Translation Studies, Autumn 2025, Vol. 23, No. 91, pp. 104–126: **Scientific Research Paper**
DOR: 20.1001.1.17350212.1404.23.3.7.1

From the Global Pool to the National Screen: A Quantitative Analysis of Film Selection and Dubbing Practices on IRIB (2005–2015)[1]

Zeinab Nasrollahi[2] & Hussein Mollanazar[3]

Abstract

This study presents a large-scale quantitative analysis of American films selected for dubbing and broadcast by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) between 2005 and 2015. By comparing a corpus of 540 IRIB-dubbed films against a comprehensive pool of 17,128 eligible Hollywood feature films, this study sought to identify the systematic patterns in institutional selection and adaptation. This analysis examined key variables, including runtime modification, genre distribution, award recognition, director and star prominence, certification profile, and commercial success. The findings revealed a highly selective curation process, with IRIB broadcasting only 3.15% of Hollywood films from 2005 to 2015. Furthermore, a systematic practice of content modification is evident, with dubbed films being shortened by an average of 19.03% of their original runtime. The study demonstrated a significant statistical preference for genres such as *Action* and *Adventure* and for films that have achieved commercial success and critical acclaim. According to the statistical analysis of directors' and stars' presence, a film's chances of selection increase significantly if it features actors and filmmakers who are part of the canon formed by IRIB. From a DTS standpoint, these findings illustrate how AVT is situated in its target system as a norm-governed practice to serve dominant cultural repertoires. From a broader cultural-theoretical lens, what is presented to the public as translation thus functions as a form of managed rewriting, oriented towards expanding the reach of the *Self* rather than admitting the alterity of the *Other*.

Keywords: Audiovisual translation, Dubbing, Film selection, Hollywood, IRIB

---

1. This paper was received on 20.06.2025 and approved on 21.10.2025.

2. Corresponding Author: Ph.D. Candidate in Translation Studies, Department of English Translation Studies, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran; email: nasrollahi@rocketmail.com

3. Associate Professor in Translation Studies, Department of English Translation Studies, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran; email: mollanazar@atu.ac.ir

1. Introduction

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) serves as a principal mediating force in the global exchange of cinematic content, one that holds the potential to act as a bridge to introduce the poetics of the *Other* to the *Self*. It bestows upon the audience the opportunity to encounter other nations' "literature, theatre, cinema" and other aspects of their cultures (Dukāte, 2007, p. 87). Translation, in this exchange, is the primary means of constructing representations of the foreign cultures and facilitating "the transculturation of cultural forms and values" (Tymoczko, 2006, pp. 244–245). In this domain, dubbing constitutes a significant site of inquiry due to its capacity for deep, often invisible, transformation. Importantly, the dubbing process begins long before a single line is dubbed. As Venuti (1998, p. 67) aptly observes, "[t]he selection of foreign texts and the development of translation strategies can establish peculiarly domestic canons for foreign literatures […] and therefore reveal exclusions and admissions". This form of gatekeeping within ideologically restrictive frameworks approaches the terrain of censorship. At its most extreme, this process evolves into a defensive mechanism, employed by "[r]eligions and political regimes […] to protect their very existence against all sorts of hostilities and threats" (Mollanazar, 2011, p. 162).

This dynamic is particularly evident in Iran's engagement with American films. Hollywood productions constitute a hegemonic force in the global cinematic landscape (Miller et al., 2009, p. 9). However, only a small fraction of this massive output is deemed appropriate for adaptation and screening by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) as the sole state-controlled media organization in Iran. This pronounced selection gap signals a complex curation process guided by institutional, ideological, and cultural considerations unique to the Iranian context.

To fully grasp this selective logic, it bears mentioning that foreign movie selection for the Iranian marketplace has never been a neutral process. Historically, it

has always been an external reflection of prevailing commercial and socio-political tendencies of the time. Before the revolution, the selection of foreign films relied almost entirely on private importers (Zhirafar, 2014b, pp. 151–155). The 1979 Islamic Revolution precipitated a fundamental paradigm shift from a market-oriented model to state ideological dominance (Naficy, 2012; Zhirafar, 2014a, p. 848). Such institutional selection is precisely the situation that Díaz-Cintas (2012) refers to when calling for contextualizing AVT "within a wider socio-cultural environment" (p. 279).

Despite the prominence of dubbed American films in Iran's audiovisual landscape, there has been no documentation on which films are selected or the variables that may govern their inclusion in the IRIB's lineup. Müller (2004) raises the significance of such studies, arguing that analyzing "canonical selection and exclusion certainly allows one to gain insight into the cultural practices of a society, [and] into power relations within the cultural field" (p. 12). Accordingly, such macro-level scrutinization, by virtue of its unique analytical potential, is worthy of occupying a particular niche in Translation Studies (TS) in Iran.

To address this empirical gap, the current study adopts a quantitative approach to describe and statistically analyze the attributes of those American films from 2005–2015 that had successfully navigated the selection process for dubbing on IRIB.

2. Literature Review

The *cultural turn* in TS embarked on a gradual development in the late 20th century, shifting the field from solely linguistic models to functionalism and sociocultural approaches. This new paradigm urged scholars to investigate questions of power, such as "which texts were or were not selected for translation by a particular culture, and what influences were exerted as a result of such selection" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 63). This functionalist perspective expanded to the entire gatekeeping process, which further necessitated examination of the complex role "an

editor, a publisher or patron plays" in determining "how a text is selected for translation" (Bassnett, 1998, p. 123). AVT, within this framework, is established as a particularly potent site of investigation due to its omnipresence and significant impact.

Dubbing has several characteristics that make it a preferred mode in some regions. A key preference is its immersive qualities, supported by eye-tracking studies, which demonstrate "an unconscious eye movement strategy performed by dubbing viewers to avoid looking at mouths", which allows them to suspend disbelief and indulge in the fictional world (Romero-Fresco, 2020, p. 17). It is also preferred in regions with "low literacy levels, linguistic chauvinism and reluctance to learn new languages" (Chaume, 2013, p. 288). This preference, however, is not absolute. The most critical aspect of dubbing is its potential for adaptation and control. O'Connell (2007) observes that "dubbing is covert rather than overt translation; there is no scope for the primary target audience to evaluate" (p. 130). This covertness allows the original text to be altered beyond recognition, which will provide a "much greater scope for censorship or other kinds of undetectable textual manipulation"(O'Connell, 2007, p. 126).

Beyond the choice of AVT mode and text-internal adjustments, manipulation "can also take the form of large-scale omissions, and even influence the preliminary decisions of whether or not to translate 'problematic' texts in the first place" (Dukāte, 2007, p. 58). This conscious choice, which Dukāte (2007) terms text-external manipulation, "proceeds outside the text" and involves "the processes of selection of texts to be translated" due to external constraints (p. 108). These interventions result in a "distorted perception of the culture(s) involved" (Dukāte, 2007, p. 109). Such macro-level gatekeeping has been previously documented in Iran in literary polysystem by Bolouri (2015), regarding the selection/non-selection of Anglo-American best novels of the 20th century. Thus far, despite these advances, the territory of AVT, in this respect, has received scant attention, and there remains a notable gap

in the literature in terms of how macro-level decision-making processes in film selection serve as proxies for broader societal and ideological hierarchies.

3. Methodology

This study is methodologically grounded in Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), an approach that treats translations as "facts of the target culture" (Toury, 1995, p. 29). To implement the descriptive goals of DTS, a large-scale quantitative content analysis was conducted to monitor and analyze data from a parallel corpus of films.

A multi-step process was employed to compile and compare the two datasets. The primary sources were: the Internet Movie Database (IMDb: [https://www.imdb.com/]) and Telewebion (TW: [https://telewebion.com/]).

- **The Eligible Pool (Hollywood Corpus):** IMDb's advanced search functionalities were used to identify the universe of American films released between January 1, 2005, and December 31, 2015. The initial 44,477 titles underwent an automatic filtration. Retaining feature-length (exceeding 60 minutes), English-language, fictional movies yielded an intermediate dataset of 28,649 titles. Ultimately, an item-wise re-evaluation removed entries with insufficient metadata, thereby refining a final eligible pool of *17,128 films*.
- **The Dubbed Corpus (IRIB Selection):** Since there existed no pre-compiled list of dubbed films, a manual compilation was required. The IRIB online archive (TW platform) was used to extract the relevant movies. Each entry was inspected and cross-referenced against IMDb to verify the often-non-literal Persian titles and production details. This labor-intensive procedure yielded a final corpus of *540 American feature films* dubbed and aired by IRIB.

A comprehensive profile of the two corpora was assembled from the information related to several key variables for comparative analysis, including:

- **Runtime:** The duration of films in minutes in the original and dubbed versions.
- **Genre:** Film genres defined by the IMDb Help Center (n.d.) as *Action, Adult, Adventure, Biography, Comedy, Crime, Drama, Family, Fantasy, History, Horror, Musical, Music, Mystery, News, Romance, Sci-Fi, Sport, Thriller, War,*

and *Western.* Within the scope of this study, *Animation, Documentary, Short, Game Show, Reality-TV, and Talk-Show* genres were excluded. Up to three genres per film were recorded.

- **Award Recognition:** Wins from leading international bodies, namely the Academy Awards (Oscars), Golden Globes, and BAFTA.
- **Certification**: The age-based rating assigned to each film (G, PG, PG-13, R, NC-17, and television classifications such as TV-PG, TV-MA). Certification was used as a descriptive variable to profile the IRIB dataset.
- **Commercial Success:** A film's inclusion among the top-10 highest-grossing films of its release year.
- **Audience Rating:** IMDb user-generated rating as well as a film's inclusion in the IMDb Top 250 list, an indicator of high popular acclaim. All IMDb ratings for this analysis were recorded in 2022.
- **Director and Star Prominence:** A list of the most influential Hollywood directors and globally renowned stars. These lists were developed through analysis of several industry-defining sources, including major award wins, box-office reports, and respected power rankings.

Levene's test was employed to evaluate the homogeneity of variance assumption required for an independent two-sample t-test. The results were to determine the significance of each variable in movie selection, using IBM SPSS Statistics v25.0. This statistical approach was performed "to determine if two population means are equal" (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2012). The test statistic is calculated as:

$$t_{obt} = \frac{(\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2) - (\mu_1 - \mu_2)}{s_{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}}$$

In this test, the null hypothesis H_0 states that the variable was not significant in the selection, and the alternative hypothesis H_1 is that the variable was significant. The analysis was conducted at a 95% confidence level.

4. Quantitative Findings

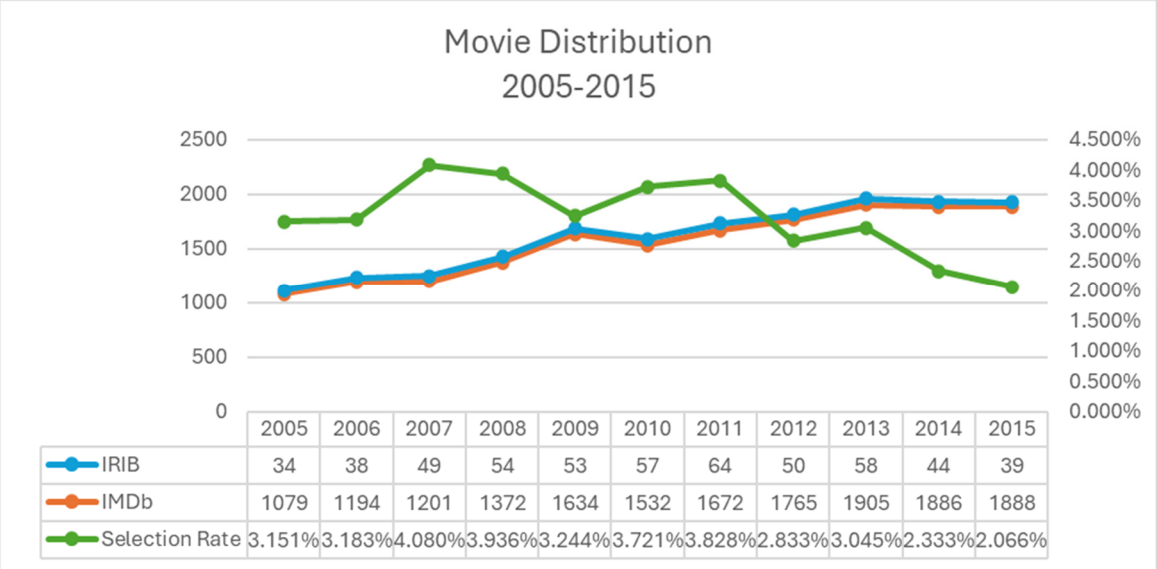
The comparative analysis of the data from the compilation of the American feature films released between 2005 and 2015 alongside those selected for dubbing

and broadcast by the IRIB, appears to be an indication of a systematic process of selection, adaptation, and modification.

The most striking finding is the extremely low selection rate. IRIB dubbed and broadcast only 3.15% of the eligible American films produced during the decade. The lowest number of eligible films was 1,079 in 2005, while 2013 held the highest volume of films with 1,905 titles. Of these movies, a total of 540 were dubbed and shown on IRIB. This considerably low percentage indicated a highly stringent and selective process. As shown in Figure 1, the lowest number of dubbed movies was recorded in 2005, with 34 titles. The annual volume of dubbed films reached its apex in 2011, with 64 titles.

Figure 1

Annual Number of Eligible Films (IMDb) and IRIB Dubbed Films (2005–2015)



	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
IRIB	34	38	49	54	53	57	64	50	58	44	39
IMDb	1079	1194	1201	1372	1634	1532	1672	1765	1905	1886	1888
Selection Rate	3.151%	3.183%	4.080%	3.936%	3.244%	3.721%	3.828%	2.833%	3.045%	2.333%	2.066%

4.1. Runtime

As tabulated in Table 14, a discernible pattern of content modification was evident through runtime reduction. Across the entire corpus, a total of 182h 37m was cut, equal to 19.03% of the films' aggregated original runtime. The intensity of this reduction fluctuated annually, from a low of 12:04' in 2005 to a peak of 21:42' hours in 2011.

Table 14

Statistical Summary of Movie Durations in Minutes (2005–2015)

DATASET	MIN	MAX	AVERAGE	SUM
IMDb List	60	675	93.57	1,602,696
Dubbed Original Version	70	184	107	57,549
Dubbed IRIB Version	45	165	86.28	46,592
Minutes Cut from the Dubbed Version	-4	67.06	20.29	10,957

The analysis of maximum durations suggests that film length may stand as a filter in the selection process. In the IMDb list, there are films with durations reaching up to 675 minutes (*Amy's Night Out*, 2007) or 360 minutes (*Zombie Horror Fright Fest!*, 2012). The longest original film selected by IRIB did not exceed 184 minutes (*Ice*, 2011). Notably, the maximum duration of the dubbed versions was 165 minutes (*The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, 2012), and the maximum cut observed in a single film was 69 minutes (*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, 2010).

These quantitative patterns of runtime fluctuations were not fixed; rather, they were flexibly adjusted to meet the requirements. This length manipulation may be attributed to censorship guidelines, broadcasting standards, or time-slot constraints. For example, *Lust, Caution* (2007, Ang Lee), an NC-17 erotic espionage thriller, suffered substantial modification, with its runtime reduced by 60 minutes (from 2:37′ to 1:37′). Meanwhile, the flexible mechanism of manipulation is exemplified by *Life of Pi* (2012, Ang Lee). This film, with an original runtime of 2:07′, was available in at least two different shortened versions (1:30′ and 1:47′) on TW website.

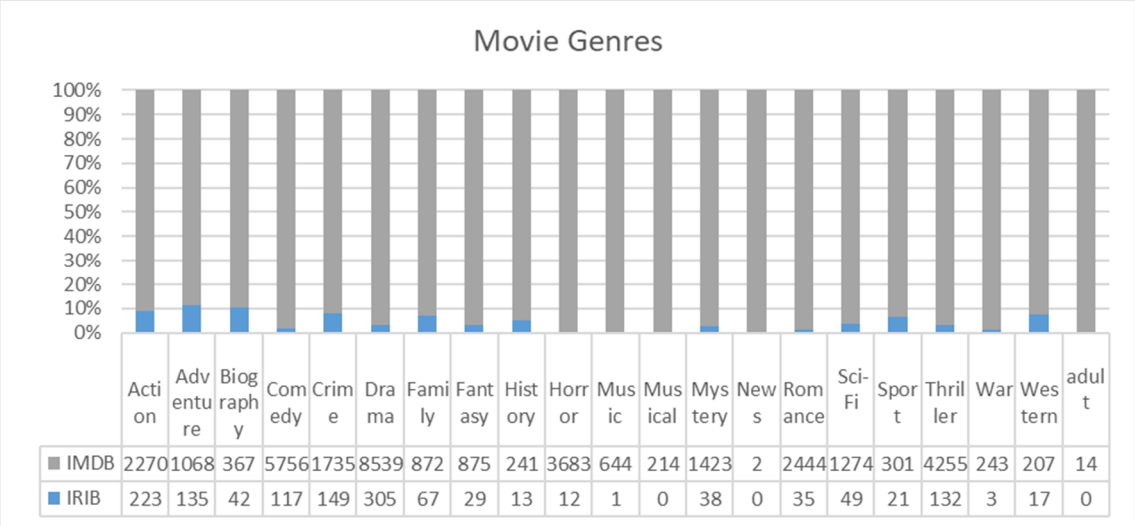
Conversely, as shown in Table 14, runtime was sometimes extended to match the broadcast schedule. In the IRIB's dataset, a negative cut of 4 minutes was observed in 2013 (*The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*) and 2014 (*The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*). The reason behind such addition lies in the fact that these movies did not fit into the allotted time slots (161 m and 144 m, respectively) and were shown in two separate episodes as *Hābit 3 (Qesmat-e Avval va Dovvom)* and *Hābit 2*

(Qesmat-e Avval va Dovvom). This necessitated content adjustments to add recap segments to each episode and thus resulting in extra minutes in the dubbed versions. This quantitative pattern and illustrative examples demonstrate that a film's runtime is not a fixed attribute but a fluid variable within the IRIB's dubbing practice.

4.2. Genres

Figure 2

Genre Distribution across the MDB List vs. IRIB-Dubbed Films (2005–2015)



As shown in Figure 2, the analysis of genre distribution reveals distinct patterns of preference and avoidance. *Drama* was the most frequent genre in both the Hollywood pool and the dubbed corpus. Moreover, the two-sample t-test confirmed that IRIB's choices for most genres were statistically significant.

- **Favored Genres:** Certain genres were favored for dubbing. These include *Adventure*, *Biography*, *Action*, *Crime*, *Western,* and *Family*. The p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) was < 0.05 for all these genres (see Table 15). This demonstrates the significance of IRIB's deliberate choice, confirming that films of certain genres were significantly more likely to be selected.

Table 15

Independent Samples Test for Favored Genres

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper
Action	Equal variances assumed	18.800	.000	-12.142	20	.000	-9.74941	.80297	-11.42438	-8.07444
	Equal variances not assumed			-12.142	11.055	.000	-9.74941	.80297	-11.51566	-7.98316
Adventure	Equal variances assumed	10.671	.004	-9.007	20	.000	-6.80849	.75594	-8.38535	-5.23163
	Equal variances not assumed			-9.007	10.295	.000	-6.80849	.75594	-8.48631	-5.13067
Biography	Equal variances assumed	7.289	.014	-4.449	20	.000	-2.12464	.47758	-3.12086	-1.12843
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.449	10.370	.001	-2.12464	.47758	-3.18363	-1.06565
Crime	Equal variances assumed	8.954	.007	-10.420	20	.000	-6.00390	.57621	-7.20586	-4.80194
	Equal variances not assumed			-10.420	10.814	.000	-6.00390	.57621	-7.27480	-4.73300
Family	Equal variances assumed	10.287	.004	-3.298	20	.004	-2.36442	.71693	-3.85991	-.86893
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.298	10.570	.007	-2.36442	.71693	-3.95025	-.77860
Western	Equal variances assumed	12.440	.002	-2.261	20	.035	-.58489	.25868	-1.12450	-.04529
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.261	10.294	.047	-.58489	.25868	-1.15905	-.01073

- **Underrepresented Genres:** In contrast, several highly prevalent Hollywood genres were significantly underrepresented in the dubbed corpus. Despite being the fourth prevalent genre in the Hollywood dataset, *Horror* had a negligible selection rate. Similarly, *War*, *Romance*, and *Comedy* also exhibited poor representation on IRIB. All these differences were statistically significant (see Table 16). This reflects avoidance of genres that rely heavily on romantic intimacy, horror, or highly cultural themes such as comedy.

Table 16

Independent Samples Test for Underrepresented Genres

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper
Comedy	Equal variances assumed	.584	.454	8.933	20	.000	7.50747	.84044	5.75434	9.26061
	Equal variances not assumed			8.933	18.278	.000	7.50747	.84044	5.74369	9.27126
Horror	Equal variances assumed	.574	.458	24.982	20	.000	9.09499	.36406	8.33557	9.85442
	Equal variances not assumed			24.982	19.719	.000	9.09499	.36406	8.33487	9.85511
Romance	Equal variances assumed	11.802	.003	9.066	20	.000	4.30775	.47517	3.31656	5.29893
	Equal variances not assumed			9.066	14.031	.000	4.30775	.47517	3.28882	5.32667
War	Equal variances assumed	9.684	.005	3.945	20	.001	.47363	.12004	.22322	.72404
	Equal variances not assumed			3.945	13.289	.002	.47363	.12004	.21486	.73240

- **Excluded Genres:** The *Musical* genre was entirely absent from the 540-film dubbed corpus, despite its presence in the eligible Hollywood list (N=214). In the same vein, there were 644 instances of the *Music* genre in the American list, among which the biographical movie *Phil Spector* (David Mamet, 2013) was the only dubbed one. Table 17 presents the result from running the two-sample t-test, which affirms the significance of divergence.

Table 17

Independent Samples Test for Excluded Genres

Independent Samples Test

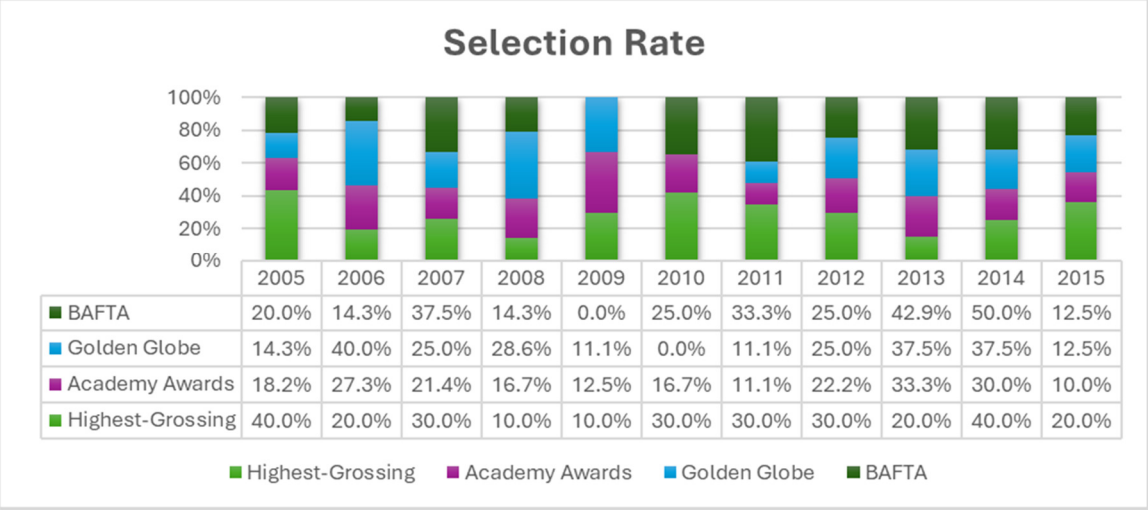
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Music	Equal variances assumed	2.503	.129	17.830	20	.000	1.69857	.09526	1.49985	1.89728
	Equal variances not assumed			17.830	19.448	.000	1.69857	.09526	1.49949	1.89765
Musical	Equal variances assumed	35.153	.000	13.645	20	.000	.58713	.04303	.49737	.67689
	Equal variances not assumed			13.645	10.000	.000	.58713	.04303	.49125	.68300

A few genres showed no statistically significant differences in selection. *Drama*, *Fantasy*, and *History* presented roughly comparable proportions.

4.3. Awards and Grossing

Figure 3

Annual Selection Rate of Prestigious and Commercially Successful Films in the IRIB-Dubbed Corpus



The allure of global prestige and popularity cannot be overstated, as these factors play determining roles in a film's chances of being selected.

- **Award Accolade:** Films winning major award (Oscar, Golden Globe, or BAFTA) had a collective selection rate of 21.92%, which is notably higher than

the overall selection rate. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances proved significant for this item ($t(10.001)=-9.518$, $p < .05$). Statistically, the null hypothesis is rejected and the results confirmed that Awards was a significant factor in the selection of movies for dubbing.

- **Box Office Performance:** A similar pattern was observed for commercially successful films. Of the 110 films that made the top-10 highest-grossing list for each year, 28 were dubbed (25.45%). Since the constant Top-10 variable lacked the variance required for an inferential test, the analysis was restricted to descriptive statistics.

4.4. Audience Rating and IMDb Top 250

Films enlisted on the *IMDb Top 250* presented an overall selection rate of 29.46%. Of the 112 films that ever appeared on the list up to 2022, 33 were dubbed by IRIB within the study's timeframe of 2005 to 2015 (see Figure 4). Statistical testing confirmed significance, with the 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from -36.67 to -17.93. The results show that inclusion in the Top 250 was a significant factor in dubbing selection.

Figure 4

Overlap of IRIB-Dubbed Films with Relevant IMDb Top 250 Lists (2005–2015)

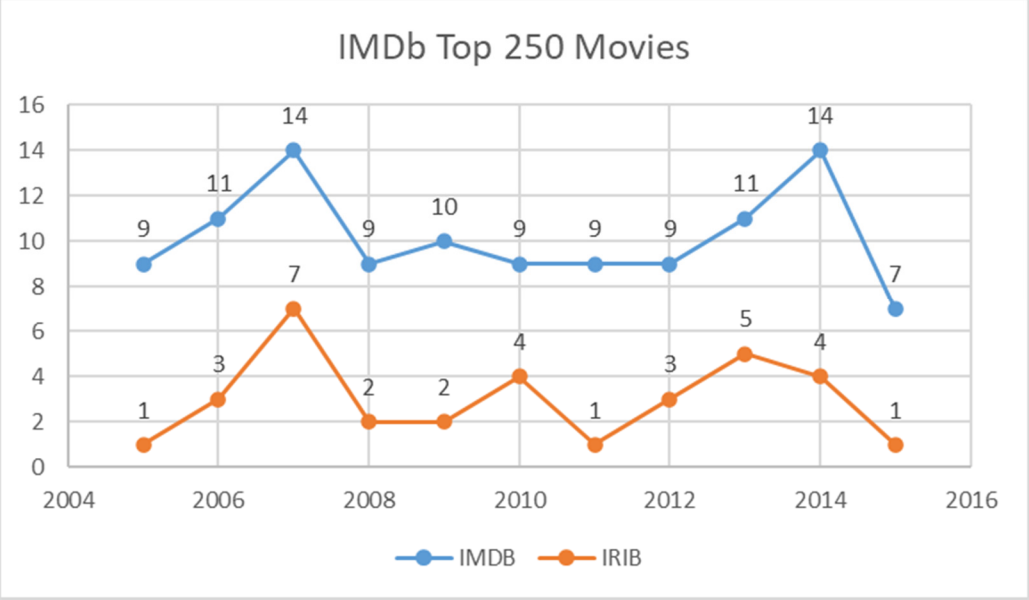


Table 18 provides a comparative summary of IMDb user ratings for the entire eligible corpus versus the final IRIB-dubbed selection.

Table 18

Overall Minimum, Maximum, and Average IMDb Ratings (2005–2015)

Dataset	Minimum	Maximum	Average
IMDb	1.1	9.8	5.76
IRIB	2.3	8.8	6.19

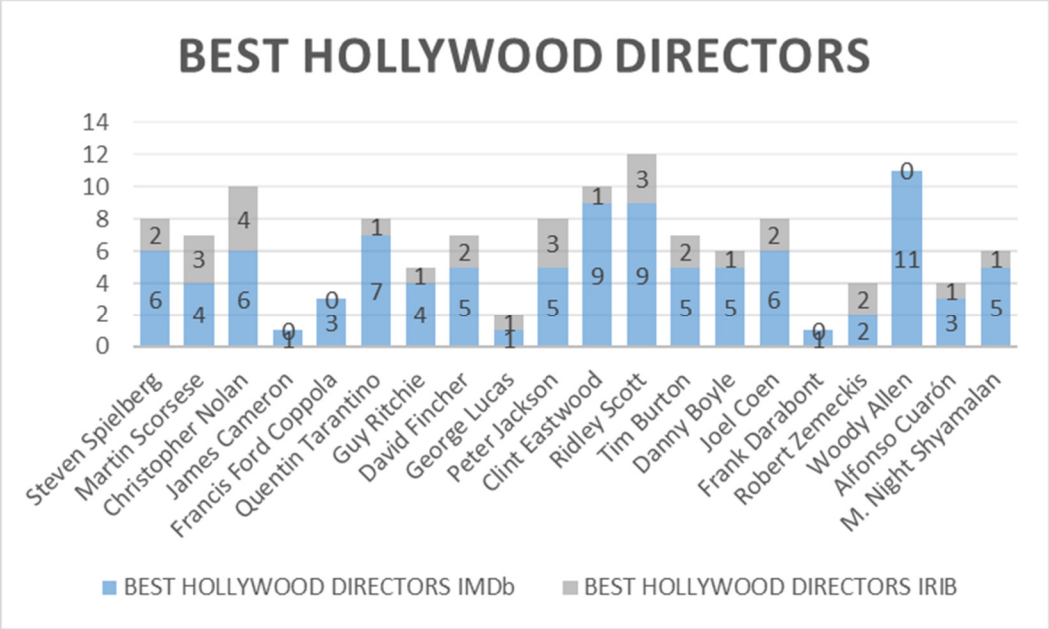
The overall average IMDb rating for the 540-film dubbed corpus across the decade was 6.19. This was noticeably higher than the overall average rating of 5.88 of 17,128 films, which equals to a positive difference of +0.43 for the dubbed films. The magnitude of this preference for higher-rated films fluctuated annually from a low of +0.03 in 2012 to a high of +0.86 in 2006.

4.5. Director Prominence

Director presence analysis further illuminates IRIB's selective criteria. Films by 20 prominent Hollywood directors had a selection rate of 30.61%, though unevenly distributed as illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Best Hollywood Directors in IMDb vs. IRIB (2005–2015)



Directors such as *Robert Zemeckis* (100% of films dubbed), *Martin Scorsese* (75%), *Christopher Nolan* (67%), and *Peter Jackson* (60%) were highly favored, whereas others like *Woody Allen* (0% of 11 films) were completely disregarded. Levene's test confirmed unequal variance (α=.000). The results showed that *Top Directors* was a statistically significant factor in film selection at the 95% confidence level.

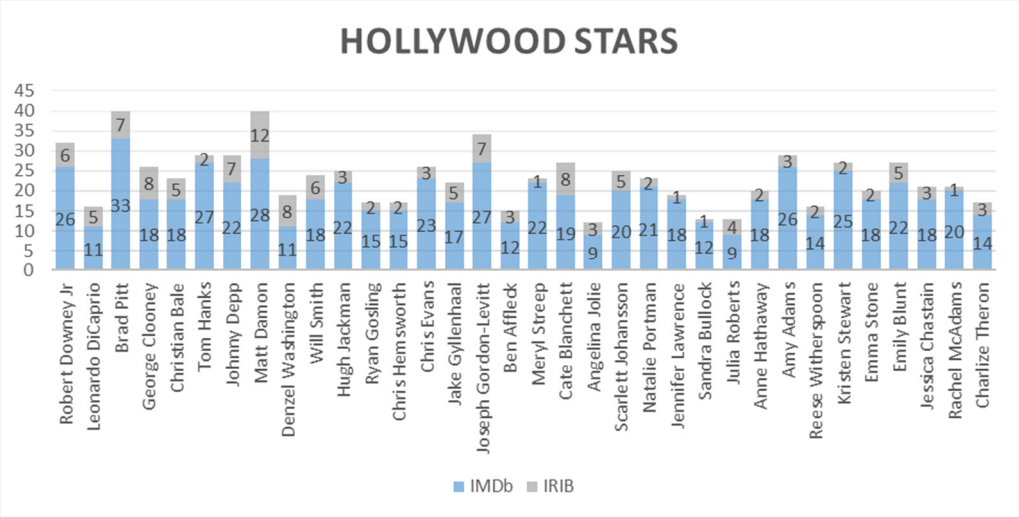
In pursuit of uncovering patterns underlying the 540 dubbed corpus, a recurring trend was identified regarding the names of certain directors. Movies helmed by *Michael Bay* and *Steven Soderbergh* were quite favorable on IRIB, with five frequencies each. Moreover, all the movies directed by *Gore Verbinski (4/4)*, *J.C. Chandor (3/3)*, and *Tony Gilroy (3/3)* were dubbed. The selection rate of 66.35% may suggest that IRIB has cultivated a canon of institutionally favored filmmakers.

4.6. Star Presence

A similar dynamic was observed with actors. Films featuring a list of 34 globally prominent Hollywood stars (Figure 6) had a selection rate of 21.45%. Levene's test indicated unequal variances, and the t-test confirmed that the "*Superstars Presence*" was a statistically significant factor in film selection ($t(33.000) = -8.658$, $p < .05$).

Figure 6

Presence of Stars in the IMDb List vs. IRIB Dubbed Films (2005–2015)

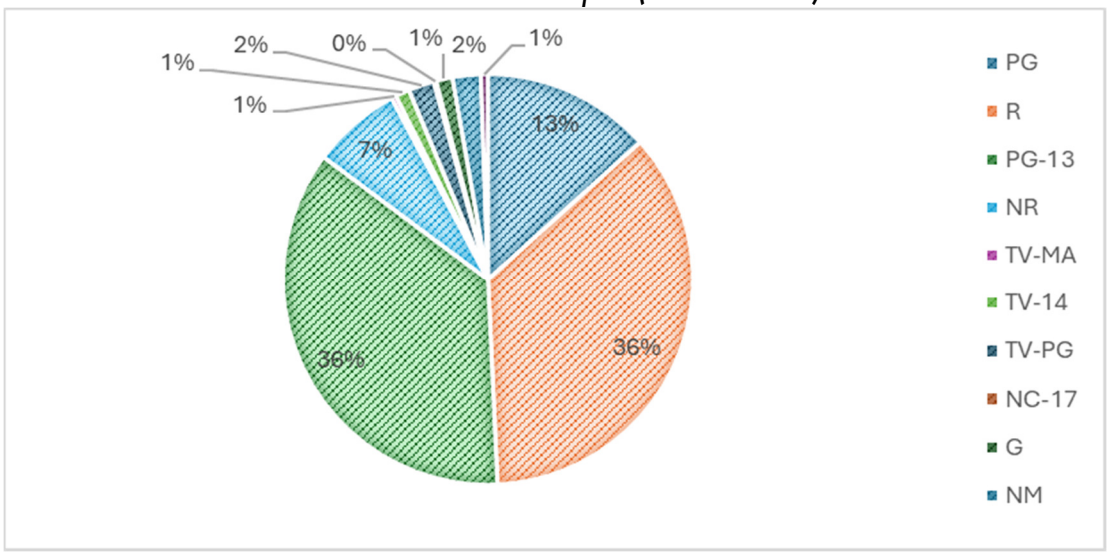


However, an analysis of the *Top Dubbed Artists* showed a selection rate of 32.3% (161/498). This indicates that while star power in general is a positive factor, a film's chances of selection increases significantly if it features actors who are part of the canon formed by IRIB's recurring, and presumably *safer*, roster.

4.7. Certification Profile

R-rated and *PG-13* films together accounted for over 70% of all dubbed titles, whereas *PG* films represented a further 13.33%. Figure 7 shows that family-oriented ratings such as *G* (1.30%), *TV-G* (0.56%), and *TV-PG* (2.04%) were relatively scarce, as were more restrictive ratings such as NC-17 (0.19%) and TV-MA (0.37%). This skew indicates that IRIB favors dubbing live-action feature films with mature-oriented content, albeit heavily edited.

Figure 7
Certification Distribution in IRIB-Dubbed Corpus (2005–2015)



5. Discussion

The findings of this empirical study, through the lens of DTS, reveal how dubbing practice on IRIB is not an isolated linguistic intervention in a vacuum. In this context, AVT may be interpreted as a multilayered process in which selection, modification, and presentation are shaped by the ideological logic of patronage. As

Müller (2004) observes, "[s]election implies exclusion", with censorship and canon functioning as mechanisms that determine which works "are deemed to be worthy of widespread dissemination and reception, and those that are not" (p.12). The quantitative evidence of a narrow selection of 3.15% of American films speaks to a set of constraints that operate long before and beyond the linguistic act of transferring dialogues. This directly points to what Dukāte (2007) identifies as text-external manipulation. To be more precise, the pattern resembles her notion of "conscious distortion" which leads to "the translation of carefully selected authors and texts only, thus misrepresenting the source culture" (pp. 108–109).

This stringent selection does not seem to stem from budgetary constraints. Since Iran is not a signatory of the Berne Convention, it does not adhere to the copyright enforcement and thus the cost of acquiring broadcasting rights is exceptionally low. For American productions, legal acquisition is generally not practiced due to political sanctions, with only one exception after the revolution (see Drury, 2021). According to the Director General of program provider at IRIB, a 30-episode foreign series costs less than producing a single domestic drama episode (Shahrvand Newspaper, 2019). At times, rights have been purchased in bulk at nominal costs (Donya-e-Eqtesad, 2014). Irrespective of these modest prices, some sources have confirmed that many films are aired in the absence of legitimate authorization, sometimes from downloaded copies (Donya-e-Eqtesad, 2014; Khabar Online, 2009). All in all, the evidence suggests that the selective pattern of dubbing and broadcasting on IRIB reflects ideological and regulatory priorities rather than budgetary constraints.

The exclusions appear to be systematic. According to DTS, "translations are facts of target culture" produced under systematic constraints (Toury, 1995, p. 29). The near exclusion of genres, such as *Music* and *Musical* and the underrepresentation of *Comedy* and *Romance* relative to their prevalence in the global pool is telling. The distortion of American films' canon appears to be structural rather than incidental, a

conclusion supported by Dukāte (2007). This "indirect censorship" as termed by Thomson-Wohlgemuth (2007) is exerted from the early stages of selection that "allow the publication of certain genres or specific works" (Gürçağlar, 2009, p. 164).

Canon formation here is not only about exclusion but also about the creation of a domestic hierarchy of foreign texts. Certain Hollywood stars and directors with international auteur prestige are absent from IRIB's list, while others recur. This selective process alludes to Hermans' (1999) argument that translation can be seen as "one of the instruments […] to consolidate or undermine positions in a given hierarchy" (p. 42). IRIB's choices exemplify such hierarchization in practice, as it reconstructs the American movies in a hierarchized and domesticated overrepresentation of certain figures. Through this selective gatekeeping, IRIB presents Hollywood cinema as a refracted subsystem, aligned with domestic hierarchies rather than the source system's internal diversity.

Drawing on DTS, we recognize that "translation is never innocent, that it always implies some sort of 'rewriting' of the source" (Morini, 2013, p. 18). Runtime manipulation further reinforces this image. The reduction of nearly one fifth of the overall original material on the IRIB dubbed versions sometimes resulted in modification of the entire subplots. As such, dubbing practice is not guided by fidelity to the source, but by its intended systematic function in the target culture. This is reminiscent of Toury's (1995) principle that a translation's systemic position "governs the strategies which are resorted to during the production of the text" (pp. 6). Dukāte (2007) argues that this "conscious manipulation", applied at multiple levels, involves "omissions of undesirable material" and the conversion of texts into "a more acceptable ideological type" (p. 58). Here, dubbing is not simply an interlingual transfer but a tool for re-inscribing meaning into the cinematic text.

These practices are not unprecedented in Iran. As early as the 1940s, Iranian translators and dubbing pioneers practiced what was called *"Iranianization"*, i.e.

renaming the characters and reframing narratives to resonate with local audiences and norms (Tahami Nejad, 2010, p. 247; Zhirafar, 2014b, p. 43). The contemporary strategies of omission, domestication, and runtime manipulation thus echo earlier habits; however, under the institutional weight of state broadcasting they have become large-scale and systematic.

Paradoxically, IRIB does not gravitate towards the safest or least controversial texts, as evidenced by the results from certification analysis. IRIB's willingness to dub PG-13 or R-rated films may reveal that family-oriented themes are not a priority in the selection process. Lefevere (1992) reminds us that ideology "dictates the basic strategy the translator is going to use and therefore also dictates solutions to problems" (p. 41). When combined with evidence of runtime manipulation, this pattern signals that IRIB's strategy is a negotiated compromise, i.e. American products are imported but re-authored, a practice supported by the micro-level studies (e.g. Mollanazar & Omranipour, 2019; Pakar et al., 2020; Pakar & Khoshsaligheh, 2022).

Such strategies create an illusion of *Other*, as they simulate openness to the world cinema while securing that the foreign is never too foreign. Polysystem theory describes this dynamic as the outcome of "a perpetual struggle for power between various interest groups" (Hermans, 1999, p. 42). In this "field of cultural activity", translation "participates actively in shaping the center of the polysystem" (Even-Zohar, 1990, p. 193). However, IRIB seems to maintain and reproduce the domestic cultural canon in line with the interests of the patron rather than acting as an agent of innovation.

From a DTS standpoint, these findings illustrate how AVT is situated in its target system as a norm-governed practice to serve dominant cultural repertoires. Through a broader cultural-theoretical lens, dubbing serves as a tool for stabilizing the *Self* in the service of ideological maintenance. In this sense, what the audience receives is

not a full representation of the American cinema, rather it is a constructed domestic canon that projects homogeneity rather than difference. A multi-layered function is at work within this structure. The pre-production stage filters out the perceived problematic films; the production stage adjusts runtime through selective modification; and, in the post-production stage, broadcasting schedules fragment longer films into episodic arcs, which alters narrative coherence. These layers exemplify Lefevere's observation that patronage can "hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature" (1992, p. 15).

6. Conclusion

This study empirically investigated the variables of film selection for dubbing on IRIB situated within the framework of DTS. Following Hermans' (1985) principle, the objective is not to judge these translations against some abstract standard of fidelity, but to understand how they operate in the target culture (p. 13). By examining films produced between 2005 and 2015 with respect to the markers of volume, duration, certification, popularity, awards, director and actor prominence and prevalence, this research aimed to determine whether inclusion in IRIB's broadcast repertoire was incidental or structurally regulated.

The findings confirm the production of a domesticated canon of global cinema that fits into Iran's cultural and political hierarchy. As Fawcett and Munday (2009) maintain, "the selections made during the translation process (not only by the translator but by all those involved, including those who decide the choice of texts to translate) are potentially determined by ideologically based strategies" (pp. 137–138). From this perspective, what is absent from the IRIB's lineup, such as excluded genres, certain directors, and runtime manipulation is as telling as what is present. What is, consequently, presented as AVT repertoire may be interpreted as a managed rewriting, oriented towards expanding a domestically constructed *Self* rather than admitting the alterity of the *Other*.

This regulatory pattern of stringent selection is also observed in other regions. In China, O'Connor and Armstrong (2015) documented a tightly controlled film import system that had restricted the number of foreign films and mandated extensive censorship. Given the reliance of Hollywood on China's film market, the Hollywood filmmakers were even "required to cut out scenes, dialogues, and themes" as a means of social control (O'Connor & Armstrong, 2015, p. 3). A similar approach was observed by Díaz-Cintas (2019) in Franco's Spain, where foreign films were manipulated to legitimize "its own myths" (p. 15). In the Arab world, Yahiaoui (2016) introduces ideological and socio-cultural factors as "the chief culprits" in the manipulation and appropriation of *The Simpsons*.

For TS, these cases underscore the value of DTS in capturing translation as a socially-situated practice. This study, by treating dubbed films as facts of the target culture, traced how selection policies, runtime manipulation, and genre biases function not merely as technical adjustments but as instruments of ideological mediation.

Moving forward, future scholarship could delve into mixed-methods research that connects audience reception at the micro-level with institutional agendas at the macro-level. Such research may also benefit from studying non-selection criteria at the level of text-internal manipulations. Only then can we fully grasp the role of translation in shaping cultural imaginaries, whether in Iran or elsewhere.

Acknowledgements

The present study constitutes one component of a tripartite investigation into dubbing, approached from three different angles: the ideological discourses, the structural features of dubbed films, and the perspectives and reception patterns of audiences.

References:

Bassnett, S. (1998). The translation turn in cultural studies. In S. Bassnett & A. Lefevere (Eds.), *Constructing cultures: Essays on literary translation* (Vol. 21, pp. 123–138). Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004490093_028

Bolouri, M. (2015). *Manipulation in translated literature in the context of current developments in Iran* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Allameh Tabataba'i University.

Chaume, F. (2013). Research paths in audiovisual translation: The case of dubbing. In C. Millán & F. Bartrina (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of translation studies* (1st ed., pp. 288–302). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203102893-32

Díaz-Cintas, J. (2012). Clearing the smoke to see the screen: Ideological manipulation in audiovisual translation. *Meta*, *57*(2), 279–293. https://doi.org/10.7202/1013945AR

Díaz-Cintas, J. (2019). Film censorship in Franco's Spain: The transforming power of dubbing. *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, *27*(2), 182–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2017.1420669

Donya-e-Eqtesad. (2014, July 22). پرکردن آنتن صداوسیما با فیلم‌های دانلودی [Por kardan-e ānten-e Sedā va Simā bā filmhā-ye dānlodi/Filling the IRIB's lineup with downloaded films]. *Donya-e-Eqtesad-News No: 816464*.

Drury, S. (2021, February 24). "The Night" achieves historic theatrical release in Iran. *The Hollywood Reporter*. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/the-night-achieves-historic-theatrical-release-in-iran-4137350/

Dukāte, A. (2007). *Manipulation as a specific phenomenon in translation and interpreting* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Latvia]. https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/bitstream/handle/7/4984/6969-Aiga_Dukate_2007.pdf

Even-Zohar, I. (1990). The position of translated literature within the literary polysystem. *Poetics Today*, *11*(1), 45–51. https://doi.org/10.2307/1772668

Fawcett, P., & Munday, J. (2009). Ideology. In M. Baker (Ed.), *Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies* (pp. 137–141). Routledge.

Gürçağlar, Ş. T. (2009). A cultural agent against the forces of culture: Hasan-Âli Yücel. In J. Milton & P. Bandia (Eds.), *Agents of translation* (pp. 161–188). John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/BTL.81.08TAH

Hermans, T. (1985). Introduction: Translation studies and a new paradigm. In T. Hermans (Ed.), *The manipulation of literature: Studies in literary translation* (pp. 7–15). Croom Helm.

Hermans, T. (1999). *Translation in systems: Descriptive and system-oriented approaches explained*. Taylor and Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315760469

IMDb Help Center. (n.d.). *Genres*. Retrieved July 4, 2025, from https://help.imdb.com/article/contribution/titles/genres/GZDRMS6R742JRGAG#

Khabar Online. (2009, November 17). فیلم‌های خارجی چگونه وارد بازار ایران می‌شوند [Filmhā-ye khāreji chegun-e vāred-e bāzār-e Irān mishavand / How foreign films enter the Iranian market]. *Khabar Online*. https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/25217

Lefevere, A. (1992). *Translation, rewriting, and the manipulation of literary fame*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315458496

Miller, T., Govil, N., McMurria, J., Maxwell, R., & Wang, T. (2009). *Global Hollywood 2*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781838711122

Mollanazar, H. (2011). Text screening (censorship) in Iran: A historical perspective. *Iranian Journal of Applied Language Studies*, *3*(2), 159–186.

Mollanazar, H., & Omranipour, A. (2019). Exploring hybridity in a sample of English feature films dubbed into Persian by IRIB. *Iranian Journal of Translation Studies*, *17*(66). https://journal.translationstudies.ir/ts/article/view/682

Morini, M. (2013). *The pragmatic translator: An integral theory of translation*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Müller, B. (2004). Censorship and cultural regulation in the modern age. In B. Müller (Ed.), *Censorship and cultural regulation in the modern age* (pp. 1–31). Rodopi.

Naficy, H. (2012). *A social history of Iranian cinema: The globalizing era, 1984–2010* (Vol. 4). Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822393542

National Institute of Standards and Technology. (2012). *NIST/SEMATECH e-Handbook of Statistical Methods*. https://www.itl.nist.gov/div898/handbook/

O'Connell, E. (2007). Screen translation. In P. Kuhiwczak & K. Littau (Eds.), *A companion to translation studies* (pp. 120–133). Multilingual Matters.

O'Connor, S., & Armstrong, N. (2015). *How China's censorship and influence affect films worldwide*. U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

Pakar, E., & Khoshsaligheh, M. (2022). American House of Cards in Persian: Culture and ideology in dubbing in Iran. *Perspectives*, *30*(3), 487–502. https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2020.1819351

Pakar, E., Khoshsaligheh, M., & Khozaei Ravari, Z. (2020). Cultural gate-keeping policies in official dubbing in Iran: A case study of the Godfather series into Persian. *Language and Translation Studies (LTS)*, *53*(1), 129–165. https://doi.org/10.22067/LTS.V53I1.82495

Romero-Fresco, P. (2020). The dubbing effect: An eye-tracking study on how viewers make dubbing work. *Journal of Specialised Translation*, 17–40.

Shahrvand Newspaper. (2019, July 10). روزنامهٔ شهروند: خوشگذرانی با فیلم و سریال خارجی در غیبت کپی‌رایت [Ruznāmeh-ye Shahrvand: Khoshgozarāni bā film o seriāl-e khāreji dar gheybat-e copy-right/Shahrvand Newspaper: Having fun with foreign films and

series in the absence of copyright]. *Pishkhan*. https://www.pishkhan.com/news/150332

Shuttleworth, M., & Cowie, M. (1997). *Dictionary of translation studies*. Routledge.

Tahami Nejad, M. (2010). نگاهی به تاریخ سخن‌گویی فیلمها به فارسی [Negāhi be tārikh-e sokhan-gui-e filmhā be Farsi/A look into Persian voice acting history in film]. In A. Tahami (Ed.), *چگونه فیلم دوبله کنیم [Cheguneh film dubleh konim/How to Dub a Film]*. Negah Publication.

Thomson-Wohlgemuth, G. (2007). On the other side of the wall: Book production, censorship and translation in East Germany. In F. Billiani (Ed.), *Modes of censorship and translation* (pp. 93–116). St. Jerome Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315759821-9

Toury, G. (1995). *Descriptive translation studies and beyond*. John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.4

Tymoczko, M. (2006). Translation: Ethics, ideology, action. *The Massachusetts Review*, *47*(3), 442–461.

Venuti, L. (1998). *The scandals of translation: Towards an ethics of difference*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203047873

Yahiaoui, R. (2016). Ideological constraints in dubbing The Simpsons into Arabic. *Altre Modernità*, 182–200. https://doi.org/10.13130/2035-7680/6855

Zhirafar, A. (2014a). *تاریخچهٔ دوبله به فارسی در ایران 1350–1380 [Tārikhcheh-ye dubleh be Farsi dar Irān: 1350–1380/A comprehensive history of dubbing into Persian in Iran: 1971–2013]*. Kooleh Poshti Press.

Zhirafar, A. (2014b). *تاریخچهٔ دوبله به فارسی در ایران ۱۳۲۰–۱۳۵۰ [Tārikhcheh-ye dubleh be Farsi dar Irān 1320–1350/A comprehensive history of dubbing into Persian in Iran: 1941–1971]*. Kooleh Poshti Press.