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Singing Across Borders: A Genre-based Approach to Song Dubbing in Persian Animated Musicals

Parina Ghomi Oskoui*
Assistant Professor of Translation Studies, English Language Department, Danesh Alborz University

Behnaz Balsini
MA in English Translation, English Language Department, Sohrevardi Institute of Higher Education

Abstract

Songs in animated musicals are far from homogenous; they belong to distinct genres, each fulfilling different communicative purposes, emotional tones, and narrative functions. This diversity requires genre-sensitive translation strategies, yet much existing scholarship continues to treat song dubbing as a uniform practice, overlooking how genre shapes translational choices. To address this gap, the present study adopts a functionalist, genre-based perspective, drawing on Reiss's (1971/2000) text typology, to investigate the role of genre in shaping dubbing strategies in the Persian versions of animated musicals. The corpus consists of six English-language animated musicals and their Persian dubbed counterparts. Songs are categorized into three genres, including background songs, plot-related songs, and entertaining songs, and examined in relation to translation strategies adapted from Gottlieb (1992) and reformulated by Ghomi (2009). The analysis reveals a strong correlation between song genre and translation method, showing that genre-specific function in animated musicals plays a critical role in sustaining narrative cohesion and enhancing audience engagement. By demonstrating how song genre systematically informs translation choices, this study contributes to the expanding field of audiovisual translation and to the specialized area of song dubbing.

Keywords: Song dubbing, genre-based approach, animated musicals, text typology, dubbing strategy

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*Corresponding author: parina.ghomi@alborzq.ac.ir

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Introduction

Song translation presents a complex set of challenges that extend well beyond the linguistic rendering of verbal content. It requires negotiating multiple semiotic dimensions, such as lyrics, musical structure, and performance potential (Franzon, 2008). In contexts such as subtitled musical films or surtitled stage productions, where translations may exist primarily in written form, singability is not always essential (Franzon, 2008). In contrast, in the context of song dubbing, this dynamic fundamentally changes and singability becomes the primary and indispensable criterion guiding the translation process (Reus, 2020).

In musical films, particularly in animated musicals, this challenge is amplified, as songs function not as ornamental features but as central narrative devices. They advance the plot, construct character identity, convey emotional intensity, and provide entertainment (Bosseaux, 2015; Dyer, 2012; Reus, 2018, 2020). These diverse functions give rise to distinct song genres, each with its own communicative role and corresponding translational demands. Thus, beyond singability, the translator must navigate how narrative purpose interacts with musical and performative constraints, making genre an essential factor in strategic decision-making.

Although research in song translation has expanded in recent decades, the dubbing of songs—particularly in animated musicals—remains relatively underexplored (Reus, 2020). Seminal contributions by Low (2003, 2005, 2013, 2016) and Franzon (2008, 2015, 2022; Franzon et al., 2021) have provided robust theoretical frameworks, distinguishing between strategies such as translation, adaptation, and replacement, and articulating criteria like singability, sense, rhythm, and skopos. The 2008 special issue of *The Translator*, edited by Susam-Sarajeva, further marked a turning point, establishing translation and music as a flourishing area of inquiry within Translation Studies (Susam-Sarajeva, 2008). Yet, despite these advances, most frameworks have been applied to contexts where narrative and performative constraints are less pressing.

More recent scholarship has emphasized the centrality of music in film narrative and affective design. Studies by Dyer (2012), Bosseaux (2015), Reus (2018), and Khoshsaligheh, Sarvghadi, and Mohammad-Alizadeh (2022) demonstrate how songs shape audience engagement and convey thematic meaning. However, these contributions often fall short of linking translation shifts to the narrative roles played by different genres of songs. This gap is particularly significant in the case of dubbed animated musicals, where translation strategies must simultaneously preserve singability and support narrative function.

The present study addresses this gap by examining how functional distinctions among song genres influence translation strategies in the Persian dubbed versions of English-language animated musicals. While singability remains a non-negotiable requirement across all song types, its interaction with narrative role varies, shaping the translator's strategic decisions. Drawing on Reiss's (1971/2000) functionalist translation theory, this study analyzes a corpus of six English animated musicals officially dubbed into Persian by Glory Entertainment Studio. It explores the alignment between song genre, narrative function, and translation strategy, guided by the following research question: How does the genre of a song influence the dubbing strategy in animated musicals when viewed through a functionalist lens?

Song Dubbing

Before analyzing strategies in song dubbing, it is crucial to establish what is meant by "song" and how this notion is conceptualized within translation studies. Low (2013, p. 229) defines a song as "a verbal–musical hybrid", underscoring its dual identity as both a linguistic and a musical construct. As

Low (2005, p. 187) explains, songs are "a combination of words and music" that partake in "two particularly elaborate systems of purely auditory and temporal signs", echoing Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) insights on multimodality. Similarly, Gorlée (2005) positions songs as a form of poetic discourse, embedded within the hybrid art of the musicopoetic.

From a translational standpoint, song translation entails more than linguistic transfer. It involves reconstituting "a pre-existing work of performance art … with a new set of words" (Low, 2005, p. 188). Low (2013, p. 231) further refines this definition by stressing the necessity of "extensive transfer of material from the ST, with a reasonably high degree of semantic fidelity." Crucially, as Low (2005) emphasizes, song translation differs significantly from conventional interlingual translation practices, such as poetry translation. This divergence arises not only from the intricate interplay of verbal and musical constraints but also from the inherently performative dimension of songs, which demands attention to delivery, rhythm, and audience reception.

Historically, however, song translation has occupied a marginal and often overlooked position within translation studies. Its classification as an atypical form of translation is largely attributable to the unique challenges it presents, which require an ongoing negotiation between verbal meaning, musical structure, and performative enactment (Franzon, 2008; Low, 2013). Nevertheless, in recent decades, the discipline has witnessed a growing scholarly interest in song translation, particularly in the domain of audiovisual translation (AVT), where songs frequently serve key functions, such as advancing the plot, shaping atmosphere, and enhancing emotional engagement.

Within this field, song dubbing represents a specialized form of song translation in which the visual dimension acquires paramount importance. Chaume (2004) highlights the intricate relationship in dubbing between the non-verbal codes of film, such as music and sound effects, photographic and iconographic cues, and on-screen movement, and the verbal code of dialogue or lyrics. Pérez-González (2014) extends this view by underscoring the need to account for visual syntax, media-specific constraints, and the multimodal distribution of meaning across semiotic resources. These multimodal considerations become particularly salient in the context of song dubbing, where the convergence of verbal, musical, and visual elements profoundly shapes the translator's choices (Reus, 2020). The interplay of these components generates a dense network of constraints, rendering the selection of dubbing strategies a highly contextual and dynamic process.

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Song Dubbing Strategies

Translating songs for dubbing is a uniquely complex task, as it operates at the intersection of language, music, and performance. Unlike most forms of translation, song dubbing is constrained by pre-existing melodies, rhythms, and timings, which impose strict structural boundaries on the translator's choices. As Low (2005, p. 189) aptly observes, "because of the constraints imposed by the pre-existing music, such song-translators resort to numerous methods in an attempt to overcome the difficulties they encounter." Thus, song translation must go beyond mere semantic transfer, negotiating verbal, musical, and performative dimensions to produce target versions that remain singable, aesthetically pleasing, and narratively coherent. This multimodal nature of song translation has been extensively discussed by Susam-Sarajeva (2008) in the special issue of *The Translator* on Translation and Music, which emphasizes that successful song dubbing requires sensitivity not only to meaning but also to music, rhythm, rhyme, and performance, all of which shape the overall effect and emotional resonance.

Franzon's (2008) influential work systematized the principal strategies available to translators, identifying five approaches: leaving the song untranslated, translating the lyrics, writing new lyrics to the original music, adapting translations to fit the music, or creating entirely new lyrics. Franzon

(2008) stresses that the choice of strategy depends largely on the song's narrative function and its musical characteristics, aligning closely with functionalist approaches such as Skopos Theory and text typology (Reiss, 1981/2004; Reiss et al., 2014), which view translation as a purpose-driven act.

Ghomi (2009) adapts Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies to the context of dubbing, providing a taxonomy that is equally applicable to song dubbing. These strategies encompass a range of techniques for negotiating the translation of signifying codes introduced by Chaume (2004) in audiovisual texts. Adapted translation choices include the following dubbing strategies (Ghomi, 2009, pp. 54–60). Expansion involves introducing additional content or effect beyond the source. Paraphrase conveys the source message with altered expression, rewording the original to achieve naturalness in the target language. Transfer represents full expression, maintaining the semantic content of the source text with minimal alteration. Dislocation replaces the message with a differing expression. Decimation reduces the content or effect, condensing the original where space or timing is restricted. Repetition reiterates elements already present. Finally, deletion omits content altogether, a strategy usually employed when elements cannot be reconciled with target constraints.

Low (2013) provides a nuanced framework for categorizing song translation outcomes, distinguishing among translations, adaptations, and replacement texts. A translation is conceptualized as a relatively faithful rendering of the original, involving only minor linguistic or stylistic modifications. An adaptation, in contrast, entails more substantial cultural or narrative modifications while preserving meaningful links to the source text. Replacement texts involve the creation of entirely new lyrics for pre-existing melodies, without retaining the original semantic content (Low, 2013, pp. 230–237). Complementing this perspective, Franzon (2022, p. 25) frames source–target relationships in terms of approximations and appropriations, observing that "a song translation can deliver an approximation of some qualities of a source song, but it will also often change certain aspects in an appropriation for a new context". Together, these frameworks highlight the delicate balance between fidelity, creativity, and contextual adaptation in song translation. This theoretical stance supports the empirical research done by Di Giovanni (2008) on the challenge between source-oriented and target-oriented translation strategies. In her study of American musicals dubbed into Italian, she identified domestication, a pronounced orientation toward target-culture expectations, as the prevailing translation strategy.

Ultimately, as Reiss (1981/2004) underscores, the choice of translation strategy is profoundly shaped by the genre of the source text. Jiménez (2017) further notes that while song translation may draw on general translation principles, it also demands techniques uniquely attuned to the musical mode. Genre influences communicative purpose, audience expectations, and stylistic conventions, making it a decisive factor in guiding the translator's approach. In the realm of song dubbing, genre not only frames textual and musical norms but also determines the strategies most effective in achieving a harmonious integration of music, meaning, and performance. This highlights the centrality of genre as a decisive factor in shaping the translator's approach and determining the selection of appropriate translation strategies.

Genre and Song Dubbing

As Reus observes "within the scope of a musical film, songs have come to fulfil specific purposes" and perform distinct narrative and aesthetic functions that directly shape the translator's strategic decisions (2020, p. 24). Franzon (2008, p. 374) suggests that "songs are translated in various ways for various purposes", underscoring the need for translators to align their choices with the intended function of the target version. Ghomi (2009, p. 53), in her study of dubbing signifying codes, including music and sound effects code, echoes this stance in "songs are of different types and each type of

song requires different translation strategy". This observation foregrounds the crucial role of genre in determining translational choices.

Low (2005, p. 210) observes that "when translating a song, keep your eyes fixed on the skopos—the function or purpose that your TT must fulfil". He conceptualizes the creation of singable translations as the skopos of the target text (TT), which is the primary purpose driving the translation. His Pentathlon Principle identifies five interdependent criteria essential for successful song translation: sense, naturalness, rhythm, rhyme, and singability. This framework was later expanded into the Hexathlon model, with skopos added as a sixth element to highlight the importance of aligning translation strategies with the intended function of the TT.

Low (2013) further distinguishes song genres according to whether verbal or musical content dominates. Logocentric songs—word-focused pieces such as narrative ballads—place a premium on semantic fidelity, requiring translators to prioritize meaning transfer while facing the greatest linguistic challenges. By contrast, musico-centric songs—where the musical message is of great importance—often lend themselves to elegant adaptations that prioritize sound and rhythm over semantic precision (Low, 2013, p. 237).

More recently, Reus (2020) has advanced the Triangle of Aspects, a multimodal analytical model designed to examine dubbed songs in animated musicals. This framework divides songs into ten analytical aspects across verbal, musical, and visual dimensions, enabling systematic evaluation of how dubbing choices shape meaning, narrative progression, and audience reception. Reus highlights that different songs privilege different dimensions—some prioritize verbal elements, others musical features, and still others the visual performance.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives illustrate the complex interplay between song genre and translation strategy. They demonstrate that the narrative and aesthetic function of each song type is central to determining how it is rendered in the target language. Building on these insights, this study integrates Reiss's (1971/2000) text typology, and multimodal song translation frameworks to investigate the relationship between song genre and dubbing strategies in animated musicals. The next section outlines the methodology used to explore how distinct song types influence the selection of translation strategies.

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Methodology

This study adopts a functionalist and descriptive quantitative research design to examine the relationship between song genre and dubbing strategies in animated musicals. The framework is grounded in Reiss's (1971/2000) text typology and Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies as adapted by Ghomi (2009) for dubbing, which together provide a functional basis for evaluating the influence of genre on translation strategies. The corpus for this study was selected through purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of diverse song genres, thereby enabling a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between genre and dubbing strategy. As Table 1 illustrates, the corpus consists of six English animated musicals and their Persian-dubbed counterparts produced by Glory Entertainment Studio, the leading institute for animation dubbing in Iran.

Table 1 Descriptive Information of the Corpus

No.	English Title	Release Date	Director(s)	Runing Time	Backtranslation of Persian Title
1	*Corpse Bride*	2005	Burton & Johnson	77 min	*Dead Bride*
2	*Cars*	2006	Lesseter	117 min	*Cars*
3	*Wall-E*	2008	Stanton	98 min	*Wall-E*

4	*Horton Hears a Who!*	2008	Hayward & Martino	86 min	*Horton*
5	*The Lorax*	2012	Renaud	86 min	*The Lorax*
6	*Moana*	2016	Musker & Clements	107 min	*Moana*

A key methodological innovation of this study lies in adapting Reiss's (1971/2000) text typology to classify song genres in animated musicals. As Reiss et al. (2014) emphasize, identifying the type of the source text is crucial when the translation aims to function as a communicative equivalent of the original. In such cases, which Reiss and Vermeer (1996) describe as communicative or imitating translations, preserving the original's primary function becomes paramount. Drawing on Bühler's functional model of language, Reiss (1977/1989) distinguishes three fundamental text types—informative, expressive, and operative—which, despite often occurring in hybrid forms, provide a valuable framework for identifying a text's predominant function. These text types are summarized as follows (Reiss, 1977/1989, pp. 108–109).

1. Informative texts (content-focused): Their primary purpose is to convey factual or conceptual information, with accuracy, clarity, and semantic fidelity being prioritized.
2. Expressive texts (form-focused): These foreground the aesthetic and creative use of language, requiring translators to recreate the artistic and emotive effect of the source text.
3. Operative texts (appeal-focused): These are designed to persuade or prompt action, where both content and form contribute to influencing the audience.

In the context of animated musicals, these three text types can be systematically mapped onto three major song genres, thereby aligning communicative function with translation strategies. While singability is the default functional requirement of all songs in animated musicals, 'expressive' here specifically refers to musicocentric songs where musicality dominates over semantics. Accordingly, the mapping is as follows:

1. Background songs (musicocentric): Comparable to expressive texts, these songs are primarily atmospheric, relying more on mood and musicality than on semantic density.
2. Plot-related songs (logocentric): Aligned with informative texts, these songs advance the storyline or develop characters.
3. Entertaining songs (imagocentric): Corresponding to operative texts, these songs are visually and performatively driven, designed to amuse and engage the audience.

Given to song dubbing strategies, the study adopts Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies, reformulated by Ghomi (2009) for dubbing. From among the seven adapted strategies, the following five strategies were applied and further redefined in the context of song dubbing.

1. Transfer denotes the close rendering of the source song, retaining its semantic content with minimal deviation.
2. Paraphrase involves rewording the source lyrics in order to preserve meaning while reshaping the expression for greater naturalness and fluency in the dubbed version.
3. Dislocation refers to the replacement of the source song with a different song in the target language.
4. Repetition entails repeating the same song from the original version in the dubbed version without translation.
5. Deletion involves omitting the entire song or its lyrics from the dubbed version.

By aligning song genres with Reiss's (1971/2000) text typology and examining how they interact with specific dubbing strategies, this framework offers a principled, function-oriented methodology. It foregrounds the communicative functions underlying each song genre while systematically exploring how genre sensitivity influences translators' and dubbing directors' strategic choices. Ultimately, this design enables a nuanced analysis of the correlation between song genre and dubbing strategy in Persian-dubbed animated musicals.

Data analysis

During the data analysis, a total of 62 songs were identified, comprising 23 background songs, 32 plot-related songs, and 7 entertaining songs. To illustrate the application of dubbing strategies across these categories, the following section presents selected examples from the corpus, highlighting how different approaches are employed in relation to each song type.

1. Background Songs

This section examines background songs through two illustrative examples drawn from *Moana* (Clements & Musker, 2016) and *Wall-E* (Stanton, 2008), analyzing how their dubbing reflects the secondary narrative role of musicocentric songs and the strategies employed to preserve atmosphere rather than semantic detail.

Table 2. A background song from *Moana* (Clements & Musker, 2016)

Source Song	Target Song	Dubbing Strategy
Tulou… Pardon us... Tulou... Pardon us... Oh Tagaloa Sei e va'ai mai Look down... I le tatou lalolagi Upon our world Sei e va'ai mai Look down ...	Tulou… Pardon us... Tulou... Pardon us... Oh Tagaloa Sei e va'ai mai Look down... I le tatou lalolagi Upon our world Sei e va'ai mai Look down ...	Repetition

One of the songs in *Moana* (Clements & Musker, 2016) is originally performed in Tokelauan (see Table 2), serving primarily as a background/atmospheric song that contributes to the animated movie's cultural setting and authentic island identity. The song is not central to the narrative development or character construction but plays an expressive role by immersing viewers in the Polynesian cultural environment.

In the Persian dubbed version, this song is left untranslated and repeated in the original Tokelauan language. From a functional perspective, this choice can be justified. Since the song is musicocentric, its primary communicative function lies in its musical and atmospheric qualities, not in the transfer of semantic meaning. The Tokelauan lyrics, though unintelligible to most Persian audiences, are not essential for understanding the plot or character development. Instead, retaining the original performance preserves cultural authenticity, rhythmic flow, and vocal aesthetics, which are integral to the film's immersive qualities.

Table 3. A background song from *Wall-E* (Stanton, 2008)

Source Song	Target Song	Dubbing Strategy
Out there Full of shine and full of sparkle Close your eyes and see it glisten, Barnaby Listen, Barnaby Put on your Sunday clothes There's lots of world out there Get out the brillantine and dime cigars We're gonna find adventure in the evening air Girls in white, in a perfumed night Where the lights are bright as the stars Put on your Sunday clothes We're gonna ride through town In one of those new horse drawn open cars	Out there Full of shine and full of sparkle Close your eyes and see it glisten, Barnaby Listen, Barnaby Put on your Sunday clothes There's lots of world out there Get out the brillantine and dime cigars We're gonna find adventure in the evening air Girls in white, in a perfumed night Where the lights are bright as the stars Put on your Sunday clothes We're gonna ride through town In one of those new horse drawn open cars	Repetition

In Pixar's *Wall-E* (Stanton, 2008), the background song *Put on Your Sunday Clothes* is a recurring musical motif taken from the 1969 film adaptation of the Broadway musical *Hello, Dolly!*. Within the narrative, the song functions as more than mere background music—it symbolizes human aspiration, joy, and the spirit of exploration, contrasting with the dystopian silence and emptiness of Earth. Despite its strong thematic associations in the source film, the song is not directly tied to dialogue or plot progression in WALL-E (Stanton, 2008). Its primary role is expressive and atmospheric, with additional intertextual significance.

In the Persian dubbed version, this song is repeated without translation, preserving the original English lyrics. From a functionalist standpoint, this decision reflects the recognition of the song's musicocentric and atmospheric role. The Persian audience may not understand the lyrics, but the emotional and symbolic weight of the performance is transmitted primarily through musicality and intertextuality rather than verbal meaning. In line with Reiss's (1971/2000) typology, the song serves an expressive function (evoking feeling, mood, and nostalgia) rather than an informative one, making semantic transfer less essential.

These cases illustrate how repetition as a dubbing strategy is often employed for background or musicocentic songs in Persian dubbing practice. This echoes Low's (2005, 2013) observation that logocentric songs require careful translation, whereas musicocentric songs can often remain untranslated without major disruption. In this case, repetition highlights the peripheral role of the lyrics, aligning with Reiss's (1971/2000) typology, where expressive function takes precedence over informative function.

2. Plot-related Songs

This section analyzes two plot-related songs from *Corpse Bride* (Burton & Johnson, 2005) and *Horton Hears a Who!* (Hayward & Martino, 2008), focusing on how their translations employ strategies that prioritize semantic fidelity and narrative coherence to support character development and story progression.

Table 4. A plot-related song from *Corpse Bride* (Burton & Johnson, 2005)

English Song	Dubbed Song	Backtranslation	Dubbing Strategy
According to plan Our daughter will wed According to Plan Our family led From the depths of deepest poverty To the noble realm of our ancestry …	بر طبق نقشه دختر عروس می‌شه بر طبق نقشه که جدم باعثشه از ژرفای تنگندستی و تباهی شیب اشرافی ارث اجدادی …	According to plan, The daughter becomes the bride According to plan, My ancestor provides From the depths of hardship and decay, An aristocratic slope, An ancestral legacy …	Transfer

In *Corpse Bride* (Burton & Johnson, 2005), the song *According to Plan* introduces the motivations of the two families arranging the marriage. It conveys essential narrative information: *the Everglots* seek wealth, and *the Van Dorts* desire social status. As a plot-related song sung by film's main characters, its lyrics carry strong logocentric qualities and they directly advance the narrative, reveal character intentions, and establish the film's satirical tone. The Persian dubbed version employs the strategy of transfer, and the semantic content of the source lyrics is preserved with only minor lexical and syntactic adjustments to ensure fluency and naturalness in the target language.

From a functionalist perspective, transfer was the most suitable choice for this case because the song is logocentric, with lyrics that are narrative-driven and directly tied to plot exposition. Preserving the semantic content was therefore essential to retain both the characters' motivations and the satirical critique of social climbing embedded in the original. Any major deviation, such as repetition, deletion, or dislocation, would have risked weakening the audience's grasp of the families' contrasting desires, which form the core of the conflict. By employing transfer, the Persian dubbing successfully maintains the skopos of the song: to convey information clearly while establishing narrative tension.

Table 5. A plot-related song from *Horton Hears a Who!* (Hayward & Martino, 2008)

English Song	Dubbed Song	Backtranslation	Dubbing Strategy
On the fifteenth of May In the jungle of Nool In the heat of the day In the cool of the pool …	پونزده ماه تو جنگل نول تو هوای گرمش هورتون فیله شنا می‌کرد آب می‌ریختش روی پوست نرمش …	On the fifteenth of the month In the jungle of Nool In its warm air Horton the elephant splashed water And poured it on his soft skin	Paraphrase

In *Horton Hears a Who!* (Hayward & Martino, 2008) the opening song sung by a non-diegetic narrator serves a plot-related function, introducing both the temporal and spatial setting, as well as the main character, *Horton* the elephant. The Persian dubbed version renders this song through the strategy of paraphrase. While the translation retains the core informational elements of the source text, it modifies the linguistic expression, reshaping the original rhythm into a similarly playful tone in Persian. The phrase *on the fifteenth of May* becomes *on the fifteenth of the month*, a paraphrastic adjustment that simplifies the reference but reduces the specificity of the temporal marker. Furthermore, the playful rhythm of the original is reinterpreted through Persian dubbed version sung by Morteza Ahmadi, a well-known Iranian actor, and further reinforced by the addition of the traditional Iranian instrument *tonbak*, which infuses the song with a culturally resonant soundscape.

From a functionalist standpoint, the use of paraphrase reflects a strategy that balances fidelity to the song's communicative purpose with adaptation to target-language and cultural norms. By preserving the essential informational content while reshaping the verbal expression, the translation successfully fulfills the function of the source song that is introducing the narrative setting and main character in an engaging manner. This approach demonstrates how paraphrase, while altering surface form, can maintain both narrative function and audience engagement, illustrating the flexible yet purpose-driven nature of functionalist translation strategies.

In both *Corpse Bride* (Burton & Johnson, 2005) and *Horton Hears a Who!* (Hayward & Martino, 2008), the treatment of plot-related songs reveals how different strategies shape narrative delivery in dubbing. These examples illustrate how transfer and paraphrase as dubbing strategies align with the functional requirements of plot-related songs. As Low (2005, 2013) and Franzon (2008) note, logocentric songs demand greater attention to semantic fidelity, since they carry narrative weight. The Persian version's use of transfer and paraphrase reflects this necessity; rather than prioritizing musicality or atmosphere, the translators prioritized the accurate delivery of plot information.

3. Entertaining Songs

This section examines two entertaining songs from *The Lorax* (Renaud, 2012) and *Cars* (Lasseter, 2006), highlighting how their translations rely on creative strategies—particularly dislocation—to preserve humor, playfulness, and audience engagement.

Table 6. An entertaining song from *The Lorax* (Renaud, 2012)

English Song	Dubbed Song	Dubbing Strategy
Pancake, the pancake Pancake, the pancake …	بفرمیود شام عزیزیم، بفرمیود شام خانومیَم، بفرمیود شام آقای محترمیه …	Dislocation

In *The Lorax* (Renaud, 2012), the brief song sung by *the Once-ler*, film's main character, while making pancakes is rendered in Persian through dislocation, as it is replaced with the theme song of a well-known Persian reality TV show centered on cooking and hosting dinners. While the source song is a lighthearted, spontaneous refrain tied directly to the visual of *the Once-ler* making pancakes, the dubbed version shifts the audience's frame of reference by drawing on a culturally familiar tune. This replacement creates intertextual humor for Persian audiences, who immediately recognize the borrowed melody and its associations with food, competition, and entertainment.

From a functionalist perspective, the strategy maintains the performative function of the scene that is enhancing comic relief and supporting the visual cue of cooking; yet it departs from the original's semantic simplicity and narrative neutrality. This case illustrates how dislocation can effectively reinforce audience engagement by exploiting local cultural code and localizing the humor.

Table 7. An entertaining song from *Cars* (Lasseter, 2006)

English Song	Dubbed Song	Dubbing Strategy
McQueen and Sally parked beneath a tree, k-i-s-somethin'-somethin'- somethin'-t	می خوام برم به آسمون، آسمون که آبی رنگه، می‌خوام برم به کهکشون، کهکشون خیلی قشنگه ...	Dislocation

In *Cars* (Lasseter, 2006), the entertaining song sung by *Mater* serves a purely comic and playful function, poking fun at *McQueen* and *Sally*'s budding relationship. In the Persian dubbed version, this song undergoes dislocation, being replaced with a playful rendition of a well-known Iranian classic song. This replacement not only transforms the humor into a culturally familiar register but also evokes a sense of nostalgia through intertextual reference, thereby enhancing its entertainment value for Persian audiences. By drawing on collective cultural memory, the replacement resonates more strongly than a literal translation would have, ensuring that the humor remains accessible and engaging.

From a functionalist perspective, this strategy aligns closely with the function of the scene; since the song is imagocentric and primarily intended for amusement rather than narrative progression, cultural resonance and audience enjoyment are prioritized over strict semantic fidelity. This example illustrates how dislocation can be particularly effective in rendering entertaining songs, as it preserves the performative and affective function of the original while tailoring it to the target culture.

Taken together, these two examples from *The Lorax* (Renaud, 2012) and *Cars* (Lasseter, 2006) demonstrate that dislocation emerges as the dominant strategy for entertaining songs in Persian dubbing. In both cases, the dubbing directors and translators prioritize cultural resonance, intertextual humor, and audience engagement over semantic fidelity, effectively adapting the songs to local cultural codes. This reinforces the argument that in imagocentric, entertainment-oriented songs, the function of generating humor and enhancing audience enjoyment outweighs the need for close adherence to the source text, making dislocation a particularly effective and culturally responsive dubbing strategy.

Results and Discussion

The results of the analysis reveal distinct patterns in the application of dubbing strategies across different song genres in Persian-dubbed animated musicals. Table 8 presents the distribution of dubbing strategies (transfer, paraphrase, dislocation, repetition, and deletion) across the three song genres (background, plot-related, and entertaining). A total of 62 songs, comprising 23 background songs, 32 plot-related songs, and 7 entertaining songs were analyzed, with frequencies calculated for each strategy. Table 8 shows clear variations in the choice of strategy depending on genre. For instance, plot-related songs were most frequently rendered through transfer (17 instances) and paraphrase (13 instances), while background songs relied heavily on repetition (14 instances) and dislocation (5 instances). In contrast, entertaining songs displayed an exclusive reliance on

dislocation (7 instances). Although deletion appeared occasionally in background songs (3 instances), it was absent in the other two genres. These frequencies suggest an apparent pattern of genre-sensitive strategy selection, which is further tested statistically using chi-square analysis.

Table 8. Frequencies of song genre vs. dubbing strategy

Genre/ Dubbing Strategy	Transfer	Paraphrase	Dislocation	Repetition	Deletion	Total
Background songs	1	0	5	14	3	23
Plot-related songs	17	13	0	2	0	32
Entertaining songs	0	0	7	0	0	7
Total	18	13	12	16	3	62

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between song genre and dubbing strategy. The results revealed a statistically significant association, $\chi^2(8, N = 62) = 77.82$, $p < .001$. The effect size, measured by Cramer's V, was 0.79, indicating a very strong association between the two variables (Cohen, 2013)

The standardized residuals and correspondence analysis further clarified the strength and direction of these associations. Plot-related songs were most frequently translated through transfer and paraphrase, suggesting that both faithful and reworded renderings were prioritized when songs carried narrative weight. Background songs, by contrast, showed a strong preference for repetition, highlighting the use of recurring lines or refrains to sustain rhythm and atmosphere rather than narrative precision. Entertaining songs were overwhelmingly linked to dislocation, reflecting a tendency toward performance-oriented replacement. Deletion was relatively rare and did not form a strong association with any particular genre.

The statistical results and visualizations illustrated in Figure 1 and Figure 2 jointly demonstrate that dubbing strategies are strongly genre-sensitive.

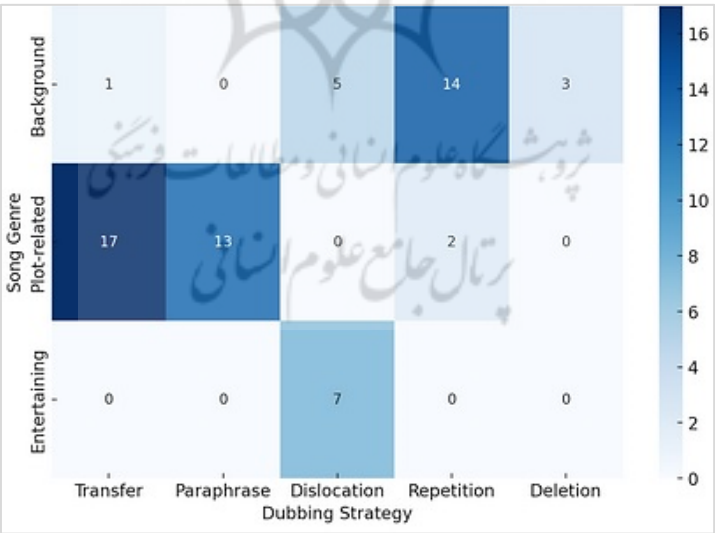

Figure 1. Frequencies: Song genre vs. dubbing strategy

Figure 1 illustrates the heatmap of observed frequencies which makes these tendencies visible at a descriptive level: plot-related songs clustered around transfer and paraphrase, background songs predominantly relied on repetition, and entertaining songs were overwhelmingly associated with

dislocation. Deletion appeared occasionally but with no strong genre correlation, confirming its marginal role as a strategy.

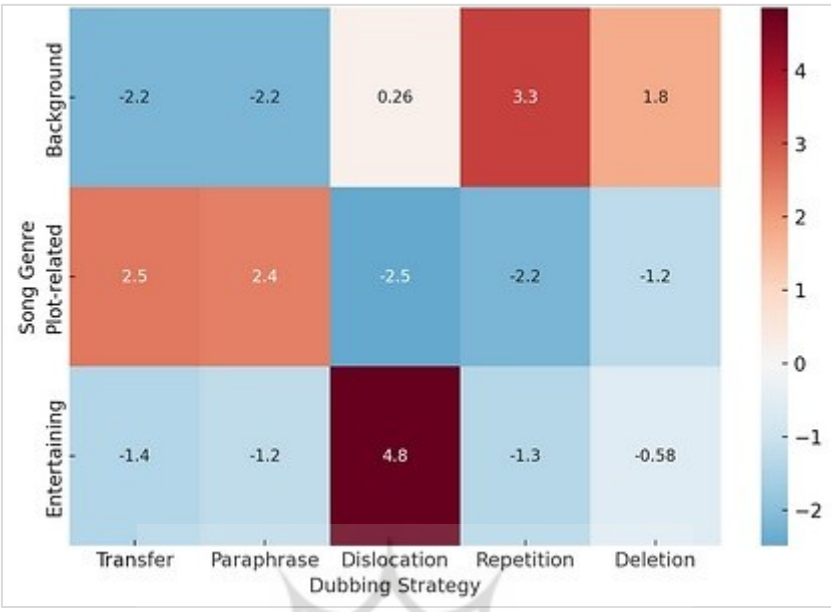

Figure 2. Chi-square distribution

Figure 2 illustrates the heatmap of standardized residuals which deepens this analysis by showing where the observed counts deviated most sharply from statistical expectations. Strong positive residuals (blue) confirmed key associations such as plot-related + transfer/paraphrase, background + repetition, and entertaining + dislocation, while negative residuals (red) indicated genre–strategy pairings that occurred less often than chance, such as plot-related + deletion or entertaining + transfer. These residuals validate the chi-square finding that the relationship between genre and strategy is not only significant but also patterned in consistent and interpretable ways.

Taken together, the results reveal how functional priorities shape translation choices in song dubbing. Plot-related songs, which are closely tied to narrative progression and character development, were predominantly rendered through transfer and paraphrase, strategies that prioritize semantic fidelity and narrative coherence. These songs, whether narrated by a non-diegetic voice as in *Horton Hears a Who!* (Hayward & Martino, 2008) or performed by main characters such as in *Moana* (Clements & Musker, 2016) and *Corpse Bride* (Burton & Johnson, 2005), required careful preservation of meaning to sustain the story's dramatic arc. By contrast, background songs, while contextually relevant, were less integral to plot progression. Often popular tracks performed by well-known artists, as in *Wall-E* (Stanton, 2008), they were more frequently handled through repetition or dislocation, reflecting their primarily atmospheric function where musical ambiance outweighed narrative precision. Entertaining songs, typically performed by characters for comic or playful purposes, showed an exclusive reliance on dislocation, underscoring the primacy of visual performance, humor, and audience engagement over verbal fidelity.

In sum, the strong and statistically significant correlation between song genre and dubbing strategy shows that translators and dubbing directors make strategic decisions not in isolation but in response to the functional role of each song. This finding highlights the utility of combining text typology with empirical statistical analysis to uncover patterned relationships in audiovisual translation practice.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the translation of songs in animated musicals is decisively shaped by the dynamic interplay between song genre and dubbing strategy. By adapting Reiss's (1971/2000) text typology to classify songs, in conjunction with Gottlieb's (1992) strategies reformulated for dubbing by Ghomi (2009), the analysis revealed clear, systematic correlations between genre and strategy. The findings show that translators' choices are not arbitrary but are instead informed by the communicative function and narrative weight of each song type. Plot-related songs, which are central to narrative development, were most frequently rendered through transfer and paraphrase, reflecting the need for semantic fidelity and coherence. Background songs, whose function is primarily atmospheric, often employed repetition, maintaining rhythm and cohesion while reducing the pressure for semantic precision. By contrast, entertaining songs, designed to amuse and engage, allowed greater creative latitude and were most often dubbed through dislocation.

These results resonate strongly with broader research in audiovisual translation, confirming that the challenges and strategies observed in this study are part of a wider, systematic pattern. Low (2005, p. 187) stresses that "for musico-centric songs, the musical message is of chief importance … [whereas] logocentric songs have greater difficulty in passing across language frontiers", a distinction that aligns closely with the present study's genre-based results. Likewise, Low (2005) notes that songs typically score lower on semantic transfer than informative texts, while Low (2013, p. 240) characterizes replacement texts in song translation as "manifestations of intercultural communication", reflecting the balancing act between fidelity and accessibility. Franzon (2008) similarly highlights the decisive role of singability and performance value in shaping translational choices. The current findings build on these insights by showing that such tendencies are not incidental but systematically linked to song genre, thereby reinforcing the importance of genre-sensitive approaches in dubbing analysis. Furthermore, the results are consistent with Reus (2020), whose multimodal model underscores the interplay of verbal, musical, and visual dimensions in determining translation strategies.

Taken together, this study underscores the importance of genre sensitivity in dubbing practice. Translators and dubbing directors do not apply strategies uniformly; rather, their choices are systematically guided by the communicative purpose and functional role of each song type. From a methodological perspective, mapping Reiss's (1971/2000) typology onto song genres has proven to be a productive framework for capturing these correlations and for explaining how function-oriented priorities manifest in dubbing. Ultimately, dubbing animated musicals entails far more than achieving singability: it requires a careful balance of linguistic, musical, and visual dimensions, while ensuring that the communicative function of the source material is preserved.

Nonetheless, the scope of this research is limited by its reliance on a relatively small purposive corpus of animated musicals. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, future research should extend this framework to a wider range of films, languages, and dubbing traditions. Comparative analyses across diverse contexts would not only strengthen the explanatory power of genre-based models in audiovisual translation but also deepen our understanding of how dubbing negotiates the tension between universal storytelling and culturally specific reception.

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