible for active maintenance of information in the face of ongoing processing and/or distraction" (Conway et al., 2005). Thus, working memory involves controlling attention, inhibiting irrelevant information and keeping relevant information active (Engle, 2002). Concurrent processing (such as evaluating the sense of sentences or performing mental math calculations while remembering items) engages the central executive system for monitoring and updating the stored information (Morales, Padilla, Gomez-Ariza, & Bajo, 2015). Complex span task scores have been associated with attentional control abilities (Shipstead, Lindsey, Marshall, & Engle, 2014). These controlled attention mechanisms prove essential for information maintenance and retrieval, especially in high-interference contexts (Redick et al., 2012). The cognitive demands of interpreting – particularly the simultaneous processing, updating, and monitoring of linguistic information – likely strain these working memory systems, though the exact nature of this interaction requires further empirical investigation.

Current evidence suggests working memory tasks are rarely independent of one another, though empirical research precisely characterizing their interrelationships remains limited. As Ecker et al. (2010) demonstrate, working memory capacity strongly predicts working memory updating ability, indicating close connections between working memory span measures and updating processes. Mizuno (2005) adapted Cowan's (1988) model through an expanded embedded processes framework, incorporating language comprehension and production mechanisms alongside the core memory system. This modification highlights the critical interactions between linguistic and memory systems during interpretation.

Conclusions

This study investigated the relationship between working memory and consecutive interpreting performance, specifically examining delivery rate and pause frequency. The results revealed a significant positive correlation between reading span (as a measure of working memory) and interpreting delivery rate, while no significant association emerged between working memory capacity and pause frequency. Furthermore, working memory demonstrated predictive value for consecutive interpreting delivery rate.

These findings suggest that working memory influences specific aspects of interpreting performance (e.g., delivery speed) but not others (e.g., pause patterns), while maintaining an overall positive association with interpreting quality. As one of the first studies to explore these relationships in English-Persian interpreting, this research establishes a foundation for future investigations in this domain. The study's primary limitation involved sample size constraints, with thirty MA translation students participating due to the specialized nature of the field. Future research with larger participant pools could validate these findings across different contexts. Collectively, these results

and subsequent studies will contribute to interpreter training methodologies and stimulate further research into cognitive aspects of interpreting performance.

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Translating Islamic Religious Terms for Non-Muslim Audience: A Comparative Study of Three Translator Groups

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Abstract

The translation of Islamic religious terms is of critical importance, as these terms play a vital role in conveying Islamic concepts. Errors in translating such sensitive content may lead to distortions in meaning. This study investigates the strategies employed by three distinct groups of translators when rendering Islamic religious texts for non-Muslim audiences: 1) experienced translators with seminary knowledge, 2) experienced translators without seminary knowledge, and 3) inexperienced translators. Employing a descriptive research design, data were collected through a task-based method and a questionnaire. Participants were asked to translate ten Persian sentences containing key religious terms into English. The translated outputs were analyzed using Larson's (1984) classification for translating non-equivalent terms. Statistical evaluation, including Mean, ANOVA, and LSD tests, was conducted to assess the findings. The results indicate that experienced translators with seminary knowledge predominantly utilized loanwords with explanatory additions. Furthermore, a significant difference was observed between this group and the other two in terms of translation strategies.

Keywords: Religious terms, seminary knowledge, translation strategies, non-muslim audience

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Introduction

Translation serves as a bridge between languages and cultures, facilitating the transfer of meaning from a source text to a target audience. However, translating culturally significant texts – particularly religious texts and terminology – presents unique challenges for translators. Given that non-Muslim audiences often lack sufficient familiarity with Islamic religious terms, careful consideration of cultural context is essential to ensure accurate and meaningful translation.

Mehawesh and Sadeq (2014) emphasize the complexity of translating religious terms, noting that it demands specialized skills and extensive experience. Due to their sacred nature, religious terms are highly sensitive, requiring meticulous attention to preserve their intended meaning across languages. Achieving semantic and functional equivalence between the source and target languages remains a persistent challenge, as translators must fully grasp the nuances of the original expression to avoid distortion or loss of meaning (p. 7).

A pertinent example of such challenges is highlighted by Jahangiri Sohrevardi (2024, as cited in Aliabadi, 2024, June 10), a member of the board of directors of the Qom Seminary Translation Association. He notes that the Persian phrase امام غائب (Imam Ghayeb) has been erroneously translated as *Hidden Imam* in some texts, whereas the theologically accurate rendering in Shia Islam is *Unseen Imam*. This distinction is critical: describing the Imam as *hidden* implies that his followers must also conceal themselves, whereas the term *unseen* affirms his continued presence and divine will. Misinterpretations of terms like غائب (ghayeb), which carries different connotations in Ismaili and Shia theology, can lead to significant theological misunderstandings. Such errors underscore the necessity of precise translation strategies to avoid misrepresenting religious doctrines.

To navigate these challenges, translators must employ strategies that address issues of equivalence, cultural variation, and linguistic divergence (Khammyseh, 2015, p. 104). As Dweik and Abu Helwah (2014) argue, translators must not only convey religious terms accurately but also retain their cultural and theological context, as non-Muslim audiences may otherwise misinterpret their significance (pp. 285–303).

This study investigates the translation strategies employed by three distinct groups: 1) experienced translators with seminary knowledge, 2) experienced translators without seminary knowledge, and 3) inexperienced translators when rendering Islamic religious texts for non-Muslim audiences. Using Larson's (1984) classification for translating non-equivalent terms, the study analyzes translated texts to address the following research question: What translation strategies are most frequently used by experienced translators with seminary knowledge, experienced translators without seminary knowledge, and inexperienced translators when dealing with Islamic religious terms?

Additionally, the study tests the following hypotheses based on task performance:

a. Experienced translators with seminary knowledge predominantly use loanwords with explanatory additions when translating Islamic religious terms.

b. There is a significant difference in translation strategies between experienced translators with seminary knowledge and the other two groups.

Literature Review

The translation of Islamic religious terms into English has been extensively explored in translation studies, with scholars highlighting the unique challenges posed by religious texts. Robinson (2000, as cited in Noviyenty et al., 2020, p. 3) questions the extent to which Islamic religious texts can be translated, examining not only methodological approaches but also considerations such as target

audiences and the authority responsible for translations. He introduces the dichotomy of translatability versus untranslatability, noting that some Muslims argue certain Islamic terms lack true equivalents in English.

Alhaddad and Abdullah (2022) emphasize the sensitivity of religious expressions, which often encapsulate concepts tied to identity, sacredness, and cultural values. Such expressions frequently appear as idioms in sacred texts, demanding high levels of translator competence (p. 57). They further argue that translating religious texts is uniquely challenging due to their divine nature – practices deeply embedded in a specific linguistic and cultural context (p. 55).

Nida (1997) observes that religious terminology tends to remain conservative, as many believers regard these terms as divinely ordained. Over time, these terms accumulate profound significance, yet their translation depends on culture-specific knowledge to ensure accurate transference from source to target language (p. 194). Jahanshahi and Kafipour (2015) echo this concern, noting that errors in translating religious terms can distort core Islamic ideas. Such translations must account for non-equivalence, particularly when adapting discourse for English-speaking audiences unfamiliar with Islamic concepts (p. 239).

Larson (1984) identifies religious terms as especially problematic, as they require meticulous analysis of their source-language semantics and careful selection of target-language equivalents (p. 180). Xue-Bing (2006) expands on this, noting that Islamic terminology often creates a "lexical void" in the target language due to the absence of direct equivalents, forcing translators to devise alternative strategies (pp. 82–93). Abdul-Raof (2005) underscores the pitfalls of assumed equivalence across cultures. For example, the Christian conception of "God" (associated with the Trinity) differs fundamentally from the Islamic Allāh, a singular divine entity – a distinction that literal translation may obscure (p. 172).

Mahmoud (2014) illustrates how even existing target-language terms may fail to convey the full nuance of religious concepts. For instance, *infāq* (إنفاق) in Islam encompasses a holistic way of life, far exceeding the literal meaning of *spending*. Similarly, *maḥram* (محرم), denoting a close relative, carries religious and cultural connotations untranslatable without explanation (p. 8). Noviyenty et al. (2020) highlight this issue with terms like *kufr* (كفر), *īmān* (ايمان), and *ṣalāh* (صلاه), where English renderings (*disbelief*, *belief*, and *prayer*) oversimplify their theological depth (p. 4).

The translation of *masjid* (مسجد) exemplifies these challenges. While dictionaries define it generically as "a Muslim place of worship" (Robinson, 2000; Macmillan, as cited in Noviyenty et al., 2020, p. 5), Iqbal (2012) notes that adopting the loanword *mosque* without explanation risks stripping the term of its cultural and liturgical significance. This underscores the need for compensatory strategies, such as glosses, to bridge conceptual gaps (Noviyenty et al., 2020, p. 5).

Translation Strategies

The translation of religious texts demands a high degree of accuracy and fidelity, necessitating strategic approaches to bridge linguistic and cultural divides (Ivir, 1998, p. 118). Ivir (1998) notes that while numerous strategies exist for conveying Islamic religious expressions, translators must carefully select the most appropriate one for each communicative context. This process involves overcoming two primary challenges: first, identifying viable strategies for culturally unmatched elements, and second, choosing the most effective approach, as not all strategies yield equivalent results in every situation (p. 118).

Nida (1964) introduces two fundamental types of equivalence in translation. Dynamic equivalence prioritizes the meaning and its impact on the target audience, while formal equivalence focuses on

preserving the form and structure of the source language (pp. 159–160). Later, Nida (1982) emphasizes the importance of considering the target audience, particularly when translating religious texts like the Bible (pp. 20–23). Similarly, Newmark (1981) proposes two complementary approaches: semantic translation, which aims to transfer the exact meaning of the source text, and communicative translation, which prioritizes the effect of the translation on its audience (pp. 39–45). Newmark (1988) further argues that the choice between these methods should be guided by the nature of the text itself (pp. 81–93).

Baker (1992) offers practical strategies for translating religious terms, including borrowing (directly adopting the source term), explanation (adding clarificatory notes), and conceptual substitution (replacing the term with a culturally familiar concept) (pp. 41–42). Koller (1979) expands on this by outlining five types of equivalence, with particular attention to semantic and cultural equivalence (pp. 186–190). In his later work, Koller (1995) stresses that cultural equivalence is especially critical for accurately rendering religious terminology (pp. 195–200). Venuti (1995) contributes to this discussion by advocating for foreignization, a strategy that preserves the source culture's distinctiveness, though this approach may present challenges for non-expert audiences (pp. 11–73). Larson's classification offers several strengths, including flexibility in addressing diverse translation challenges, heightened cultural awareness in conveying concepts, and proven effectiveness for religious, literary, and cultural texts.

Methodology

This study involved a total of 15 participants, divided into three groups of translators. A purposive sampling method was employed to ensure the selection of participants who met specific criteria relevant to the study's aims – namely, the challenges of translating Islamic religious terms for non-Muslim audiences. Participants were selected based on their academic backgrounds, translation experience, and familiarity with Islamic concepts.

The first group consisted of five translators who hold university degrees in English translation and have also received formal seminary education. These individuals pursued seminary studies following their undergraduate education, thereby acquiring advanced knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence and theology. They are currently active in translating religious texts. The second group also included five translators with degrees in English translation; however, they have not undergone seminary training. Despite this, they have independently engaged in translation of religious texts, motivated by personal interest rather than formal religious education. The third group comprised five translators who possess academic qualifications in English translation but have no experience in translating religious texts and limited or no knowledge of religious terminology.

The study faced two primary limitations: difficulty in identifying professional translators who had both academic and seminary training, and the reluctance of some qualified individuals to participate. These constraints contributed to the small sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the findings.

A descriptive research design was adopted. Data were collected using two instruments: a translation task and a post-task questionnaire. Each participant was asked to translate a set of 10 complex Persian sentences containing culturally and theologically significant Islamic terms (e.g., « ایمان و اعتقاد به امام غائب سبب امیدواری مسلمانان نسبت به آینده‌ی روشن در عصر ظهور امامشان می‌گردد», «مومنان باید در راه خدا جهاد کنند», «مسجد نماد وحدت و برابری مسلمانان است»).

Participants were instructed to translate the sentences into English for a non-Muslim audience. They were explicitly asked not to consult other individuals or use artificial intelligence tools such as

ChatGPT or Gemini. The use of dictionaries was permitted. All translators participated voluntarily and provided informed consent. They were briefed about the research process and assured that their identities would remain confidential and that their translations would be used solely for academic purposes.

Upon completion of the translation task, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire designed to elicit their rationale for choosing specific translation strategies.

To analyze the translated texts, the study applied the classification proposed by Larson (1984) for translating non-equivalent terms. The four main strategies from Larson's model – loan words, loan words with explanations, general translation, and cultural substitution – served as the basis for evaluating the participants' choices. These strategies are discussed in detail in the literature review section.

Statistical analysis was conducted using mean comparisons, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), and the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test. The mean values were used to identify the most frequently employed translation strategies across the three groups. This helped address the first hypothesis: that translators with seminary training are more likely to use loan words with explanatory notes when translating Islamic religious terms. ANOVA was used to test for statistically significant differences in strategy use among the three groups. This analysis addressed the second hypothesis: that there is a significant difference between translators with seminary training and the other two groups in their approach to religious translation.

Following a significant ANOVA result, the LSD test was applied to conduct pairwise comparisons between groups, identifying which specific group differences were statistically significant in the use of translation strategies.

Results

The analysis of translation strategies employed by the three translator groups reveals distinct patterns in rendering Islamic religious terms. As demonstrated in Table 1, experienced translators with seminary knowledge predominantly utilized *loan words with expression* (68%), significantly more than other strategies. This approach combines direct borrowing of Arabic-Islamic terms with accompanying explanations to ensure conceptual clarity for non-Muslim readers.

Table 2 presents the strategic preferences of experienced translators lacking seminary training, who showed greater variation in their approach, with no single strategy dominating to the same degree. The data indicates these translators more frequently employed general translations and cultural adaptations. Table 3 highlights the translation patterns of inexperienced translators, whose strategies differed markedly from both experienced groups. Their translations featured a higher incidence of general translation.

Table 1. Translations by Experienced Translators with Seminary Knowledge

No	Islamic Terms	Loan word	Loan word with expression	General translation	Cultural translation
1	Imam Ghaeb	-	-	1	4
2	Allah	3	1	-	1
3	Mahram	-	3	-	2
4	Masjid	-	4	-	1
5	Wudu	-	4	-	1
6	Halal	-	5	-	-

7	Haram	-	5	-	-
8	Kufr	-	4	-	1
9	Munkar	-	4	-	1
10	Jihad	1	4	-	-
Total		8%	68%	2%	22%

Table 2. Translations by Experienced Translators Without Seminary Knowledge

No	Islamic Terms	Loan Word	Loan Word with Expression	General Translation	Cultural Translation
1	Imam Ghaeb	-	-	3	2
2	Allah	1	-	4	-
3	Mahram	-	1	2	2
4	Masjid	-	-	3	2
5	Wudu	-	1	1	3
6	Halal	3	1	-	1
7	Haram	3	1	-	1
8	Kufr	-	1	-	4
9	Munkar	-	-	2	3
10	Jihad	-	-	2	3
Total		14%	10%	34%	42%

Table 3. Translations by Inexperienced Translators

No	Islamic Terms	Loan Word	Loan Word with Expression	General Translation	Cultural Translation
1	Imam Ghaeb	-	-	5	-
2	Allah	1	-	4	-
3	Mahram	-	-	3	2
4	Masjid	-	-	5	-
5	Wudu	-	-	4	1
6	Halal	3	-	2	-
7	Haram	3	-	2	-
8	Kufr	-	-	4	1
9	Munkar	-	-	4	1
10	Jihad	1	-	3	1
Total		16%	0%	72%	12%

Table 4 presents the average scores of translation strategies across the three groups. For experienced translators with seminary knowledge, the scores were 1.1 (loan word), 4.0 (loan word with expression), 0.1 (general translation), and 3.4 (cultural translation), indicating a predominant use of loan words with explanatory expressions.

Among experienced translators without seminary training, the average scores showed different preferences: 0.7 (loan word), 0.5 (loan word with expression), 1.7 (general translation), and 2.1 (cultural translation), demonstrating their greater reliance on cultural translation.

The inexperienced translators exhibited yet another pattern, with average scores of 0.8 (loan word), 0.1 (loan word with expression), 3.6 (general translation), and 0.6 (cultural translation), revealing their primary use of general translation for Islamic religious terms.

Table 4. Average Scores of Translator Groups

Groups	Mean			
	Loan word	Loan word with expression	General translation	Cultural translation
Experienced translators with seminary knowledge	1.1	4	0.1	3.4
Experienced translators without seminary knowledge	0.7	0.5	1.7	2.10
Inexperienced translators	0.8	0.1	3.6	0.6

Table 5 reveals statistically significant differences between translator groups in their use of three translation methods: loan words with expression, general translation, and cultural translation ($p < 0.05$ at 95% confidence level). However, no significant difference was found among groups in their use of loan words ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5. Analysis of Variance

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Loan word	Between Groups	.867	2	.433	.324	.726
	Within Groups	36.100	27	1.337		
	Total	36.967	29			
Loan word with expression	Between Groups	67.400	2	33.700	33.825	.000
	Within Groups	26.900	27	.996		
	Total	94.300	29			
General translation	Between Groups	61.400	2	30.700	28.194	.000
	Within Groups	29.400	27	1.089		
	Total	90.800	29			
Cultural translation	Between Groups	11.667	2	5.833	5.215	.012
	Within Groups	30.200	27	1.119		
	Total	41.867	29			

The LSD post hoc test further specifies which translator groups employed each method more frequently, providing detailed comparisons between the groups.

Table 4.6. Post Hoc LSD Test

Dependent Variable	(I) GROUP	(J) GROUP	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Loan word with expression	Translators with seminary knowledge	Experienced translators without seminary knowledge	2.90000*	.000
		Inexperienced translators in the religious field	3.40000*	.000
	Experienced translators without seminary knowledge	Translators with seminary knowledge	-2.90000*	.000
		Inexperienced translators in the religious field	.50000	.273
	Inexperienced translators in the religious field	Translators with seminary knowledge	-3.40000*	.000
		Experienced translators without seminary knowledge	-.50000	.273
General translation	Translators with seminary knowledge	Experienced translators without seminary knowledge	-1.60000*	.002
		Inexperienced translators in the religious field	-3.50000*	.000
	Experienced translators without seminary knowledge	Translators with seminary knowledge	1.60000*	.002
		Inexperienced translators in the religious field	-1.90000*	.000
	Inexperienced translators in the religious field	Translators with seminary knowledge	3.50000*	.000
		Experienced translators without seminary knowledge	1.90000*	.000
Cultural translation	Translators with seminary knowledge	Experienced translators without seminary knowledge	-1.00000*	.044

The three translator groups exhibited distinct strategy preferences, confirming the first hypothesis that seminary-trained translators predominantly used loan words with expression. As shown in Tables 5 and 6, there was a marked distinction in their use of loan words with expression compared to the other groups. The analysis also revealed significant variation in cultural translation between seminary-trained and non-seminary experienced translators, whereas no such difference was observed among inexperienced translators. For general translation, notable differences were evident across all three groups. Finally, the ANOVA and LSD test results substantiated the study's second hypothesis, confirming statistically significant differences in strategy selection between seminary-trained translators and the other groups.

The questionnaire results, presented in Tables 7 through 9, document the rationale underlying the choice of strategies in each translator group.

The questionnaire results in Table 7 reveal that seminary-trained translators believed the target audience has limited understanding of Islamic religious terminology and thus requires additional explanation. Their predominant use of loan words with explanatory additions (e.g., *Jihad* [striving in the path of Allah]) stemmed from two key motivations: preserving Islamic theological precision and compensating for non-Muslim audiences' limited religious knowledge. This approach reflects their specialized understanding of Islamic terminology.

Table 7. Questionnaire Results – Experienced Translators with Seminary Knowledge

No.	Reasons	Answers
1	Limited vocabulary for expressing Islamic concepts	3
2	The audience's limited understanding of Islamic religious terminology requires additional explanation	5
3	As the text addresses English readers, Islamic terms should be translated into English	-
4	Maintaining Islamic identity and values	4
5	Certain religious terms have become common and naturalized in English usage	4

Table 8 findings indicate that non-seminary experienced translators favored cultural translation (equivalence, explanation, addition, omission), believing Islamic concepts required adaptation for English readers. Their renderings (e.g., *Forbidden according to Islamic law* for *Haram*) demonstrate this compensatory approach toward perceived audience limitations.

Table 8. Questionnaire Results – Experienced Translators without Seminary Knowledge

No	Reasons	Answers
1	Limited vocabulary for expressing Islamic concepts	2
2	The audience's limited understanding of Islamic religious terminology requires additional explanation	4
3	As the text addresses English readers, Islamic terms should be translated into English	4
4	Maintaining Islamic identity and values	-
5	Certain religious terms have become common and naturalized in English usage	1

Inexperienced translators, as shown in Table 9, treated Islamic terms as conventional vocabulary, employing direct equivalents (*Holy War* for *Jihad*; *Unbelief* for *Kufr*) without theological nuance. This tendency toward general translation methods appears to reflect both their limited Islamic knowledge and different translation priorities compared to the experienced groups.

Table 9. Questionnaire Results – Inexperienced Translators

No	Reasons	Answers
1	Limited vocabulary for expressing Islamic concepts	3
2	The audience's limited understanding of Islamic religious terminology requires additional explanation	1
3	As the text addresses English readers, Islamic terms should be translated into English	5
4	Maintaining Islamic identity and values	-
5	Certain religious terms have become common and naturalized in English usage	-

Conclusion

Translating Islamic religious terms presents significant challenges due to the intrinsic connection between religion and culture. Cultural disparities between source and target languages often result in a lack of equivalent terms, and even apparent equivalents may fail to convey identical meanings. For instance, seminary-trained translators frequently prefer *Allah* over *God*, recognizing that while God has broad interpretations in non-Muslim contexts, for Muslims it refers exclusively to the Islamic conception of the divine. Similarly, terms like *Halal* and *Haram* resist simple translation as *lawful* and

forbidden, as these English terms lack the specific theological connotations of their Arabic counterparts. In Islamic tradition, these concepts derive their meaning from divine commandments, whereas their English equivalents suggest more general secular prohibitions or permissions.

This study's findings reveal distinct patterns in translation strategy usage among different translator groups. Seminary-trained translators predominantly employed loan words with explanatory additions, followed by cultural translation, loan words, and general translation. Experienced translators without seminary training favored cultural translation, while inexperienced translators relied most heavily on general translation, often overlooking important theological nuances.

The research highlights several key differences in strategy application: seminary-trained translators used loan words with expression significantly more than other groups; notable variations existed in cultural translation usage between seminary-trained and non-seminary experienced translators; and all three groups differed substantially in their employment of general translation.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study's sample size was constrained by the limited availability of translators with both professional translation qualifications and seminary education, as well as by participant recruitment challenges. These factors may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the geographical scope, and by incorporating a broader range of religious terms. Additional studies in this area would help validate and build upon these findings.

This research underscores the importance of specialized religious knowledge in producing accurate translations of Islamic terminology, particularly for non-Muslim audiences. The findings suggest that optimal translation of religious texts requires both linguistic expertise and deep theological understanding to adequately bridge cultural and conceptual gaps.

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A Study of Hybridity in Persian Translations of Mohsin Hamid's Novels

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Abstract

This study explores the complexities and variations in translating Mohsin Hamid's novels – *Exit West*, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* – from English into Persian within a hybridized space. Using Mollanazar and Parham's (2009) analytical framework, the research examines the attributes of hybrid texts in translations by Hossein Hassani, Maryam Ahmadi, and Ahmad Al-Ahmad. Through micro- and macro-level analysis, the study addresses key questions: How do translations adhering to Mollanazar and Parham's model (2009) reflect the first level of hybridity? Are the findings consistent with existing hybrid perspectives in translation studies? The results indicate that contemporary translations, influenced by factors such as censorship and cultural invasion, alter the narrative's interpretation. This conclusion contributes to translation studies by highlighting the challenges of translating hybrid texts and their broader implications.

Keywords: Hybridity, migration literature, Homi Bhabha, Mohsin Hamid

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1. Introduction

Homi Bhabha, a notable Indian-American postcolonial theorist whose work gained prominence in 1994, is renowned for his significant contributions to exploring hybridity in postcolonial studies. His scholarly discussions delve into the complexities and nuances of hybrid identities, cultures, and phenomena arising from colonial encounters and their aftermath. Bhabha's insights have greatly enriched our understanding of how hybridity shapes and influences various aspects of postcolonial societies and cultures. Bhabha refers to the existence of a space "between the designation of identity", suggesting that this intermediary realm allows for cultural hybridity to emerge. Within this space, there is the potential to embrace difference without assuming or imposing hierarchical structures (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4).

Bhabha (1994) argues that cultures are inherently hybrid and impure, emphasizing that cultural interactions inevitably lead to mixedness (p. 9). He posits that the true locus of culture exists at the boundary – a liminal space where identities are negotiated. For Bhabha, those situated at this boundary engage in acts of self-representation marked by ambivalence (p. 12). This ambivalence, he contends, destabilizes fixed oppositions and transforms the identity of the colonized into a hybrid position. As Bhabha asserts, hybridity "overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity" (1994, p. 86). Thus, hybridity holds particular significance in translation, as it disrupts binary distinctions and fosters fluid, intercultural exchange.

In translation studies, hybridity has been widely examined across diverse contexts, particularly in relation to its manifestation in texts through genre conventions, linguistic norms, and structural features. Scholars such as Simon (2001), Snell-Hornby (2001), Neubert (2001), Schäffner and Adab (2001), and Pym (2001) have approached the concept from varying perspectives, yet it remains a subject of debate.

Simon and Snell-Hornby connect hybridity to the intercultural identity that defines the modern world (as cited in Snell-Hornby, 2001, p. 208). Neubert (2001), however, questions whether hybridity in translation studies should be tied to generic concepts, text types, or specific textual features. He cautions against labeling entire texts as hybrid, arguing that this risks devaluing the translator's work and framing the target text negatively. Instead, he proposes assessing hybridity through unconventional textual elements (p. 182).

Schäffner and Adab (2001) focus on defining hybrid texts and exploring their underlying causes, offering hypotheses that challenge conventional views (p. 279). Meanwhile, Pym (2001) contends that source texts and their authors are inherently hybrid, whereas translation reinforces perceived linguistic and cultural boundaries. This process, he argues, perpetuates an idealized notion of linguistic purity (p. 196).

Plentiful efforts have been devoted to exploring hybridity, however, it remains a contentious issue in certain respects. As a matter of fact, lately, Mollanazar and Parham (2009) conducted extensive research, offering a taxonomy for various manifestations of hybridity. However, some aspects of this concept still need to be explored. In particular, there has been limited exploration in postcolonial translation literature regarding linguistic hybridity in Persian immigration literature and texts translated in diaspora settings.

2. Literature Review

Homi K. Bhabha's work is foundational to the conceptualization of hybridity in cultural studies, marking him as the first scholar to systematically theorize the concept. While Bhabha draws upon Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of hybridity – originally used to analyze literary texts – he redefines it within

postcolonial discourse. As Easthope (1998) observes, "Bhabha's hybridity is Derridean *différance* applied to colonialist texts: the presence of a dominant meaning in a dominant culture can be destabilized by exposing the hybridity or difference from which it emerges" (p. 146). For Bhabha (1990), hybridity represents "the perplexity of the living as it interrupts the representation of the fullness of life" (p. 314). Furthermore, he argues that hybridity possesses a distinct rhetoricity – termed "hybrid talk" – which is central to postcolonial critiques of cultural imperialism (Bhabha, 1994, p. 28).

Hybridity has since been recognized as a fundamental feature of social interaction, shaped by globalization and intensified cross-cultural communication. As Schäffner and Adab (2001) note, it arises from "the contemporary globalization of communication and the effects of interaction in spaces of fuzzy or merging borders, which subsequently reshape cultural and linguistic identities" (p. 301). In this context, translation plays a vital role in mediating these hybridized exchanges. Many scholars now regard hybridity not only as an inevitable product of translation but also as a defining characteristic of contemporary intercultural communication.

Hybridity and Translation

The concept of hybridity has recently emerged as a significant focus of scholarly investigation, attracting considerable attention both within and beyond the field of translation studies. Numerous researchers have attempted to define this phenomenon, particularly highlighting its intrinsic relationship to translation processes and diasporic contexts – environments particularly conducive to the emergence and development of hybrid forms. Within descriptive translation studies, translation itself has been conceptualized as fundamentally hybrid. As Hermans notes, "translation is irreducible: it always leaves loose ends, is always hybrid, plural and different" (as cited in Schäffner & Adab, 2001, p. 170).

Schäffner and Adab (2001) made substantial contributions to this discourse by proposing two key hypotheses regarding the nature and definition of hybridity. Through critical examination from multiple perspectives, they refined their conceptual framework, ultimately defining a hybrid text as "a text that results from a translation process. It shows features that somehow seem out of place, strange and unusual for the receiving culture, i.e. the target culture" (p. 169). Their work, published in a special issue of a translation studies journal which they edited, focused particularly on translation rights. This publication featured their initial paper alongside responses from fellow researchers, culminating in a revised version that incorporated this scholarly feedback. The impact of their work has been considerable, stimulating numerous subsequent discussions about hybridity in translation studies.

While alternative definitions of hybrid texts exist, Gommlich and Erdim (2001) argue that "the hybrid text is not only a necessity for cultural transfer understood as shifting information from a source culture into a target culture, but rather for a transfer resulting in new cultures and subcultures" (p. 240). Simon's research on bilingual cultures demonstrates that such texts can achieve acceptance despite their initial strangeness, potentially serving as models for new original texts in the target culture. However, as Nouss counters, hybrid texts may equally face rejection by target cultures (Schäffner & Adab, 2001, p. 288).

The longstanding debate between domestication and foreignization strategies in translation remains unresolved. Nevertheless, in practical terms, any foreign text introduced into a domestic culture inevitably undergoes a process of hybridization, blending with target-language elements regardless of the chosen translation approach. This inherent process ensures that hybridity remains an essential characteristic of translated texts, embodying a synthesis of source and target cultural elements. The

extensive discourse surrounding hybridity and its role in translation continues to illuminate various trends and developments within the field.

The debate concerning hybridity in translation fundamentally originates from translators' practice of producing hybridized texts through the translation process. As Bond (2001) explains, "when trans-coding a text, i.e., a 'web' of intended meaning as expressed in and consequently shaped by one language, into another language, translators are confronted with morphologically and culturally differing assumptions" (p. 251). This inherent tension between linguistic systems and cultural frameworks inevitably leads to the creation of hybrid texts. Bond further develops this distinction by contrasting hybrid texts with mutant texts. Hybrid texts emerge when the translation intentionally preserves a sense of "strangeness" that reflects the source culture's linguistic and cultural conventions (Bond, 2001, p. 252). In contrast, mutant texts adapt the original content to feel more natural in the target culture, often through significant modifications to the source material. This crucial difference highlights how translation strategies can produce either texts that maintain foreign elements or texts that prioritize local assimilation.

Mollanazar and Parham (2010) conducted a comparative analysis of texts originating from diaspora communities alongside those composed and translated within Iran, revealing that all examined categories exhibited some level of hybridity irrespective of their publication location. In subsequent research, Parham (2011) specifically investigated hybrid texts emerging from diaspora contexts, making an important distinction between concrete and abstract manifestations of diaspora. The translation and interpretation of such hybrid texts necessitates particular theoretical frameworks, among which Fillmore's Scenes and Frames Semantics (SFS) has proven valuable for elucidating the mechanisms of hybridization, rehybridization, and dehybridization processes (Birjandi & Parham, 2015; Parham, 2010).

Parham's later work in *National Identity in Literary Translation* (2019) dedicates a section to examining *National Identity in Persian Translated Immigrant Literature*. Focusing on questions of identity, this research analyzes a work of Iranian immigrant literature in translation to see how these concerns with national identity and identification are reflected in translation (Parham, 2019, p. 193). The findings demonstrate that the migrant author's identity concerns are effectively rendered into Persian by translators, whether through deliberate choices or inherent linguistic requirements.

Homi Bhabha and Migration

Homi K. Bhabha, the prominent postcolonial theorist, has made seminal contributions to our understanding of identity formation, cultural negotiation, and power relations in contexts of migration and colonialism. His conceptual framework – particularly his theories of hybridity, mimicry, and the third space – offers critical insights into the transformative effects of migration on cultural identity, with significant implications for contemporary discourse on these matters.

Central to this discussion is Bhabha's notion of hybridity, which illuminates the complex identity negotiations of migrant subjects. As he observes, "in this transcultural world, a person has become a landless sojourner who wants to communicate with others while maintaining his or her identity in order to take root in the new land and become a member of it" (as cited in Khazaei & Karnova-Torabi, 1400, p. 80). This conceptualization finds particular resonance in migration literature, which explores the multifaceted experiences of border-crossing individuals through themes of displacement, belonging, and cultural adaptation.

The twentieth century witnessed unprecedented global migration flows precipitated by world wars, regional conflicts, decolonization movements, and authoritarian regimes (Grass et al., 2008, p. 2). These historical forces displaced millions, creating waves of refugees, migrants, and exiles navigating

increasingly fluid national boundaries. Today, migration continues to profoundly reshape societal structures across political, economic, geographic, and cultural dimensions, making its study ever more crucial.

Migration and Translation

Contemporary scholarship has increasingly examined the intrinsic relationship between translation and migration, reflecting their growing significance in globalized societies and the complex issues they engender. These interconnected phenomena manifest most visibly in migration literature, where the experience of crossing linguistic and cultural borders necessitates not only the translation of language but also the negotiation of identities, traditions, and worldviews.

As Gratman observes, "since immigrants migrate from one culture to another, their writing style is actually dual and biocultural. The combined use of two languages in literary texts creates problems for translators" (as cited in Afzali & Ashari, 1399, p. 183). This duality underscores how migration literature often resists monolingual frameworks, presenting unique challenges for translation while simultaneously enriching literary expression.

Conceptualizing migration through translation reveals a fundamental truth: it is not merely texts that traverse borders, but people. This perspective is pivotal for translation studies, as it expands conventional understandings of translation to encompass the cultural, social, and psychological dimensions of migratory experiences. The current scholarly focus on migration's cultural implications makes this investigation particularly urgent. This study engages with key questions regarding translation's indispensable role in mediating migratory narratives, thereby contributing to broader discussions about the nature of translation itself.

3. Method

This study adopts a comparative analytical approach to investigate hybridity in Persian translations of Mohsin Hamid's diasporic novels, employing Mollanazar and Parham's (2009) Hybridity Trends and Manifestations model as its theoretical framework. The research design incorporates a multi-layered textual analysis, examining both macro-level narrative structures and micro-level linguistic features to identify manifestations of hybridity across cultural, linguistic, and structural dimensions. The selected corpus consists of three of Hamid's English-language novels alongside their Persian translations published between 1397 and 1398:

Source Books:

1. Hamid, M. (2007). *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Penguin Books. (64224 words)

2. Hamid, M. (2013). *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*. Riverhead Books. (55176 words)

3. Hamid, M. (2017). *Exit West*. Riverhead Books. (64294 words)

Persian Translations:

1. Hamid, M. (1398). *Bonyad Garay-e Narazi* (M. Ahmadi, Trans.). Manuchehri Publishing. (61295 words)

2. Hamid, M. (1398). *To-ye Kasif-e Daroun-e Man* (A. Al-Ahmad, Trans.). Tadaaie Books. (32000 words)

3. Hamid, M. (1397). *Khorouji-e Gharbi* (H. Hassani, Trans.). Sedeh Books. (50622 words)

These works were chosen due to Hamid's own immigrant background spanning Pakistan and the UK, which informs his literary exploration of hybrid identities, as well as the translators' status as native Persian speakers whose works have achieved significant commercial success in Iran's literary market.

The data collection process involved two primary phases of textual engagement. Initial readings focused on macro-level indicators of hybridity, including overarching narrative techniques, character development, and cultural themes that reflect the intersection of Eastern and Western worldviews. Subsequent close readings analyzed micro-level hybrid features, scrutinizing lexical choices, syntactic patterns, and discursive strategies such as code-switching, genre blending, and the juxtaposition of disparate cultural references. The unit of analysis remained intentionally flexible, ranging from individual words and phrases to entire paragraphs or texts, in order to fully capture the multifaceted nature of hybridity as it operates across different textual scales.

For data analysis, the study applied Mollanazar and Parham's (2009) framework – *Manifestations of Hybridity*. The framework comprises four distinct components or trends, with this research focusing primarily on the first trend. As Mollanazar and Parham (2009, p. 43) assert, "when hybridity is deemed a feature of contemporary intercultural communication (first trend), hybrid elements are expected to be seen in both translations and original writings". The first trend specifically addresses intentional hybridity, characterized by textual features that appear unusual or out of place. These elements result from deliberate choices by translators or writers rather than linguistic incompetence or translationese (Mollanazar & Parham, 2009, p. 43).

This intentional form of hybridity manifests through various linguistic and cultural markers, including code-switching, code-mixing, dialectal variations (diastratic and diatopic), idiolect, the juxtaposition of disparate culturemes, intentional textual and syntactic interference, as well as genre mixtures that combine Western and Eastern allusions. These elements collectively demonstrate how hybridity operates at multiple levels within translated and original texts (Mollanazar & Parham, 2009).

Data analysis procedure involved systematically categorizing these hybrid elements, comparing their treatment in source and target texts, and documenting their frequency to identify patterns in how translators negotiate cultural dissonance.

Table 1 presents the Integrated Model of Culture (Mollanazar & Parham, 2009), which serves as the foundation for analyzing these hybrid features in the selected corpus.

Table 1. Integrated Model of Culture (Mollanazar & Parham, 2009)

Outer Elements of Culture (Concrete)	- Semiotic signs - Gestures - Pictures - Objects - Music - Art and literature - Food and drink - Dress code and ornaments - Architecture - Names (people, places, brands) and dates - Heroes (cultural and pan-cultural)
Inner Elements of Culture (Abstract)	- Rituals (including communication strategies) - Customs and traditions (including marriage, funeral, festivals, vows, stories and the significance or symbolism behind them) - Ways and styles (of discourse, …) - Beliefs and feelings religious elements - Myths and legends - Geographical and environmental elements

4. Results

This section presents the findings of textual analysis across Hamid's three novels, examining how hybridity manifests through linguistic, cultural, and narrative strategies. Specific examples from each work demonstrate how translation mediates the intersection of Eastern and Western cultural paradigms.

Analysis of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

The novel chronicles the journey of Changez, a Pakistani man who pursues education and employment in America before his growing disillusionment – particularly following wartime events in Pakistan – prompts his return to his homeland. Changez serves as both protagonist and narrator, recounting his experiences to an unnamed American visitor in Lahore, a narrative frame that effectively highlights the novel's central cultural hybridity through its comparative examination of American and Pakistani societies.

The first example from this novel contains an instance of code-switching. The Persian translation has preserved this element by translating "jenaab" into جناب. However, the Persian equivalent is not out of place and strange in the target language and is thus dehybridized.

ST: "**Jenaab**", I replied, bowing my head, "do you never go home?"

"Not enough", he said.

TT: «من در حالی که سرم را به نشانه تعظیم فرود می‌آوردم پاسخ دادم: «**جناب**! اصلا به خانه نمی‌روید؟» پاسخ داد: «نه به قدر کافی.».

Manifestation of hybridity: Code-mixing

In the second example, the translator has preserved the semiotic sign which has resulted in hybridization.

ST: And then recomposed **thousands of miles away**?

TT: و سپس دوباره هزاران **مایل** دورتر دوباره به وجود بیایی؟

Manifestation of hybridity: Semiotic sign

Analysis of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*

The novel follows the journey of a impoverished village boy striving for prosperity. His childhood sweetheart defies their community's traditions by moving to the city and becoming a model, which inspires his own urban migration. After achieving wealth and success in adulthood, he ultimately faces financial ruin and illness in old age. The story concludes with his reunion with the woman he had long admired, spending his final years with her. This narrative effectively portrays the transformative experience of rural-to-urban migration and the pursuit of a new life.

The first example from this novel presents an instance of code-switching in the translation process, resulting in the hybridization of the target text.

ST: Your brother-in-law is visibly excited, pleased to be seated in **business class** and to be booked into a fancy hotel.

TT: برادر زنت به وضوح هیجان‌زده است، از پرواز در بخش **بیزنس کلاس** و اقامت پیش رو در یک هتل مجلل بسیار خشنود است.

Manifestation of hybridity: Code-mixing

The second example contains another instance of hybridization since *heavy metal* is transliterated as *هوی متال*.

STT: He is a lanky fellow with sideburns and a soul patch, his T-shirt suggesting an affinity for **heavy metal**.

TT: جوان دیلاقی است با دم خط بلند و ریش مختصر زیر لب پایین. تی شرت به تن دارد که نشان می‌دهد به موسیقی **هوی متال** علاقمند است.

Manifestation of hybridity: Music

Analysis of *Exit West*

The narrative follows a young Pakistani couple deeply in love when war suddenly erupts in their homeland. Mysterious magical doors appear without warning, offering passage to foreign lands, compelling them to begin life as migrants in unfamiliar countries. Ultimately, the strains of existing between cultures prove too great – Saeed, the male protagonist, returns to his homeland, while Nadia, his partner, adapts to her adopted country and chooses to remain abroad. Their diverging paths poignantly illustrate the complex realities of displacement and cultural adaptation.

The first example presents an instance of code-mixing which has hybridized the translation.

ST: Nadia frequently explored the terrain of social media, though she left little trace of her passing, not **posting** much herself, and employing opaque usernames and **avatars**, the online equivalents of her black robes.

TT: نادیا به طور مرتب در قلمرو رسانه‌های اجتماعی کندو وکاو می‌کرد، گرچه ردپای کمی از خود بجا می‌گذاشت. زیاد **پست** نمی‌گذاشت و از نام‌های کاربری مبهم و **آواتار** استفاده می‌کرد، معادل آنلاین ردا های سیاه رنگش را.

Manifestation of hybridity: Code-mixing

In the second example, Saeed and Nadia in the English text are considered hybrid. But after translation, these name have lost their hybrid quality and are dehybridized.

ST: A young man met a young woman in a classroom and did not speak to him for many days. His name was **Saeed** and her name was **Nadia**.

TT: مردی جوان در کلاس دختر جوانی را دید، اما تا مدت ها با او حرف نزد. نامش **سعید** بود و نام آن دختر **نادیا**.

Manifestation of hybridity: Names

The study's findings reveal an absence of code-switching in the translations, with all texts being fully translated. Similarly, there is no evidence of dialect, idiolect, intentional textual and syntactic interference, or mixtures (of genres, Western and Eastern allusions, etc.). However, as demonstrated in Figure 1 below, instances of code-mixing and cultureme are present and observable across all three novels.

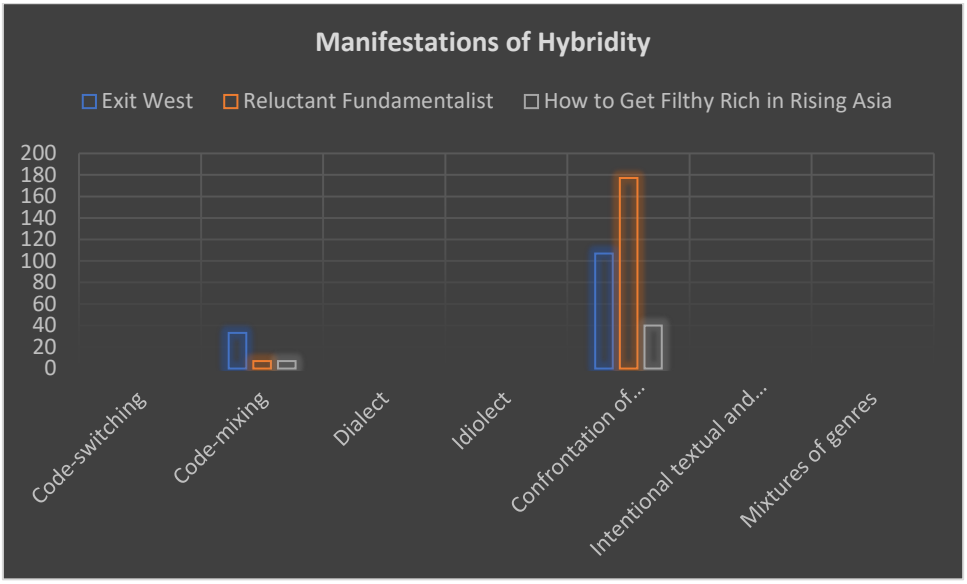

Figure 1. Manifestations of hybridity in the Corpus of the Study

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings presented in Figure 1 clearly illustrate the distribution of code-mixing and culturemes across the three novels. *Exit West* demonstrates significantly more code-mixing compared to the other works, while *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* contains the highest number of culturemes. These variations stem from both the translators' choice of strateges and the inherent demands of each narrative, where certain storylines naturally required more pronounced cultural representations. The translators' decisions regarding which elements to translate directly impacted the degree of hybridity in each text, effectively moving it closer to or further from a hybrid mode.

The comprehensive analysis identified 363 hybrid elements in total, consisting of 47 instances of code-mixing and 326 culturemes. *Exit West*'s prominence in code-mixing suggests the translator's intentional effort to preserve textual hybridity, while *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*'s abundance of cultureme confrontations effectively captures the protagonist's experience of cultural duality as a foreigner navigating between worlds. It is noteworthy that no other hybrid elements beyond these two categories appeared in the texts, and all translators maintained strict adherence to translation principles, successfully avoiding any instances of translationese.

The study revealed systematic omissions of content related to emotional and sexual relationships, reflecting the target culture's Islamic values where such topics remain culturally sensitive. Furthermore, the data indicates a gradual reduction in hybrid elements across different publication years, pointing to translators' growing tendency to culturally adapt texts for local readership. However, despite these adaptations, the fundamental hybrid nature of the source texts persists due to the original works' inherent duality, Mohsin Hamid's deliberate construction of bicultural narratives, and the unavoidable preservation of certain hybrid elements during the translation process.

Applying Mollanazar and Parham (2009) model demonstrates how contemporary writers and translators increasingly minimize textual hybridity for cultural adaptation purposes, while complete elimination remains impossible due to the texts' essential biculturalism. Translators emerge as crucial mediators in this process, carefully balancing cultural adaptation with hybrid preservation. Their

strategic decisions regarding which modern terms to leave untranslated contribute significantly to maintaining the texts' hybrid qualities.

The research ultimately confirms two major findings: the substantial omission of sensitive relationship content due to cultural norms, and the enduring appeal of hybrid texts that offer readers access to dual cultural spaces. This 'dual space' phenomenon – the coexistence of original and translated cultural elements – functions as both a literary device and a translation challenge. While current translation trends favor cultural adaptation, the fundamental hybridity of migrant literature persists through authorial intent, untranslated contemporary terminology, and the irreducible cultural duality inherent in displacement narratives. The study demonstrates how skilled translators successfully navigate these complexities, producing works that remain faithful to both the source material and target culture expectations.

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Exploring the Inclusive Potential of Audio Description

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Abstract

Audio description (AD) is a key tool for improving audiovisual accessibility, originally developed to support the blind and partially sighted community. However, its benefits extend far beyond its initial target audience, with users now including individuals with cognitive disabilities, older adults, language learners, and even sighted individuals in specific contexts. This article analyzes the inclusive potential of AD, tracing the historical evolution of AD from its initial beginnings in the 1980s to the current day as a recognized form of audiovisual translation. AD translates visual information into verbal description, enabling BPS audiences to access visual media on an equal basis as sighted viewers. Apart from accessibility, AD has increasingly been appreciated as a pedagogical tool to facilitate language learning, listening skills, and vocabulary acquisition. AD is also advantageous for individuals with cognitive disabilities since it provides clear, concise descriptions of visual objects, helping to focus attention and reduce cognitive overload. It can also improve the experience for sighted users where visual access is limited, such as while driving or multitasking. This study invites further investigation of the broader applications of AD, encouraging its use in different environments, including education, virtual reality, and interactive narratives. Seen in this light, the current study highlights AD's potential to facilitate inclusivity and accessibility across society, for a wide variety of users beyond its current target ones.

Keywords: Audio description, audiovisual accessibility, blind and partially sighted, cognitive disabilities

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Introduction

In the early stages of cinema, films were created as silent movies with no dialogue. In such silent films, intertitles were used to convey the narrative between scenes. These printed texts, often used to summarize the plot, could be easily translated into different languages and inserted into the film (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2014). Though these intertitles are considered an early form of audiovisual translation (AVT), it was not until the late 1920s with the emergence of talking films that the need for more formalized translation became evident (Chaume, 2012; Chiaro, 2009; Ranzato, 2016; Remael, 2013). With the introduction of sound into cinema, the process of translation became intricate, creating a new set of challenges for translators.

As an academic discipline, Translation Studies (TS) did not emerge until the latter half of the 20th century. Initially, its focus was on literary and biblical translation, while AVT was largely overlooked (Remael, 2013). The late 1950s and early 1960s marked the beginning of serious academic engagement with the interdisciplinary nature of AVT. Over the past five decades, AVT has been recognized as a distinct subfield, evolving its own theoretical frameworks separate from traditional literary models (Chaume, 2012; Romero-Fresco, 2009). This shift has led to the development of specific models and methods for different modes of AVT, such as subtitling, dubbing, and voice-over (Bassnett, 2013).

By the 1980s, AVT research began to be approached with a focus on translation theory (Orero, 2009). According to Díaz-Cintas (2008), this can be seen in the increasing availability of AVT courses at universities which encompass areas of study such as dubbing, subtitling, voice-over, and audiovisual accessibility for both deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers. These training events, in association with an ever-growing number of academic conferences and symposia, have favored the expansion of interest in AVT towards a multidisciplinary brand of scholarship encompassing scholars from a wide range of fields (Díaz-Cintas, 2009). With the rapid growth of audiovisual translation, significant attention has been directed toward accessibility services such as Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (SDH) and Audio Description (AD).

The primary significance of audio description in research lies in its ability to enhance audiovisual accessibility for blind and partially sighted (BPS) audiences. However, it is important to note that BPS audiences are not the only beneficiaries of AD. Seen in this light, this inquiry focuses on how this accessibility tool also holds potential value for a wider range of users, including those with cognitive disabilities, older adults, and even sighted individuals in specific contexts, such as when consuming visual media in an audio-only format. This study, then, forms the footing for further research on the broader applications and benefits of AD. Furthermore, this study seeks to establish a foundation for future research into the evolving role of AD in diverse settings, such as education, virtual reality, and immersive storytelling, where its principles could be adapted to create more accessible and enriching experiences for a wider audiences. Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of reimagining AD not only as an accessibility solution but also as a transformative medium with the potential to benefit society as a whole.

Definition of Audio Description

Although AD is new, it has established itself solidly within the field of AVT. Being a specialized variant of AVT, AD shares many characteristics with text production but also exhibits distinct features that set it apart. This is most evident in its inter-semiotic translation process, where visual information is transformed into verbal descriptions.

Linguistically, AD has been described as "the transformation of images into vivid narration" (Matamala & Orero, 2007, p. 329), or as "a verbalization of the visual codes" (Kruger, 2012, p. 70). Despite varying descriptions, these definitions share a focus on the textual dimension of AD. Seen in this light, AD can be classified under Jakobson's (1959) third type of translation: inter-semiotic translation, which is defined as "the conversion of nonverbal signs into words" (Díaz-Cintas, 2005, p. 4). Gottlieb's (1998) four communication channels – nonverbal visual, verbal-visual, nonverbal auditory, and verbal auditory – illustrate how AD converts nonverbal visual input into a verbal auditory format. Having said that, it involves more than merely describing what is seen; it aims to evoke an experience akin to what sighted audiences perceive, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility.

In the broader context, AD is considered a "media access service" (Braun & Orero, 2010) that enables BPS individuals to follow visual content by filling the accessibility gap (Bourne & Hurtado, 2007; Remael, 2012). To this end, AD is essentially an enabling service: it supports inclusion and bridges the gap between the visual media and BPS audiences. This facilitates access to, and appreciation of, various types of visual content on equal terms with sighted spectators, thus realizing equality of, and participation in, culture. According to Holland (2009), AD enables the creation of inclusive environments that allow people with BPS to have equal experiences with art and media with sighted audiences.

AD provides a verbal narrative inserted during silent segments of audiovisual products, describing actions, character movements, scene transitions, and other visual elements (Ofcom, 2006). It must address five key narrative questions: where (locations), when (time of day), who (characters), what (on-screen text and sound effects), and how (action development) (Vera, 2006). These questions ensure that selection of visuals to describe is guided by elements that remain important for comprehension. The approach also dictates neutrality at all times; audio text must not be overly descriptive or interpretable, leaving the audiences to their own decisions and judgment (Braun, 2007).

A Historical Sketch of Audio Description

After introducing AD as a media access service and defining it as the umbrella term for techniques meant to make visual media accessible to the blind in the previous section, it is now necessary to present a comprehensive historical sketch of AD.

As indicated by some researchers (Benecke, 2004, p. 78; Snyder, 2020), the origins of AD can be traced back to "as old as sighted people telling visually impaired people about visual events happening in the world around them". Snyder (2020, p. 13) humorously states that the origin of AD dates back to prehistoric times: "When two sighted cavemen were munching on the same leftover saber-tooth tiger. One fellow screamed at the other, 'Look out behind you! There's a mastodon coming from the left!'". Snyder also highlights the concept of AD for "sighted individuals who happen to be looking the wrong way" (Snyder, 2020, p. 13).

Despite such anecdotal perspectives, the history of AD as a formal practice is relatively short. According to most academic accounts, its origins can be pinpointed to the early 1980s, with the United States often identified as its birthplace (Benecke, 2004; Braun, 2007; Kleege, 2016; Snyder, 2014, 2020; Vera, 2006). Earlier initiatives, however, date back to the 1970s, when Gregory Frazier, a graduate student at San Francisco State University, played a pioneering role. Frazier expanded the horizons of AD by experimenting with rapid speech between dialogue lines at the request of a blind friend. His master's thesis, titled *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman: An All Video Description of the Teleplay of Blind and Visually Handicapped*, marked a landmark in the formalization of AD

guidelines (Snyder, 2020). In 1996, the *New York Times* described him as "a San Francisco visionary who hit on the idea of providing simultaneous electronic AD for the blind" (Snyder, 2020, p. 20).

Although the United States is widely regarded as the birthplace of AD, most academic research in this field comes from European countries, where AD is often studied as a form of translation (Snyder, 2020; Orero, 2005; Matamala, 2018). By the mid-1980s, AD expanded to the United Kingdom, debuting in a small theater (Snyder, 2020). Some researchers, however, suggest that a form of AD may have existed earlier, such as during the 1940s in Spain, where a radio commentator described events for blind listeners (Reviers, 2016). In these early theatrical implementations, blind audience members wore headsets to receive descriptions of scenes, characters, and their actions, delivered during natural pauses in dialogue. By this time, AD began to extend its reach to television programs and films (Benecke, 2004; Braun, 2007; Holland, 2009; Hyks, 2005; Kleege, 2016; Snyder, 2006).

In countries such as the United States, Canada, and the UK, AD initially centered on live and open theatrical performances before expanding to other forms of media (Vera, 2006). Early descriptions were delivered through separate audio tracks accessible to audiences (Kleege, 2016). Museums also began adopting AD to make exhibitions accessible to BPS visitors. The advent of digital television and commercial DVDs in the 1990s further popularized AD, transforming it into a professional and public service. The passage of the Telecommunications Act in 1996 by the U.S. Congress required the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to mandate closed captioning, indirectly fostering the development of AD (Vera, 2006). In 1997, the FCC implemented a transition schedule for distributors to increase the availability of captioned programs, laying the groundwork for AD's standardization (Vera, 2006).

The UK played a very important role in the development of descriptive styles and guidelines. In 1991, the Independent Television Commission (ITC) – today part of Ofcom – under the AUDETEL Consortium, established the ITC Guidelines to explore issues related to described programs (Snyder, 2020). These guidelines became a model for other European countries. As a response, the European Union has issued "Television Without Frontiers" directive in 1989 and then updated in 1997 to respond to US's Telecommunication Act (Vera, 2006).

Spectrum of Audio Description Audiences

As the definition of AD has pointed out, it is a "media access service". Despite this, research regarding the reception of AD produced for and by its diverse users has remained rare. It therefore becomes necessary to first establish who the BPS are, as the primary users of AD, and to discuss and differentiate the terms *impairment* and *disability*. What is more, it is important to consider other potential audiences who may benefit from or contribute to the AD production process.

The distinction between the terms *impairment* and *disability* further clarifies the issue. Disability is a subjective and variable concept, whereas impairment is a more objective and defined term (Ellis, 2016, p. 37). The World Health Organization (WHO), through the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) in 2001, defined impairment as "problems in body function or structure related to a significant deviation or loss", which can be either temporary or permanent, progressive, regressive, or static (WHO, 2014). Historically, the term impairment has carried a negative connotation, often associated with medical defects. For many years, individuals with impairments were expected to adapt to society. However, as societal attitudes shifted, it became clear that society itself needed to adapt – through improved design of environments, products, and services – to accommodate people with disabilities.

The CRPD defines persons with disabilities as individuals "who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full

and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (Ellis, 2016, p. 38). Recognizing that society is often rigid and unaccommodating, it becomes evident that poorly designed environments, technologies, education systems, and other societal components continue to hinder people with impairments.

According to Global Age Watch, in 2050 nearly one in five people in developing countries will be aged over 50 (as cited in Ellis, 2016). While many older people are not considered disabled, over 80 % of people who experience sight loss are over the age of 50 with considerable numbers being aged over 65 years (Fernández i Torné, 2016; Reviers, 2016). Consequently, there is a probable increase of AD users within the next couple of decades since 23.55% of the EU's population will reach 65-plus years in the year 2030. This is essential for those that have been experiencing a progressive loss of sensory or cognitive abilities. A point that is paramount here, though, is that these people, most of the time, do not come into the statistics count under the BPS group (Reviers, 2016). But then, again, more than 5 million partial sighted people are found within the ADLAB countries only (Maszerowska, et al., 2014; Reviers, 2016), and they also derive significant benefit from environmental, product, and service designs intended for them (Ellis, 2016). Besides, all the secondary AD benefits for both groups are no less important to ignore (Reviers, 2016).

There is, however, still no consensus between organizations of people with disabilities about how these terms ought to be used. Given the range of terminology, it is not at all surprising that the general public is often at a loss to know which terms to use. Keeping these differences in mind, we move now to the question of who constitutes the audiences for AD.

The Spanish Standardisation and Certification Association, AENOR, and the AD standard UNE 153020 state that AD is destined for people with visual impairments. However, the same standard recognizes that "people with no visual disabilities can also benefit from it" (AENOR, 2005, p. 4). There are, therefore, two different kinds of AD audiences: the primary and the secondary.

The main recipients are BPS users, who strongly rely on AD in their access to visual media. A very heterogeneous target group consists of persons who became blind from birth or at a later stage as an effect of accidents or diseases (Remael et al., 2015). As such, the BPS audiences are not homogeneous; it is made up of various subgroups, each with different levels of visual impairment and distinct ways of understanding the world (Remael et al., 2015). The other users include those who use AD as a support tool for various reasons, such as immigrants learning the language of their host country, children acquiring language skills, individuals with ADHD using AD to improve their concentration (Rai et al. 2010; Remael et al. 2015), or even those who choose not to view images for personal reasons. These are those elderly individuals who are not regarded as impaired but who nevertheless need AD, especially as they experience a natural decline in either sensory or cognitive abilities over time (Ellis, 2016; Fernández i Torné, 2016).

Primary Audiences (BPS Individuals)

Audio description is one of the most important elements in bridging the gap between visual media and visually impaired audiences, enabling individuals who are blind or partially sighted to engage more with audiovisual productions. As Poli (2009) explains, the human visual system mediates one's experience of the world, and AD bridges the gap of missing visual information by providing auditory descriptions of visual elements such as characters' actions, settings, and facial expressions. In doing so, BPS audiences can follow and understand visually dependent media, such as science documentaries, that they might otherwise be unable to fully appreciate (Schmeidler & Kirchner, 2001). In conveying such information, AD not only augments understanding but also intensifies

emotional engagement, allowing BPS audiences to connect more deeply with the narrative, particularly in emotionally charged sequences (Ramos, 2015).

The process of visualization is also another significant factor facilitated by AD since it assists BPS viewers in creating internal mental representations of scenes, characters, and events. Szarkowska and Jankowska (2012) reaffirm that particular descriptions assist in creating internal and rich representations for blind individuals regarding onscreen activity, which is a key factor in narrative access. Without such descriptions, BPS audiences would be deprived of the opportunity to visualize the story, limiting them from participating in the plot. Bardini (2020) further observes that the ability to mentally picture scenes enhances the level of immersion, enabling viewers to position themselves in the developing story. This cognitive visualization is particularly important in relation to emotional involvement since AD not only describes visual objects but also informs us about the mood of a scene. By stipulating characters' emotions, reactions, and interactions, AD facilitates greater emotional involvement on the viewer's part with the action (Benecke & Dosch, 2004; Morisset & Gonant, 2008). Vercauteren (2007) also adds that tone, pace, and expressive choices by audio describers play a significant role in the way emotional nuance is transmitted to enable BPS audiences to access the emotional content of the story.

Enhancing AD, audio introduction provides additional contextual information about audiovisual products, making it easier for BPS audiences to understand and appreciate. Fryer and Romero-Fresco (2014) and Di Giovanni (2014) note that audio introduction, often used in opera and theatre, provides factual and visual information enabling BPS audiences to gain an external overview of the content. Audio introduction may assume numerous forms, including pre-recorded or live presentations, and is particularly useful in explaining intertextual references that are often vital to the understanding of certain narratives (Federici, 2007). For instance, in films like *Midnight in Paris* (2011), audio introduction can explain allusions to famous paintings, while in *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), it can explain symbolic visual details such as costumes or gestures. This additional layer of information avoids BPS audiences losing out on significant plot advancements or cultural references, and also enhances their viewing experience.

The access made possible by AD is possibly its greatest contribution in that it makes available to BPS individuals copious amounts of cultural, educational, and entertainment media which otherwise they would be unable to access. Braun and Orero (2010) note that AD enables visually impaired groups to have access to film, television, and educational video, making social inclusion possible as they are able to view the same content as their sighted counterparts. Technological advancements, such as text-to-speech systems, have also improved the production and dissemination of AD, thereby making it more accessible and affordable (Fernández-Torné, 2016). This increased accessibility to AD implies that BPS individuals will not be left behind in a world where visual communication is becoming the dominant form of communication.

AD also helps to promote equality in society by breaking media consumption barriers. Caro (2016) and Braun and Orero (2010) argue that AD helps BPS individuals participate in social and cultural life to the fullest, reducing feelings of isolation and exclusion. By making audiovisual media accessible to all, regardless of visual ability, AD facilitates a more inclusive and accessible society for all. Observe, however, the variety within the BPS community as there may be varying preferences for how AD is delivered. Chmiel and Mazur (2022) state that some BPS viewers prefer interpretative, creative descriptions and others who prefer functional, straightforward ones. What is more, Walczak and Fryer (2017) note that some viewers prefer emotionally resonant, creative descriptions, while others favor traditional, factual accounts. Seen in this light, flexibility in AD delivery is essential to meet the diverse needs and preferences of BPS audiences. Striking a balance between emotional depth and clarity is the key to the success of AD, as it ensures that all viewers can engage with the content in a way that suits their preferences (Szarkowska & Jankowska, 2012). This adaptability not only

enhances comprehension but also optimizes emotional immersion, making the viewing experience more enjoyable for BPS audiences.

Secondary Audiences

Audio Description for Language Learners

AD is an accessibility tool that translates visual information into verbal commentary, primarily aimed at blind or partially sighted people (Walczack & Fryer, 2017). While translating images into words, audio describers, on some occasions, also feel the need to include aural information that is difficult to understand (Fryer 2010) or even to explain some cultural information that is concealed in the visual information. This makes AD also useful for audiences of different ages, different social backgrounds or different cultures and even "for those who find it difficult to follow the narrative thread" (Fryer, 2016, p.171).

In this regard, AD has gained recognition as a pedagogical tool in various educational settings. Clouet (2005) was the first to propose the use of AD as a didactic tool aimed at enhancing writing skills within English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. Following this, Martínez Martínez (2012) expanded on the concept by describing how AD can facilitate the acquisition of lexical competence in language learners. Both authors focused their research on translation students, utilizing AD to assist these individuals in developing essential linguistic skills pertinent to translation tasks. Their work highlights the innovative application of AD not only as a means of making audiovisual content accessible to BPS audiences but also as a valuable pedagogical resource in language education. This intersection of translation studies and language learning underscores the versatility of AD in educational settings.

Experimental studies on AD have proliferated over the past decade, ranging from pedagogical proposals (Cenni & Izzo, 2016) to explorations of its potential for developing linguistic competences (Calduch & Talaván, 2018; Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2013), speaking competences (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2015a, 2015b; Navarrete, 2018; Talaván & Lertola, 2016), integrated skills (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2014), media literacy (Herrero & Escobar, 2018), literacy (Snyder, 2006) or accessibility awareness (Ogea Pozo, 2022). Results suggest that using AD as a pedagogical tool enhances learning in multiple ways (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2017a; Lertola, 2019; Talaván *et al.*, 2022), such as:

1. Enhanced Comprehension and Engagement: AD can significantly improve comprehension and engagement for learners by providing detailed descriptions of visual elements in multimedia content.

Several studies have provided evidence on the positive influences of AD on media content understanding by BPS viewers (Frazier & Coutinho-Johnson, 1995; Schmeidler & Kirchner, 2001) and children (Palomo, 2008). Frazier and Coutinho-Johnson (1995), for example, conducted a significant study that highlighted the effectiveness of AD in enhancing the comprehension for BPS individuals. Their research demonstrated that participants with visual impairments who viewed films supplemented with audio descriptions achieved comprehension levels comparable to those of sighted viewers. Having said that, listening to AD is advantageous for a much wider audiences including sighted viewers when it is inserted between dialogues in the film. Eardley et al. (2017) emphasized the potential of AD to enhance the experiences of both sighted and BPS individuals by stimulating imagery and creating a more immersive viewing environment. By integrating narrative information with visual content, AD fosters a multi-sensory experience that engages various senses, thereby enriching the overall comprehension of the film or artwork. This multi-sensory approach not only aids blind and visually impaired individuals in understanding and enjoying visual elements that

they cannot see but also benefits sighted viewers by providing deeper contextual insights that can enhance their engagement with the material.

Krejtz et al. (2012a) in an experimental eye-tracking study, in primary school sighted children, demonstrated that AD guides children's attention toward described objects resulting, e.g., in more fixations on specific regions of interest in educational movies. AD also sustained attention of sighted viewers resulting in a better comprehension of the movie content (Krejtz et al., 2012a). After watching audio-described educational movies, children easily retrieved visual elements of the movies than their peers who watched the clips without AD and relied more on the recognition rather than based their decisions on the elimination heuristic (Krejtz et al., 2012b). Another series of multimedia learning experiments (Krejtz et al., 2016) corroborated that AD in a group of sighted young adults facilitates focal attention (see also Velichkovsky et al., 2005) when looking at still images of visual art which in turn enhances their comprehension and engagement.

2. **Vocabulary Acquisition**: Providing detailed and contextually rich language input through AD can enhance vocabulary acquisition in foreign language learners.

In essence, AD acts as a bridge between visual information and language, providing learners with a rich and engaging way to acquire new vocabulary in a foreign language. By presenting words in context, reinforcing their meaning through repetition, and encouraging active engagement, AD supports a more effective and enjoyable vocabulary learning experience. Ibáñez Moreno and Vermeulen (2013), for example, assert that using AD as a pedagogical tool for language learning is highly effective, concluding that "AD is a good tool to foster lexical and phraseological competence and to make students aware of the importance of this competence as an essential part of communicative competence" (p. 56).

AD presents new vocabulary in a meaningful context, making it easier for learners to understand and remember the words. Learners can infer the meaning of unfamiliar words from the visual context and the surrounding description. For instance, an AD describing a character's facial expressions can introduce vocabulary related to emotions and reactions, allowing learners to associate words with visual cues and understand their nuanced meanings.

As AD describes the visual content, key vocabulary is often repeated, reinforcing its meaning and usage. This repetition aids in memory retention and helps learners internalize new words and phrases. For instance, if a scene depicts a historical event, AD might repeatedly use terms related to warfare, politics, or social customs, reinforcing their understanding of those concepts.

The combination of visual and auditory input in AD enhances vocabulary acquisition by engaging multiple senses and cognitive processes. Learners can associate the spoken words with the visual imagery, creating stronger connections and improving recall. This multimodal approach caters to different learning styles and preferences, making vocabulary learning more effective.

3. Development of Listening Skills: By focusing on the spoken descriptions, learners can develop their listening comprehension abilities. AD requires learners to listen attentively to the spoken descriptions in order to understand the visual content being conveyed. This focused attention on the auditory input strengthens their ability to discern sounds, identify keywords, and follow the flow of information.

In addition to the primary applications of AD for educational purposes, numerous scholars have explored its potential for developing various skills. Clouet (2005) pioneered the use of AD to enhance writing skills among translation students, recognizing its capacity to improve clarity and precision in their written work. Similarly, Cambeiro and Quereda (2007) regarded AD as a valuable tool for fostering a deeper understanding of the translation process itself, enabling students to engage more critically with the material they translate. Basic Peralta et al. (2009) further suggested that AD can

assist translators in cultivating specific competencies essential for effective AD, such as keen observation skills, the ability to articulate visual details accurately, and the use of appropriate language and register. Moreover, Ibáñez Moreno and Vermeulen (2014) demonstrated that tasks based on AD in Spanish as a foreign language classrooms can promote effective communication strategies among learners. Their earlier work in 2013 also highlighted how AD contributes to enhancing idiomaticity in language use, a finding supported by Sadowska (2016) in her study involving Polish students learning English as a foreign language. In terms of more specialized skills, Ibáñez and Vermeulen (2017b) addressed the promotion of metalinguistic competences, which can often be challenging to teach. Collectively, these studies underscore the versatility of AD as a pedagogical tool that not only aids in language acquisition but also enriches various linguistic competencies among learners.

AD for People with Disabilities

AD was originally developed to assist BPS individuals by providing a verbal narration of visual elements in audiovisual content; however, some authors and guidelines suggest, primarily on a academic basis, that individuals without visual impairments may also benefit from AD (e.g., ADLAB, 2012, p. 9; ADP, 2009, July, p. 3; AENOR, 2005, p. 6; Díaz Cintas, 2007; Remael et al., 2015, p. 17). These sources suggest that potential sighted audiences might include vulnerable and general users. AD acts as an additional layer of audio that enhances the comprehension and interaction of such viewers with the material. This audio can explain intricate scenes, character relationships, and contextual backgrounds that might have been missed otherwise and allow a more inclusive experience. This means that AD not only enriches the accessibility of audiovisual products but also enhances cognitive processing and comprehension in a diverse range of audiences, thus making the media landscape more equal.

AD is a service that greatly enhances the viewing experience of individuals with cognitive-perceptual impairments due to its structured and clear auditory narrative to accompany visual information. Apart from assisting BPS viewers, this service also provides many benefits to people with cognitive disabilities that impede them from processing visual information effectively. For instance, the *French Audio Description Charter* (Morisset & Gonant, 2008) maintains that AD could be used successfully by elderly people whose cognitive capacities are diminishing; sick people who are sometimes bothered by the rapidity of the moving image; foreigners who are learning the language; and [...] anyone who can see but who wants to listen to a film without looking at it (while driving, for example) (p. 4).

AD offers significant benefits for individuals with cognitive-perceptual challenges, including:

1. Clarification of Visual Elements

Research on information processing in the brain points out that there are two channels: visual and auditory. Therefore, it can be understood that when the brain uses both channels together, for example when AD is used, it has the potential to hold and process more new information than usual. According to Lewis (2021), AD describes visually apparent actions, settings, and expressions. This is particularly beneficial for individuals with autism spectrum disorder, who often find it difficult to interpret social cues and facial expressions. By narrating these elements, AD helps them understand the context better, thereby enhancing their overall comprehension of the content (Lewis, 2021).

2. Support for Auditory Learning

Some people learn much easier by hearing the information. It is because AD meets a learning style in which one would simply listen to things and not necessarily be distracted by everything else surrounding him. It may also turn out very vital in an educational situation when such an audio learner receives additional context from the AD and longer retains this very information.

3. Reduction of Perceptual Blindness

Perceptual blindness occurs when viewers miss out on important visual cues either because they are distracted or just not paying attention. The AD makes sure that such relevant visuals get mentioned to avoid any missing of vital information by all viewers, including those with cognitive challenges, which would be critical in following the story (Marshall et al., 2016).

4. Enhanced Engagement and Focus

AD assists in holding the attention of those who might struggle with their ability to focus or process, simplified from complex visual narratives into clear audio formats. Due to the structured nature of ADs, the experience is more immersive, in that users are able to follow along and not feel overwhelmed by the visual stimuli.

Despite the many advantages of AD, the effect of AD on the viewing experience of sighted audiences is not yet clear. One of the most central questions is whether AD is distracting for these audiences. Current empirical research into the effects of AD on sighted users is scarce and often inconclusive, making it impossible to give a straightforward answer. For instance, in their recent study *Audio Describing for an Audience with Learning Disabilities in Brazil: A Pilot Study*, Franco et al. (2015) were able to disclose the fact that though AD can be much helpful for viewers with eyesight disabilities, it may not appropriately help people with learning disabilities to fully understand the plot of a film and various narrative mechanisms. The researchers have concluded from their findings that besides AD, a further interpretation of what is implicit between images and across the images is very much required in developing access for that particular audience. Thus, each of these approaches points to a more extensive examination of how varied groups engage in AD and how much more has to be done for an inclusive watching experience.

Audio Description for Limited Screen Access

Over the decades, the field of AD has been mostly concerned with the issue of disability and accessibility of the BPS individuals and providing them with essential visual information, through which they can enrich their experience of audiovisual content. However, a considerable gap remains with the application of AD for sighted audiences who want to hear the content but do not have a screen to watch it. This emerging area is an opportunity for AD to be further utilized in different ways and to be more inclusive and far-reaching than ever before. For example, sighted users, who are multitasking like driving or cooking, could still want to listen to a film or TV show without having their eyes on the screen. Equally, in cases where screens are not visible due to technical problems or because of environmental obstacles, AD might be implemented and thereby help to maintain the audiences' attention in an unprecedented way.

AD's current practices are mainly made for BPS users, and there is emphasis on the description of the central visual components which contribute to the story articulation. While sighted audiences without screen access may share other needs, they may benefit from a more inclusive description that allows them to fully grasp the story and consequently adds to their experience. This could be done by including more AD styles that are relevant to the needs of sighted users, and this would most likely result in a better auditory experience that complements their current interaction with the medium.

Research into this area could explore how AD can be tailored for these audiences, investigating their specific needs and preferences. This includes understanding what types of visual information are most beneficial for sighted users who are unable to view the screen directly and how best to integrate these descriptions into existing media formats. By addressing this gap, stakeholders can not only broaden the audiences for AD but also foster a more inclusive media landscape that accommodates diverse viewing conditions and preferences. As such, exploring the application of AD

for sighted audiences without screen access could represent a significant advancement in the field, promoting greater accessibility and engagement across various contexts.

Conclusion

Audio description has been recognized as a major tool for BPS viewers' access to visual media on an equal footing with the sighted majority. However, as this research has indicated, the potential for AD is considerably larger than that of its niche audiences. AD possesses the immense potential for a variety of diverse users including individuals with cognitive disabilities, older adults, language learners, and even sighted individuals in specific contexts. Sealing AD back into a formative and pluralist medium involves liberating its capability for change and making an impact upon society in general.

For individuals with cognitive disability, AD offers a scripted auditory account which may assist in explaining visual data, reducing perceptual blindness, and enhancing interest and concentration. This is particularly useful for those who struggle with interpreting social cues or understanding complex visual information, such as individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Similarly, older adults who are subjected to normal decline in sensory or intellectual abilities will discover AD to be beneficial as it provides more context and explication for understanding visual media and therefore reduces the feeling of loneliness and exclusion.

Language learners constitute another category of AD consumers. Translating visual information into oral form, AD serves as a powerful pedagogical aid, enhancing vocabulary acquisition, listening, and general language proficiency. Integrating AD into learning contexts has been productive, allowing for greater multimedia interaction and supporting the development of linguistic and communicative ability. This intersection of AD and language learning emphasizes its potential to bridge educational needs and promote multilingualism.

In addition, AD can also enrich the experience of sighted individuals, particularly where visual access is not possible or limited. Multitasking users who are visually able, while cooking or driving for example, may continue to access audiovisual content with AD. Moreover, where screens are hidden due to technical or environmental constraints, AD can maintain viewers' engagement and provide an enhanced accessible viewing experience. This emerging application of AD for sighted audiences without screen access represents a significant opportunity to expand its reach and foster a more inclusive media landscape.

To this end, while AD remains an important tool for BPS audiences, its universal applicability indicates that it may be an innovatory medium for many users. Through the tailoring of AD to the diverse needs of such users, we can create more inclusive, interactive, and enriching experiences in different contexts, from learning to leisure. Continuing research and development in AD must continue to explore its potential in promoting inclusion and accessibility to allow all, regardless of capability or circumstances, to participate as fully as possible and gain maximum benefit from the immense richness of visual content.

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