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## A Comparative Corpus-Based Study of Taboo Translation Conducted by the Iranian State TV in the First and Second Twenty Years of the Islamic Revolution

Omid Jafari<sup>1</sup>, Mahmoud Afrouz<sup>2</sup>, Hossein Barati<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Candidate, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran, Email: [o.jafari81@fgn.ui.ac.ir](mailto:o.jafari81@fgn.ui.ac.ir)

<sup>2</sup>Corresponding author, Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran, Email: [m.afrouz@fgn.ui.ac.ir](mailto:m.afrouz@fgn.ui.ac.ir)

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran, Email: [barati@fgn.ui.ac.ir](mailto:barati@fgn.ui.ac.ir)

### Abstract

The Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979 caused the replacement of a pro-western government with an Islamic republic which also affected the broadcast of foreign audio-visual products on the State TV. As such products contained taboos, some specific translation strategies seemed necessary according to Islamic laws. This study aimed to investigate how the State TV has dealt with taboos during the first and second twenty years of the Islamic Republic. To this end, four audio-visual products including *Secret Army* (1977) and *Captain Tsubasa* (1983) broadcast during the 1980s and 1990s and *Wall-E* (2008) and *House of Cards* (2013) aired in the 2000s and 2010s respectively by the State TV were selected. Procedures suggested by Brownlie (2007) were utilized to analyse taboo translation. The findings indicated that the most frequent procedure was changing taboos to irrelevant expressions in *Secret Army* and *Captain Tsubasa*, and *Wall-E*. This procedure was not included in Brownlie's framework. But the most frequent one in *House of Cards* was toning down. It was concluded that procedures for taboo translation have been inconsistent during all these four decades and the reason might be ideological and political. Consequently, such inconsistencies may disrupt the logical relation the directors intended to create between their works and their audience and the sudden leniency of IRIB in translating taboos in the *House of Cards* series for ideological and political purposes may also lead to distrust of the Iranian audience.

**Keywords:** taboo, State TV, translation procedure, ideology, audio-visual products

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## 1. Introduction

Language is a social phenomenon that is closely linked to culture as a means of interaction. Culture is also an entity that is acquired unconsciously and is shaped by a set of shared beliefs and practices among members of a particular speech community (House, 2009). Taboo items are almost always seen as inseparable parts of any language and culture and are passed down from generation to generation at very subconscious levels of human behaviours and audio-visual products as a part of daily life with numerous viewers also sometimes contain such parts of language and culture.

The Islamic Revolution of Iran occurred in 1979 and resulted in the ousting of the Pahlavi dynasty under the Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and its replacement with the Islamic Republic which was backed by several leftist and Islamist groups. The previous government used to favour a pro-Western absolute monarchy and subsequently was replaced with an Islamic anti-Western theocracy and this resulted in massive social and political changes. As a result, the Cultural Revolution of 1980 was an event that occurred and marked the beginning of a gradual cultural shift. As instructed by Ayatollah Khomeini (religious leader of the Revolution), a council named as “the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution” was formed. The council stated that its objective was to guarantee that the systems of education and culture would be preserved as Islamic and defence against outside cultural attacks would constitute the main idea of its ideology.

The Iranian State TV (IRIB)<sup>1</sup> is also a media corporation that enjoys a monopoly on national radio and television services in Iran as private TV channels are banned. It receives its budget from the Iranian government, but it is considered independent of the Iranian government. It is known to support the ideology of Islam and established stringent rules on audio-visual translation and broadcasting according to the Islamic Sharia after the Revolution.

After the Islamic Revolution, IRIB broadcast various dubbed foreign audio-visual products during the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. This study aimed to compare the translation of taboos broadcast in products during the first and the second twenty years of the Islamic Revolution and clarify the procedures used in the translation of taboos based on the ones suggested by Brownlie (2007) and determine whether or not this media corporation has consistently dealt with taboo items throughout these various decades and if there had been changes in the policies, what were the main causes? The first and the second decades have been chosen since they have been repeatedly described as a period when ideology and fundamentals and also the cultural agenda of the Islamic Revolution were established (Kachooyan, 2012). The third and fourth decades were also selected for this study since they were the latest decades and could help to administer the required comparison.

The following research question was developed in order to address the above-mentioned issues:

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<sup>1</sup>Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting

1. What translation procedures were more frequently used by the translators of IRIB for translating taboos in foreign audio-visual products during the first and the second twenty years of the Islamic Revolution?

## 2. Review of Literature

The word “tabu” from the Tongan language, which means “forbidden” formed the basis of the word “taboo” in the late eighteenth century. According to Allan and Burridge (2006, p. 1), “Taboos arise out of social constraints on the individual’s behaviour where it can cause discomfort, harm, or injury”.

Additionally, they established six various taboo topics in Western culture which included:

1. Bodies and their effluvia
2. The organs and acts of sex
3. Diseases, death and killing, physical and mental handicap
4. Religion and church, naming and addressing sacred persons, beings, objects, and places
5. Food gathering, preparation and consumption
6. Prostitution, narcotics, and criminal activity

Some items that are locally perceived as taboo language by Iranian culture were detected in this study, utilizing the categorization of taboo items in Iran presented by Sharifi and Darchinian (2009). According to their investigation, translators working in Iran must tackle a wide range of concepts that are considered taboo such as:

- a) Private relationships between men and women, whether lawful or illegitimate, and terms associated with them, such as kissing, hugging, sleeping with, and cheating on.
- b) Relationships between boys and females before marriage, such as boyfriend, girlfriend, etc.
- c) Referring to or mentioning sexual organs and related terms;
- d) Using words and expressions associated with alcoholic beverages and drugs;
- e) Using swearing, cursing, and rude expressions;
- f) Stating characteristics of immoral activities and habits such as thievery, etc.
- g) Issues relating to religion and beliefs that run counter to the translator’s society;
- h) Political issues that pose a threat to the translator's society and contribute to the instability of certain political situations.

Pakar and Khoshsaligheh (2022) analysed the censorship that affected the Persian dubbing of the first four seasons of *House of Cards* (2013–2017) shown on the Iranian State TV. In order to do this, a multi-modal comparison was performed between the Persian dubbing and the original version in order to determine what was deemed unsuitable for public broadcasting in the first place, as well as which situations could have been potentially censored but were preserved on purpose. Based on the findings, censorship was applied to a number of verbal and nonverbal elements in both visual and acoustic modes. Additionally, it was indicated that while many elements were removed

from this dubbed version, several other ones that were previously removed from official dubbed movies and television shows were left unchanged.

Khoshsaligheh and Ameri (2014) examined the strategies used by Iranian translators to render taboos into Persian in American crime films. Some predetermined criteria were used to choose the required multilingual corpus. They devised four different translation strategies: translating ST taboos to TT taboos, omitting taboos, substituting taboos of ST with non-taboos of TT, and changing taboos to euphemisms. Their findings showed that the translators usually reduced the impact of taboo language by either removing the taboo from the source culture or replacing it with a non-taboo or euphemism.

Hashemian et al. (2014) used Venuti's classification of domestication and foreignization to assess the strategies used in the translation of taboos from English into Persian in five Hollywood films dubbed by IRIB by comparing taboos in the original films and their Persian equivalents. The relevant data analysis revealed that "deletion" was the most frequently employed strategy in the translation of taboo items.

Sedighi and Najian Tabrizi (2012) used Toury's (1995) suggested framework for norm categorization to examine the frequently used methods for dubbing taboo items in some dubbed romance films from English to Persian after the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Their study examined the norms that motivated dubbers and movie subtitlers to dub taboo items from English to Persian. According to their findings, "euphemism" was the most frequently used strategy for rendering and dubbing words and expressions in romance films, accounting for 73% of items.

### 3. Taboo Translation

There is constant conflict in translation between the fidelity to the source text and its objectives and the fidelity to the target language and its relation with culture, society, and customs. Each culture contains a set of norms that prescribe the approaches to translating. These norms are derived from the prevailing ideologies and values which shape a culture. The commissioner, the initiator, the publisher, and others specify norms and transform them into social customs.

Cultural disparities, such as taboos, and sensitive religious, social, ethical, and political issues are also among the most contentious subject matters in translation. The primary concern is how to cope with them reasonably.

Brownlie (2007) investigated the origins and effects of dealing with taboos in literary translation by analyzing five translations of Emile Zola's *Nana*. She also looked for specific procedures that result in variations between the source text and its rendering. Among the procedures she noticed are the following (p. 206):

1. Omission
2. Addition
3. Substitution

## 4. Literal Translation

## 5. Toning Down

## 6. Leaving an ST content in the SL

Brownlie (2007) discovered the omission procedure which is used when a translator removes a taboo item because they believe it to be ideologically or culturally inappropriate for the intended audience. The addition procedure also means adding phrases to create a less insulting target text is another translation procedure in the model. Substitution procedure also is utilized when a taboo item that appears in the source text is replaced in the target text with an equivalent that is more culturally acceptable. She also explains that translators use literal translation procedure to render specific taboo words to form new items in the target language (a process commonly referred to as “loan translation”). Toning down also refers to employing less rigid taboos instead of rough ones to produce a less expressive target text. The final procedure refers to leaving a term in the target text without explaining it, expecting the target readers to figure out what it means based on the context.

## 4. Methodology

The original scripts of four foreign audio-visual products from the first twenty years (the 1980s and 1990s) and the second twenty years (the 2000s and 2010s) of the Islamic Revolution as well as their Persian dubbings were used as the source material for this descriptive, corpus-based, and comparative study. Employing the categorization of Iranian taboos developed by Sharifi and Darchinian (2009), the products with a high frequency of taboo items that could fulfill the aims of the study were selected. Table 1 lists the necessary information about the corpus of this study.

**Table 1**

*The Corpus of the Study*

Products	Creators	Release year	Dubbing year
<i>Secret Army</i>	Gerard Glaister	1977	1989
<i>Captain Tsubasa</i>	Yōichi Takahashi	1983	1994
<i>Wall-E</i>	Andrew Stanton	2008	2009
<i>House of Cards</i>	Beau Willimon	2003	2016

The researchers selected *Secret Army* and *Captain Tsubasa* as a sample to investigate how taboo items were dealt with in audiovisual products in IRIB during the first twenty years of the Islamic Revolution. *Secret Army* was a drama series produced by the BBC and the Belgian national broadcaster BRT (now VRT). It narrated the story of a fictitious Belgian resistance movement in German-occupied Belgium during World War II devoted to returning Allied airmen, who were typically shot down by the Luftwaffe, to the United Kingdom. It was produced in the United Kingdom and Belgium and was aired on BBC1 between 1977 and 1979. *Captain Tsubasa* was also a Japanese manga series aired in Japan. This animation focused on Tsubasa, an 11-year-old boy passionate about football, who hoped to win the FIFA World Cup for Japan one day. This series

dealt with his friendships and football rivalries as he and his teammates matured and encountered new adversaries. He resided in Japan with his mother, whereas his father was a seafaring captain. Tsubasa and his mother moved to Nankatsu at the beginning of the series where he met Sanae Nakazawa, an energetic girl who loved football and Tsubasa and cheered for the Nankatsu high school team. He also met Roberto Hongo (one of the world's greatest Brazilian players and a close friend of Tsubasa's father) who moved in with Tsubasa and his mother to coach him. Roberto became Tsubasa's mentor and helped him hone his football abilities. He persuaded Tsubasa to join Nankatsu Elementary School's football squad, which he would eventually coach while passing on his tactics to Tsubasa. Soon, Tsubasa met some talented players as Kojiro Hyuga who was coached by Akira Kouzo in different competitions.

Using *Wall-E* animation and *House of Cards* series as a case study, the researchers investigated how IRIB handled taboo items in audiovisual products during the second twenty years of the Revolution. *WALL-E* was an American science animation about Earth in the 29th century which had turned into a wasteland full of trash because of excessive consumerism. A corporation named Buy-n-Large (BnL) had transported humans into space some hundred years ago. It used a robot called Waste Allocation Load-Lifter: Earth-Class (WALL-E) to compress waste. One day, the routine work of Wall-E was disrupted by the unexpected arrival of an unmanned probe named Extra-terrestrial Vegetation Evaluator (EVE), which was a female robot. Her assignment was to look for evidence of life on Earth. The robot attracted WALL-E's attention and the two began a passionate romance. *House of Cards* was also an American political television series as an adaptation of the 1990 BBC series of the same name. It chronicled the lives of Democratic Congressman Frank Underwood and his wife Claire Underwood in Washington. He intended to be appointed as the Secretary of State, but this did not occur; thus, he launched a systematic strategy to obtain power with Claire's support. The series covers issues such as ruthless pragmatism, abuse, dishonesty, and power among American officials and media professionals.

To achieve this aim, the researchers utilized a parallel corpus to analyse the translatorial performance of IRIB translators in detail. Thus, the above-mentioned animations and the first seasons of both series (*House of Cards* with 13 episodes and *Secret Army* with 16 ones) were compared to the original versions to collect the data. To ensure the accuracy of the comparisons, the Springfield website<sup>2</sup> was used to obtain the English screenplay of every product. Then, each taboo item was subsequently classified using one of the translation procedures suggested by Brownlie (2007). The corpus was examined manually because its size was easy to handle, and 668 taboo items (*Secret Army* with 258 taboo items, *Captain Tsubasa* with 68, *Wall-E* with 41 and *House of Cards* with 301 ones) were carefully chosen. Two university lecturers who possessed expertise in English culture studies were consulted for the data collected and as a result, some sections of the analysis were re-examined and changed.

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<sup>2</sup> (www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk)

Furthermore, investigating all taboo renderings made the researchers realize that IRIB translators have utilized a translation procedure that was not mentioned by Brownlie. They translated lots of taboos to irrelevant words, phrases, or sentences and this procedure was termed as “change” by the researchers.

One another aspect required to be regarded is that all state TVs have their translation processes monitored by a specific board. Thus, the researchers endeavoured to organize an interview with the dubbing directors to ask them to explain their decisions. But the dubbing directors rejected the interview request, without mentioning any specific reason.

## 5. Results and Discussion

Taboos defined by Sharifi and Dachinian (2009) and translation procedures for them provided by Brownlie (2007) are presented below with some examples extracted from the products.

### 5.1. Taboo of Private Relationships between Men and Women and Terms Associated with Them

- a. Give my regards to your wife. (from *Secret Army*)

سلام به خواهرت برسون.

Back translation: Give my regards to your sister. (Substitution)

- b. That kiss up on the roof. (from *Secret Army*)

میدونی که اسم رمز عجیبی برای خودت انتخاب کردی.

Back translation: You know you chose a strange password for yourself. (Change)

- c. Dupont works as a pimp at Picot's bar in the Rue Bara. (from *Secret Army*)

گویا دوپان تو رستوران پیکات تو خیابون بارا کار میکنه.

Back translation: Dupont works at Picot's restaurant on Bara Street. (Omission)

- d. I even caught Hans flirting with her. (from *Secret Army*)

بطوری که هانس اول اونو نشناخت.

Back translation: So that Hans did not recognize me at first. (Change)

- e. And you sleep with the Boche. (from *Secret Army*)

باز کن. باز کن در رو.

Back translation: Open. Open the door. (Change)

- f. I f\*\*\*ed around a bit, ok? (from *House of Cards*)

یک کم الواطی کردم، خب؟

Back translation: I f\*\*\*ed around a bit, ok? (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

- g. How often did you solicit prostitutes in D.C.? (from *House of Cards*)

چندوقت یکبار روسپیهای واشنگتن رو میبینی؟

Back translation: How often do you see prostitutes in D.C.? (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

**h.** I am a hell of a lot more afraid of the US attorney than I am of some hooker. (from *House of Cards*)

من از دادستان ایالات متحده بیشتر میترسم تا یک زن خیابونی.

Back translation: I am a hell of a lot more afraid of the US attorney than I am of some hooker.  
(Leaving an ST content in the SL)

Islam has forbidden any relationship between boys and girls outside of the marriage contract, but one interesting point about the *Secret Army* series is the extramarital relationship between its main characters. The story of this series is about Lisa Colbert who manages Lifeline, an evasion organization located in Brussels. It assists Allied aircrew in avoiding arrest and going back to Britain through Switzerland or Spain. She is assisted by Café Candide owner Albert Foireta and his mistress Monique Duchamps. While Albert is having this love affair, his wife Andrée is confined to bed upstairs in his cafe. But IRIB has changed this relation and Albert's wife is considered his sister in all renderings as indicated in example 'a'.

## ***5.2. Taboo of Relationships between Boys and Females before Marriage, Such as Boyfriend, Girlfriend, etc.***

**a.** My girlfriend is an orderly at the hospital. (from *Secret Army*)

دوست قدیمیم تو بیمارستان سورماتیا کار می‌کنه.

Back translation: My old friend works in Surmatia Hospital. (Substitution)

**b.** James and his mistress are staying at an old farmhouse near Tours. (from *Secret Army*)

جیمز و دوست صمیمیش تو یک کلبه قدیمی نزدیک شهر توراقامت دارن.

Back translation: James and his close friend are staying at an old cottage near Tours. (Substitution)

**c.** Dear Tsubasa, Roberto is a famous player of the national Brazilian team. For personal reasons, he will stay at our house in Japan for a while. (from *Captain Tsubasa*)

پسر من جان هونگ برادرخوانده من از بازیکنان فوتباله. مدتی پیش شما میمونه.

Back translation: My son, John Hong is my adopted brother and one of football players. He will stay with you for a while. (Substitution)

**d.** Be honest, please. Should I really bring Tsubasa to Brazil? (from *Captain Tsubasa*)

زن داداش، لطفا ممکنه بهم بگین که اجازه میدین سو بارو همراه خودم ببرم؟

Back translation: My sister-in-law, can you please tell me whether you will allow me to take Tsubasa with me? (Change)

**e.** Tsubasa became popular with girls. (from *Captain Tsubasa*)

(Omitted)

**f.** Tsubasa, I love you. (from *Captain Tsubasa*)

(Omitted)

**g.** Every holo-date I have been on has been a virtual disaster. (from *Wall-E*)

ساعتهای خیلی زیبایی رو اینجا میگذرونیم.



Back translation: We are spending good time here. (Change)

h. Eve, arrest him. (from *Wall-E*)

ایوان دستگیرش کن.

Back translation: Evan, arrest him.

i. There's no reason we can't be in touch or remain friends. (from *House of Cards*)

بازم این دلیل همیشه باهم در تماس نباشیم؟

Back translation: There's no reason we can't be in touch? (Omission)

j. Not professionally, the other thing. (from *House of Cards*)

رابطه کاری نه... رابطه غیر کاری.

Back translation: Not working relation ... non-working relation. (Change)

All parts relating to Tsubasa's relationship with his girlfriend Sanae and his popularity among girls in the school were omitted. Also, Roberto Hongo was featured as Tsubasa's uncle to make his stay in Tsubasa's house seem religiously legal and acceptable. Also, while WALL-E attempted to bring EVE, the white metallic creature, back to life, IRIB changed EVE's name to Evan and made it look male so that the love and passion between these two metallic characters became religiously acceptable (as in example f).

### ***5.3. Taboo of Using Words and Expressions Associated with Alcoholic Beverages and Drugs***

a. You were drunk. (from *Secret Army*)

مگه تو نظامی نیستی؟

Back translation: Aren't you a military man? (Change)

b. Monique could you get back to the bar, please? (from *Secret Army*)

مونیک ممکنه خواهش کنم بری تو سالن؟

Back translation: Monique could you get back to the saloon, please? (Substitution)

c. Now, would you prefer red wine with the cassoulet? (from *Secret Army*)

شما دسر رو همین جا میخورین یا تو سالن کنار بخاری؟

Back translation: would you eat dessert here or in the saloon near the heater? (Substitution)

d. A drunk like you does not have the skills required to be a coach. (from *Captain Tsubasa*)

آدم بداخلاقی مثل تو نمیتونه مربی تیم ما بشه.

Back translation: A bad-tempered person like you cannot be the coach of our team. (Substitution)

e. Right now, I am a drinking companion. (from *House of Cards*)

الان یک هم پیاله ام برای تو.

Back translation: Right now, I am a drinking companion for you. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

f. I was at the bar around the corner. (from *House of Cards*)

تو بار سر نبش بودم.

Back translation: I was at the bar around the corner. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

g. Speed, some smack. (from *House of Cards*)

شیشه به ذره هم هروئین.

Back translation: Speed, some smack. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

h. He's not just been eating grass; he's been smoking it. (from *House of Cards*)

اون فقط علفرو نمیکشورده بلکه اونومیکشه.

Back translation: He does not just eat grass. He also smokes it. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

Both coaches Roberto Hongo and Akira Kouzo were alcoholics in *Captain Tsubasa*, but all the scenes and references to their drinking issue were eliminated as Islam considers such drinks inappropriate.

#### 5.4. Taboo of Using Swearing, Cursing, and Rude Expressions

a. She is a bitch and she is Albert's wife. (from *Secret Army*)

زود هم گذشت. درسته که آلبرت به خواهرش مدیونه.

Back translation: Time flies. It is right that Albert is grateful to her sister. (Change)

b. I have only seen Negros twice. (from *Secret Army*)

و منم تنها دوبار سیاهپوست دیدم.

Back translation: I have only seen black guys twice. (Toning down)

c. She cheers for Tsubasa, but she came with her boyfriend. The bitch. (from *Captain Tsubasa*)

(Omitted)

d. Shut up. (from *Captain Tsubasa*)

(Omitted)

e. He is f\*\*\*ing lying, Bob. (from *House of Cards*)

اون مثل سگ دروغ میگه باب.

Back translation: He is f\*\*\*ing lying, Bob. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

f. I'm a white-trash cracker from a white-trash town. (from *House of Cards*)

من یک بچه روستایی سفیدپوستم از یک محله سفیدپوست آشغالی.

Back translation: I'm a white-trash cracker from a white-trash town. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

g. You are just an uppity dago. (from *House of Cards*)

تو یک بچه مهاجر اسپانیایی مرفه ای.

Back translation: You are just an uppity dago. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

#### 5.5. Taboo of Political Issues

a. Once they wear the Star of David, it is too late. (from *Secret Army*)

آخه بعضیهاشون متاسفانه کاملا شناخته شده ان.

Back translation: Unfortunately, some of them are completely known. (Change)

b. I don't think the BBC would say anything if it wasn't true. (from *Secret Army*)

من این فکر رو نمی کنم چون خودم اونها رو دیدم.

Back translation: I don't think so, because I saw them myself. (Change)

c. So freedom lies with the Anglo-Americans, does it? (from *Secret Army*)

خب شما فکر می کنین آزادی در جبهه اونهاست؟

Back translation: Well, you think freedom lies with them? (Substitution)

d. A great man once said that everything in life is about sex except sex.

ما درسزمین آزادی پیرو مکتبی هستیم که میگه شالوده زندگی شهوته به جز خود شهوت.

Back translation: We follow a school of thought in the Land of the Free that says the basis of life is lust except lust. (Change)

One interesting point is that IRIB has added “سرزمین آزادی” (the Land of the Free) to one dialogue in this series to create a political irony on liberalism in the US as indicated in the example ‘d’.

Taboos referring to sexual organs and related terms, characteristics of immoral activities and habits, and religions and beliefs that run counter to the translator's society did not exist in these audio-visual products.

The procedures for rendering taboos were properly identified and categorized. Table 2 shows the frequency and percentages of the procedures used in translations of taboos existing in *Secret Army* and *Captain Tsubasa*. The results showed that changing taboos which was not included in Brownlie's framework was the most frequently used procedure (34.88% in *Secret Army* and 63.23% in *Captain Tsubasa*). Also, omission and leaving an ST content in the SL procedures were utilized as the second and third most frequent ones respectively (31.78% and 15.50%) in *Secret Army*, while substitution and omission were the second and third frequent ones in *Captain Tsubasa* (19.11% and 17.64%). Substitution and toning down procedures were also used as the fourth and fifth ones (10.07% and 7.75%) in *Secret Army*. Furthermore, procedures of addition and literal translation were not used at all by IRIB translators in *Secret Army*, while addition, literal translation, toning down, and leaving an ST content in the SL procedures were never utilized in *Captain Tsubasa*. Some taboos like referring to pigs, alcoholic drinks, and some signs of Christian religion were kept intact in *Secret Army*.

**Table 2**

*The Descriptive Statistics for the Procedures of Translating Taboos during the First Twenty Years*

Translation procedure	Frequency in <i>Secret Army</i>	Percentage in <i>Secret Army</i>	Frequency in <i>Captain Tsubasa</i>	Percentage in <i>Captain Tsubasa</i>
Omission	82	31.78	12	17.64
Addition	0	0	0	0
Substitution	26	10.07	13	19.11
Literal translation	0	0	0	0
Toning down	20	7.75	0	0
Leaving an ST content in the SL	40	15.50	0	0
Change	90	34.88	43	63.23

Table 3 also lists the frequency and percentage of procedures utilized in translating taboos from *Wall-E* and *House of Cards* which were broadcast during the 2000s and 2010s. The results showed that changing taboos was the most frequently used procedure in *Wall-E* (34.88%), while toning down was the most frequently used one in *House of Cards* (41.86%). The second and third most frequent procedures were omission and substitution in *Wall-E* (36.58% and 9.75%) and the change procedure (27.24%) was the second in *House of Cards*, while the third and fourth ones were the omission and leaving an ST content in the SL, respectively (14.95% and 10.63%). The substitution was also the fifth most frequent procedure in terms of frequency (5.31%). Addition, literal translation, toning down, and leaving an ST content in the SL procedures were never used in *Wall-E*, while addition and literal translation procedures were never used for rendering taboos in *House of Cards*.

**Table 3**

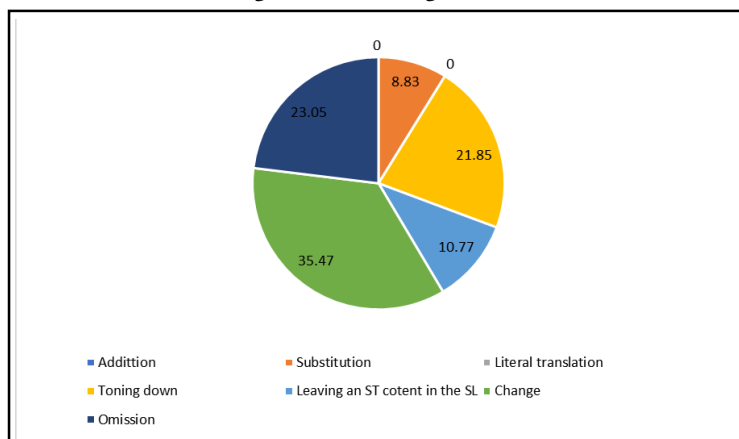
*The Descriptive Statistics for the Procedures of Translating Taboos during the Second Twenty Years*

Translation procedure	Frequency in <i>Wall-E</i>	Percentage in <i>Wall-E</i>	Frequency in <i>House of Cards</i>	Percentage in <i>House of Cards</i>
Omission	15	36.58	45	14.95
Addition	0	0	0	0
Substitution	4	9.75	16	5.31
Literal translation	0	0	0	0
Toning down	0	0	126	41.86
Leaving an ST content in the SL	0	0	32	10.63
Change	22	53.65	82	27.24

Figure 1 also indicates how IRIB translators have used overall procedures for rendering taboos existing in the foreign audio-visual products to clarify general policies of IRIB. Changing taboo items to completely different and irrelevant things has been the most frequent procedure (35.47%) while omission (23.05%) and toning down (21.85%) were respectively the second and third most utilized procedures among IRIB translators. Leaving an ST content in the SL (10.77%) and substitution (8.83%) also constituted the fourth and fifth frequent procedures. Addition and literal translation procedures were not at all utilized by translators.

**Figure 1**

*Procedures of Translating Taboos in Foreign Audio-Visual Products after the Islamic Revolution*



## 6. Conclusion

As per the guidelines set forth by IRIB, any audio-visual product containing taboos defined by Islam is either not translated or modified. Consequently, IRIB translators have always attempted to generate acceptable renderings according to such laws after the Revolution. Such a trend for decreasing the negative effects of taboos is also reflected in other contexts as some taboo items were also cut out in audio-visual products in Hong Kong (Chen, 2004), Italy (Parini, 2014; Beseghi, 2016; Zanotti, 2016), and Spain (Ávila-Cabrera, 2016b).

IRIB cultural policies are based on Islam and this organization does not readily embrace interference from secular Western countries, thus its translators have adopted a defensive stance against Western taboos displayed in audio-visual products. IRIB may suppose that if elements of Western culture are translated without any change, they can be threats against the Islamic culture. Consequently, IRIB translators strive to enforce limitations on taboos in accordance with Islamic cultural norms and ideology.

However, this study indicated that several problems existed regarding the handling of taboos in IRIB. Indeed, the policies for dealing with taboo items are not clarified definitely and completely as some taboos are deleted in a decade and are then left without change in another decade. As a result, final renditions seem to be inconsistent as the evidence obtained from this study indicated. For instance, several references to the Christian religion were broadcast in *Secret Army* during the 1980s since Islam has no opposition towards other religions specified by God, but similar references were cut out in others without any obvious reason. Also references to eating pig flesh as food were preserved in *Secret Army*, but all such references have been omitted or changed in other products. The reason might be the Islamic belief that such meat is unclean. As another example, taboos relating to illegal relations between men and women, drugs and alcoholic beverages, and swear words were cut out in the *Secret Army*, *Captain Tsubasa*, and *Wall-E* but were kept intact in the *House of Cards* series. Such sudden unprecedented leniency may trigger this suspicion that the *House of Cards* series has been dubbed with specific political purposes, hoping to draw attention to the widespread corruption in American politics. As stated by Novak (2016), the fact that this series was broadcast during the US presidential election may have assisted IRIB in providing a thorough image of US politics. Several news agencies have also noted these political factors when choosing and broadcasting this series, such as AP News which stated that IRIB has always sought to omit taboos relating to the American culture, yet it is now content to allow Iranians to see the backstabbing and devious schemes of fictitious U.S. officials (Karimi & Gambrell, 2016). The rationale behind such policies may be the fact that Iranian officials regard the United States as the greatest adversary.

The Iranian audience may also become confused by this kind of inconsistency in the renderings and changing taboo items to irrelevant words, phrases, and sentences. Most Iranians have easy access to original audio-visual products on the Internet and can detect the parts that have

been changed. Consequently, the audience can decide to watch the original audio-visual works that are readily available in Iran's underground market. The sudden leniency of IRIB in translating taboos in the *House of Cards* series for ideological and political purposes may also lead to distrust of the Iranian audience.

Regarding rendering taboo items, what can be researched in the future is an investigation of the English movies that were broadcast after the Islamic Revolution during various decades or even a comparison can be made between the movies or series that were aired before and after the Islamic revolution. Such an analysis also can be applied to the translation of taboos existing in foreign animations aired before and after the Islamic Revolution.

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