

Translation of Movie Titles from English into Persian: Strategies and Effects

Bahareh Lotfollahi

M.A. student of translation studies

Ahmad Moinzadeh, Ph.D.

*Corresponding author: Bahareh Lotfollahi, Department of English,
Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Isfahan, Iran,
Email: blotfollahi@yahoo.com*

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Abstract Movies are one of the most popular and influential mass media in the world. Movie titles are the inseparable parts of the movies. Translation of movie titles is a demanding job which needs much effort. Iran has long been a market for western movies which are rapidly being translated from English into Persian. It seems that translation of movie titles from English into Persian has not received much attention. Therefore, the present study made an attempt to investigate the translation of Hollywood movie titles of 2010 from English into Persian in order to analyze the kind of translation strategies and procedures which were used and to show how these strategies changed the effect each title creates. It was shown that the most frequently used translation strategies were literal translation and transliteration which could change the effect of the main titles.

Keywords: movie titles, translation, strategies, Persian

1. Introduction

Movies are one of the most popular and influential mass media in the world. Titles, which are names given to the movies are the inseparable parts of the movies. Translation of movies and especially movie titles is a demanding job which needs much effort. In the translation of movie titles attention should be paid to the features of the title and its connection to the plot of the movie. Different translation strategies and procedures are used in order to translate movie titles. According to Venuti (2000), adaptation is one the most frequently used strategy in the translation of books and movie titles.

Newmark (1988) differentiates between two kinds of titles. Descriptive titles "describe the topic of the text" and allusive titles "have some kind of referential or figurative relationship to the topic" (p. 57). He proposes to keep the descriptive titles, including ones that are based on the protagonist's name, and to rework allusive ones only if necessary. According to Zatlín (2005) "many titles carry over easily" (p. 95) and it is a rule not to keep play titles in a foreign language. Also according to him, problematic titles are those with cultural references and the best strategy for comic titles is adaptation.

Some studies have investigated the translation of movie titles. In one of them, by applying Newmark's translation theory Ying (2007) investigated the translation of movie titles from English to Chinese. Four main translation procedures identified were literal translation, transliteration, free translation and semantic translation. It was suggested that by integrating different translation strategies and procedures with a theory, a translator can provide suitable translations to "get the audience a better understanding of ... the film itself" (p. 83).

In the second study, Yin (2009) examined translation of movie titles from English to Chinese too. In this study techniques used in translating movie titles were categorized into two groups: first including transliteration, literal and explication which show respect for the original title and second, adaptation and providing a new title which get rid of the original title. As Yin proposed, a good movie title "should obey such principles: faithfulness, cultural awareness, combination of commercial and aesthetic effects" (p. 173).

Finally, Yo-ou and Jin-hai (2010) discussed treason in movie title translation from four different aspects: the types, the manifestations, the causes and the effect. They classified treason which "is an inevitable phenomenon in translation" (p. 58) into two categories: unconscious which "will cause mistranslation" (p. 58) and conscious which is deliberate deviation from the original.

As Sklar (1975, p. 215) mentions American movies especially present "American myths and American dreams...", also these movies carry "their views of American to more people in more places than ever before (p. 215). Iran has long

been a market for western movies. These movies are rapidly being translated from English into Persian. It seems that despite the importance of movie translation and especially translation of the title, translation of movie titles from English into Persian has not received much attention. Therefore, the present study makes an attempt to investigate the translation of Hollywood movie titles of 2010 from English into Persian in order to analyze the kind and frequency of translation strategies and procedures which are used and to show how these strategies have changed the effect each title creates.

In order to analyze the strategies and procedures, the model proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet was used as the theoretical framework of the study. The following translation 'procedures' were identified by them (Munday, 2001, p. 56-58):

- 1) **Borrowing:** It happens when the source language word is transferred directly to the target language.
- 2) **Calque:** It is "a special kind of borrowing" where the source language expression or structure is transferred literally.
- 3) **Literal translation:** It is "word-for-word" translation and is common between languages of the same family and culture.
- 4) **Transposition:** It happens when one part of speech changes for another without changing the sense.
- 5) **Modulation:** It changes the point of view and semantics of the source language.
- 6) **Equivalence:** This is used when "languages describe the same situation by different stylistic or structural means" especially in translating proverbs and idioms.
- 7) **Adaptation:** Where a situation in the source culture does not exist in the target culture, adaptation happens by changing the cultural reference.

Another category for translation procedures which was used in this study was that of Newmark (Newmark, 1988, p. 75-77) who identified the following procedures:

- 1) **Transcription** (adoption, transfer, 'loan-words').
- 2) **Literal translation:** A 'coincidental' procedure when the SL term is transparent and semantically motivated and is in standardized language.
- 3) **Through-translation** ('loan-translation', calque).
- 4) **Cultural equivalent:** The SL word is replaced with the TL cultural word.
- 5) **Translation label:** An approximate equivalent or a new term, usually a collocation, for a feature peculiar to the SL.
- 6) **Translation couplets:** The transcription of an institutional term followed by its translation in brackets.
- 7) **Translation triplets:** A politically colored term may require a literal translation, a transcription, and the denotation.
- 8) **Deletion:** A term of little importance in the TL culture may be deleted in translation, provided it is marginal to the text, and some indication of function given where required.
- 9) **Naturalization:** The process of 'anglicizing' foreign names by supplying them with English suffixes.

2. Methodology

The list of 60 Hollywood movies of 2010 which has been translated from English into Persian was made from the websites introduce these movies and also from stores sell them. Each title was compared with its translation to Persian in order to determine the kind of translation strategies used in the process of translation from English into Persian. The data was analyzed by the researchers separately and in cases where no consensus was reached between them, two other people were asked for further analysis. Vinay and Darbelnet and Newmark's models were used as the theoretical framework of the study. Then frequency and percentage of each translation strategy was calculated.

3. Results

Movie titles and their translations were analyzed according to Vinay and Darbelnet and Newmark's model. The results are summarized in the following tables.

Table 1 Literal translation

Source language	Target language
Alice in wonderland	آلیس در سرزمین عجایب
Clash of the Titans	برخورد تایتان ها/نبرد تایتان ها
Edge of darkness	لبه تاریکی
The book of Eli	کتاب الی
Red dawn	سحرگاه سرخ

Unstoppable	توقف ناپذیر
Blue valentine	ولنتاین آبی
Harry Potter and the deathly hallows	هری پاتر و قدیسان مرگبار
Green zone	منطقه سبز
Undisputed 3: redemption	شکست ناپذیر 3: رستگاری
A Christmas carol	سرود کریسمس
The talented Mr. Ripley	ریپلی با استعداد
The return	بازگشت
Resident evil: extinction	شیطان مقیم: انقراض
Devil	شیطان
Needle	سوزن
The tailor of Panama	خیاط پاناما
Little Folkers	فاکرهای کوچک
Body of lies	مجموعه دروغ ها
Inception	سراغز، آغاز، تلقین
Prince of Persia: the sands of time	شاهزاده ایران: ماسه های زمان
The fighters	مبارزان
Mirrors 2	آینه ها 2
The social network	شبکه اجتماعی
I am love	من عشق هستم
Black swan	قوی سیاه
Never let me go	هیچ وقت اجازه نده برم
Exit through the gift shop	خروج از فروشگاه هدیه فروشی/ خروج از راه مغازه کادو فروشی
Barney's version	نسخه بارنی
Another year	سالی دیگر
The twilight saga: eclipse	افسانه گرگ و میش: کسوف
Red	سرخ
Universal soldier 3	سرباز جهانی 3
Iron man 2	مرد آهنی 2
Killers	آدمکش ها
Saw 7	اره 7
Game of death	بازی مرگ
Thirteen	سیزده
Winter's bone	استخوان زمستان
The king's speech	سخنرانی پادشاه

Table 2 Transliteration

Source language	Target language
Robinhood	رابین هود
Salt	سالت
Legion	لژیون
Max payne	مکس پین
Machete	ماشته
Julie and Julia	جولی و جولیا
Australia	استرالیا
Shutter island	شاتر آیلند
Bruce Lee	بروس لی
Narnia 3	نارنیا 3
Tron 2	ترون 2

Table 3 Borrowing

Source language	Target language
Princess	پرنسس
A-team	Aتیم
The tourist	توریست

Table 4 Transposition

Source language	Target language
The stone council	انجمن سنگی
The wolfman	مرد گرگ نما
Tron: the legacy	میراث ترون
127 hours	127 ساعت
Four lions	چهار شیر
Animal kingdom	قلمرو حیوانات

Figure 1 shows the frequency of translation strategies used in the translation of Hollywood movie titles of 2010 from English into persian.

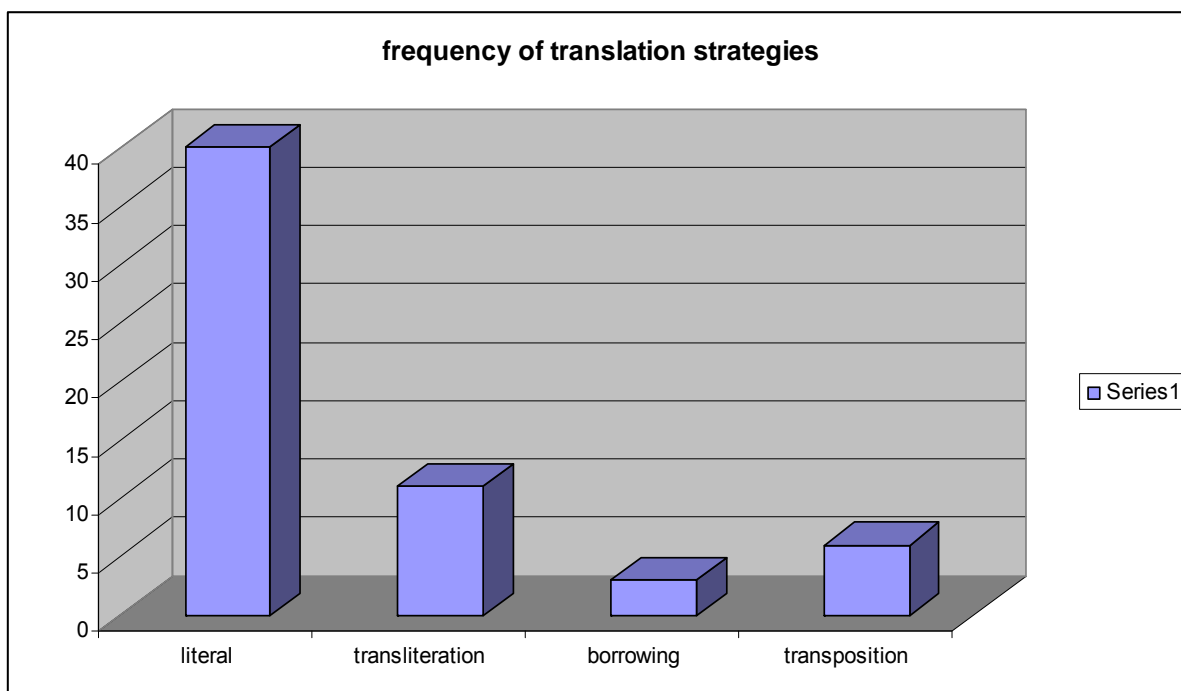
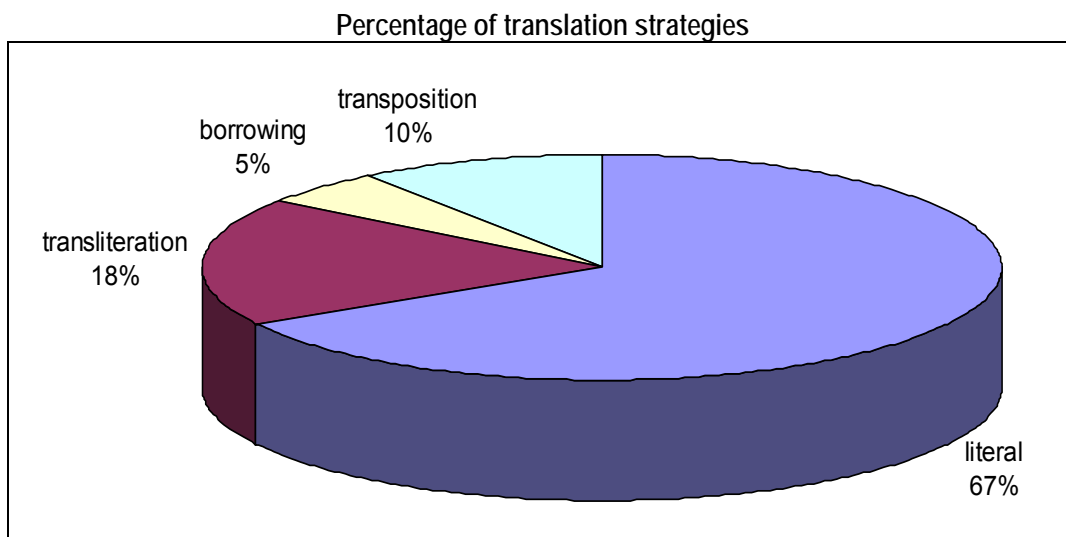


Figure 2 shows the percentage of translation strategies used in the translation of Hollywood movie titles of 2010 from English into persian.



4. Discussion

The comparison of movie titles with their translation from English into Persian showed that the most frequently used strategies were literal translation and transliteration respectively.

Literal translation is the best translation strategy between languages which match with each other structurally. Titles such as 'red dawn' are literally translated into *سحرگاه سرخ*, and the effect of sound play has been kept in Persian.

In case of 'the talented Mr. Ripley', deletion of the word 'Mr.' in translation has created a shorter title in Persian. Although being short is one of the characteristics of a good title, this title does not a clue to the audience that whether the protagonist is a man or a woman.

'Inception' has some different translations in different websites. According to the plot which refers to planting an idea within the person's subconscious mind, *سرآغاز* and *آغاز* could not be a proper equivalent for this title. It seems that *نی‌تلق* could be a better equivalent because it refers to the plot of the movie. This could show that some titles are being translated without paying enough attention to the plot. Titles are the last items to be translated, because as Zatlín (2005) mentions they are "the most important item for marketing the play" (95) and movies.

In case of 'the twilight saga: eclipse' choosing *گرگ و شیم* as the equivalent of 'twilight' has made the title ambiguous in Persian. It is not clear whether *گرگ و شیم* refers to the time of the day when the sun is going down or to some animals.

Proper names like 'Alice', 'Eli', 'Harry Potter', 'Ripley', 'Folkers', 'Barney', 'Robin hood', 'Max Payne', 'Machete', 'Julie', 'Julia', 'Bruce lee', 'Tron' and 'Salt' which are mainly based on the name of the heroes or heroines of the movies are transferred through transliteration with some pronunciation modifications. As long as some proper nouns have connotations in the movies, the effect of these nouns might be lost through transliteration. For example, 'Max Payne' refers to the pain the main character suffers as the slogan of the movie is "I don't believe in heaven. I believe in pain". Also, we know that machete is a kind of knife used as a weapon. 'Machete' is the name of the police officer in this movie which could refer to the violence we witness in this movie. The name of geographical places such as 'Panama' and 'Australia' has also been directly transferred to Persian without being translated. However, 'Persia' has been naturalized and is translated to *رانیا*.

There are some borrowed words from English which in spite of having equivalents in Persian are commonly used. Words such as princess, team and tourist with Persian equivalents *شاهزاده*, *گروه*, and *جهان گرد* are still kept in foreign language. Valentine and Christmas which could be considered culture-bound items are directly transferred to Persian too.

As Ying (2007) mentions one of the functions of movie titles is giving clues about the main place where the story happened. Translating 'Shutter Island' into *شاتر لن‌دی* and borrowing the word island in spite of having a well established equivalent in Persian, could make target language audience not get the idea that the name refers to the place where the story takes place.

In case of transposition some changes in part of speech of some words was observed. For example 'stone council' is translated into *انجمن ی‌سنگ*. Stone is a noun in this sense which is used before nouns or in compounds and refers to a hard material substance in English which has been translated as an adjective in Persian. Also, 'wolfman' which is a compound noun in English is translated into *مرد گرگ نما* in Persian which is a noun phrase with an adjective modifier.

In case of 'Alice in wonderland' wonderland is a compound noun which is translated into *نی‌سرزم بی‌عجا* in Persian which is a noun phrase with an adjective modifier too.

In '127 hours' hours is always translated into *ساعت* which is a singular noun and could be considered an obligatory modulation. The same has happened in translation of 'Four Lions' into *چهار ریش*. Also, in translating 'animal kingdom' into *قلمرو واناتی‌ح* a singular noun -animal- has changed to a plural one -واناتی‌ح- which is more natural in Persian.

5. Conclusion

Movie titles are one of the first items that attract the attention of the audience. Therefore, the translation of movie titles becomes of great importance. The present study investigated the translation of 60 Hollywood movie titles of 2010 from English into Persian. It was shown that the most frequently used translation strategies and procedures were literal translation and transliteration. This is in line with Ying (2007) and Yin (2009) who investigated translation of movie titles from English into Chinese and came to the same results. Also, it was observed that using these kinds of translation strategies could lead to changes in the meaning and effect of the original titles. Therefore, it is highly recommended that translators pay more attention to movie title translation in order to prevent miscommunication.

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