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# The reception of Persian dubbing: a survey on preferences and perception of quality standards in Iran

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## ABSTRACT

Dubbing is Iran's main modality for translating audiovisual content. There has been, however, relatively limited research on public recipients of dubbing in Iran. This article reports the results of a mixed-methods study that uses qualitative data to create a quantitative instrument to survey the reception of Persian dubbing among a selection of Iranian lay viewers ( $n = 477$ ). In the qualitative phase, using focus group interviews ( $n = 5$ ), a pool of items on dubbing reception is generated and used to design an original questionnaire. The quantitative survey results indicate that the reception of Persian dubbing could be manifested in six broad dimensions: technicality, agents, faithfulness, censorship, domestication and preferences. Most notably, technicality, including character synchrony and isochrony, is the highest-rated and most valued quality standard by participants. It is also revealed that dubbing reception does not vary significantly across gender, or with regard to different fields of study as a factor, except for two dimensions – technicality and domestication.

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dubbing; audiovisual translation; reception; quality standards; lay viewers; Iran

## 1. Introduction

Due to the advancement of digital technology, the number of distribution platforms, such as television networks, has been increasing in recent decades (Esser, Smith, & Bernal-Merino, 2016), leading to 'the boom and proliferation of AV [audiovisual] texts at the close of the twentieth century' (Remael, 2010, p. 12). There is also an ever-growing demand for audiovisual translation (AVT) in societies (Díaz-Cintas & Anderman, 2009), particularly in communities such as Iran where a great amount of AV material is imported, and the AVT landscape of the nation has been traditionally and predominantly occupied with dubbing.

Audience is an indispensable part of the AV scene, but this has not been taken into account until recently (Christie, 2012). With the aim of reading, texts are produced, just as they are rendered to be read by new recipients in a different speech community. When there is no audience, the significance of texts remains questionable and '[t]hat is the fundamental reason why a systematic effort to learn more about audience reception is important' (Tuominen, 2012, p. 13). More importantly, 'very few studies have dealt with the issue of reception in screen translation, and even fewer have looked at it

empirically', despite the constant reference to readers, viewers and consumers (Gambier, 2003, p. 184). Chaume (2013) similarly asserted that few researchers have attempted to 'uncover how AVT and dubbings are received by audiences' (p. 294). The ultimate goal of all such studies is that the viewers of AV materials 'can and indeed should lead the way in the definition and enhancement of quality, for the benefit of the industry, the translators, the academic community and, ultimately, the receivers themselves' (Di Giovanni, 2016, p. 77). In the context of Iran up until now, AVT research, and especially audience reception, remains underresearched, thus prompting the necessity for empirical investigation (for a first study on the topic see Ameri, Khoshsaligheh, & Khazaei Farid, 2015). In fact, much remains unclear about Iranian dubbing viewers in terms of their perception and preferences.

This paper is an attempt to partly fill both the conceptual and practical dimensions of this gap, by exploring the issue of dubbing reception in general and dubbing quality standards in particular in Persian dubbing from the viewpoint of the viewers. This can have practical applications for the local dubbing industry, and can lead to insights into the prevailing norms in dubbing reception (see Chaume, 2012). Specifically, this study attempts to address the following questions:

1. What are the main aspects of Persian dubbing reception for Iranian lay viewers?
2. Which dubbing quality standards are most expected by Iranian lay viewers of Persian dubbing?
3. Is gender a significant factor in the reception of dubbing among Iranian lay viewers?
4. Is field of study a significant factor in the reception of dubbing among Iranian lay viewers?

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Reception and audience

The concept of reception was first discussed in literary studies in the 1960s, and has shifted the attention from the text and author to the reader. There is also a strong connection between reception studies and translation studies, as an important part of any translation is its audience. While increasing in popularity, reception has nevertheless only recently attracted the attention of translation scholars for systematic investigation (Brems & Ramos Pinto, 2013). As pointed out by Suojanen, Koskinen, and Tuominen (2015), a distinction can be made between the implied reader and the actual reader. The former can be addressed through text-analytical approaches (e.g. Mossop, 2007; Nord, 2000; Sousa, 2002), whereas the latter requires participant-oriented research, and what is relatively new is the sharpened focus on actual receivers (see Suojanen et al., 2015).

The concept of user has been previously addressed in earlier research in translation studies (Suojanen et al., 2015), but Chan (2016) stated that 'in most translation histories the reader has been largely relegated to a secondary, if not marginal, position' (p. 152). After all, Nida (1964) deserves recognition as a forerunner in reception or receiver studies by having introduced the principle of equivalent effect. Similarly, the works of Even-Zohar (2012) and Toury (2012 [1995]) uniquely addressed societies' reception of translational products from the perspectives of systems and norms. It is also important

to mention Chesterman (2016 [1997]), who proposed the concept of expectancy norms – another key notion in reception. Overall, despite the varying levels of attention in addressing AVT audience, ‘much still needs to be done to contribute to a better insight into how different audiences make sense of audiovisual texts’ (Kruger, 2012, p. 67). Based on attitude studies in reception, which draw on experiences and opinions of the audience (Suojanen et al., 2015), this article aims to offer insights into the reception of dubbing and its quality standards in Iran among the lay viewership.

## 2.2. Lay viewing

For the purpose of this study, the notion of viewing is defined following Guillory (2000, pp. 31–32), who proposed two types of readership: professional versus lay. Professional reading is a labor that demands a considerable amount of time and resources and is typically compensated by a salary. As a ‘disciplinary’ task, professional reading follows the roles and norms of interpretation and is ‘vigilant’ as it withdraws from the experience of enjoyment in reading; even though it does not seek to exclude pleasure, it is not necessarily motivated by it (Guillory, 2000, pp. 31–32). Lay reading, on the other hand, may have something in common with professional reading; nevertheless, it is limited by a shortage of time and resources. This ‘leisure’ activity is more concerned with ‘pleasure’ and a ‘solitary’ experience; consequently, the task of reading is approached differently (Guillory, 2000, p. 32). Although Guillory’s (2000) dichotomy focused on reading, it seems that it would make reasonable sense to classify the audience of AV products similarly. The dichotomy can also be quite useful when considering audience design in reception research, as recommended by some scholars (e.g. Chaume, 2012, p. 15).

## 2.3. Expectancy norms

The concept of expectancy norms was primarily introduced by Chesterman (2016 [1997]). To him, expectancy norms, also known as ‘product norms’, are determined by the expectations of the target culture readership and are concerned with how a translation should be. These norms can be affected by economic and ideological factors, as well as power relations between cultures. Readers, who might not necessarily be paying clients, may still hold expectations about ‘text-type and discourse conventions, about style and register, about the appropriate degree of grammaticality, about the statistical distribution of text features of all kinds, about collocations, lexical choice, and so on’ (p. 62). They are validated and confirmed by a subset of members, known as experts, in a given society that he called ‘norm authorities’. Expectancy norms, however, are not permanent, and are dynamically prone to change. They are also specified by text types; each type requires its own expectations (Chesterman, 2016 [1997]). Closely associated with expectancy norms, Chaume (2007) offered a possible list of quality standards in dubbing that contain issues pertaining to acceptable synchrony, credible and natural dialogues, coherence between images and translation, faithful translation, sound quality and voice acting. However, such quality standards require empirical evidence (Chaume, 2012, p. 15). Empirical research on expectations or quality standards, a subclass of reception studies, so far has been mostly reported

on conference interpreting and literary translation, but very few studies have investigated dubbing in this regard.

### 3. Previous research on AVT reception

This section reports the main previous research conducted on AVT reception, and in particular the reception of dubbing. Scholarly literature on dubbing reception goes back to the mid- and late 1990s, with a slow but steady rise of research in the 2000s. Among the pioneering attempts, Herbst (1997) investigated synchronization reception in dubbing, Fuentes Luque (2000) researched reception of humor in dubbing and subtitling, and Peeters, Scherpenzeel, and Zantinge (1988) examined dubbing and subtitling reception from a psychological perspective. According to Perego (2016), empirical research on AVT reception emerged in the 1980s (e.g. d'Ydewalle, Muylle, & Van Rensbergen, 1985; d'Ydewalle, Pollet, & van Rensbergen, 1987; Grillo & Kawin, 1988) but with a focus on the psycholinguistic aspects of subtitling. Later, the renewed interest in AVT reception achieved prominence in the 2000s and the 2010s (see Perego, 2016 for an overview of research development).

Empirical research on dubbing reception thrived in the mid-2000s with the works of a group of Italian scholars at the University of Bologna on a variety of variables, such as humor, dubbese, and culture-specific references (e.g. Antonini, 2007, 2008; Antonini & Chiaro, 2005, 2009; Bucaria, 2005, 2008; Chiaro, 2004, 2007). Recently, there has also been a thriving line of enquiry in dubbing reception (e.g. Ameri et al., 2015; Denton & Ciampi, 2012; Di Giovanni & Romero Fresco, 2016, February; Perego, Missier, & Bottiroli, 2015; Reyes Lozano, 2015). Nevertheless, dubbing reception appears not to have sparked much interest, and reception has to date been investigated mainly regarding subtitling and accessibility. Additionally, an area in AVT that has been left largely untapped is attitudes and opinions of the dubbing viewers, particularly in communities with a language of limited diffusion, such as Persian.

While a significant portion of AVT research on reception was initially conducted in the realm of psychology, reception studies have now increasingly become a thriving sub-area of AVT. Significant empirical work has been conducted in various branches of the broadening landscape of AVT, such as subtitling (Alves Veiga, 2006; Antonini, 2005; Caffrey, 2008; Cavaliere, 2008; Di Giovanni, 2016; Gottlieb, 1997; Perego et al., 2015, 2016; Tuominen, 2012; Widler, 2004), voice-over (Di Giovanni, 2012; Kizeweter, 2015; Szarkowska & Laskowska, 2015), audio description (Chmiel & Mazur, 2012; Fryer & Freeman, 2013; Fryer, Pring, & Freeman, 2013; Kruger, 2012; Ramos, 2015, 2016; Ramos & Rojo, 2014; Szarkowska & Jankowska, 2012; Wilken & Kruger, 2016), subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing (Miquel Iriarte, 2014; Romero-Fresco, 2015; Szarkowska, Krejtz, Pilipczuk, Dutka, & Kruger, 2016), non-professional subtitling (Orrego-Carmona, 2014, 2016) and video game localization (Fernández Costales, 2016; Mangiron, 2016; O'Hagan, 2009). As the aforementioned contributions have shown, and as similarly noted by Chiaro (2014, p. 205), subtitling and accessibility have won the lion's share of AVT reception studies. Clearly, other modalities, especially dubbing, deserve and require more attention. As a response to this call, the present study explores Persian dubbing reception by taking into account the viewers' preferences and how they perceive conventional quality standards in dubbing.

## 4. Method

As recommended by Chaume (2012) for AVT research on reception and viewers, this survey focuses on a specific category of viewership. That is, the study is delimited to determining the reception of dubbing and its quality standards according to lay viewers. Drawing on a sequential mixed-methods design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), this exploratory survey consists of qualitative and quantitative phases, underlining the true interdisciplinarity in AVT studies by borrowing methods from social sciences (Matamala & Orero, 2013).

In AVT, as Pérez-González (2014, p. 159) noted, ‘the role and significance of interviews vis-à-vis other participant-driven research instruments (e.g. Questionnaires) remain relatively unexplored’. Questionnaires are employed to gather data about participants’ background information, facts, attitudes, and opinions, or the behavior of a population on a large scale (Saldanha & O’Brien, 2013), and has so far been the dominant instrument in AVT reception studies.

Since there was no established questionnaire fitting the purpose of the current study, an original instrument was designed, validated and applied in this project. To generate the initial item pool for the questionnaire, qualitative, exploratory data were collected from a purposive selection of dubbing viewers (see Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Following the guidelines recommended by Dörnyei (2007), five focus group interviews were conducted to generate items for the main body of the questionnaire. The five focus groups included an overall selection of 42 male and female, undergraduate as well as graduate, students. The participants were selected from among those who were highly interested in watching Persian dubbing of foreign films and TV series. A semi-structured interview protocol that included preliminary, probing and follow-up questions drawn from the literature, along with points from a professional dubbing translator, were employed. The focus group interviews took 15 to 35 minutes and were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

The thematic analysis of the transcription of the sessions helped create a pool of approximately 100 items, based on which the initial draft of the questionnaire was designed. The pool of items contained a variety of opinions and ideas regarding dubbing translation strategies, dubbing agents, dubbing process, dubbing vs. subtitling, among others. The item pool was first reviewed by the authors, and more than half of them were omitted due to redundancy or ambiguity. To pilot the questionnaire and secure its content validity (see Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010), the initial draft of the questionnaire in Persian was subjected to comments and revisions by four Iranian experts in translation studies and applied linguistics, as well as a professional dubbing translator. Simultaneously, an English edition of the draft was sent to four international AVT scholars to ensure further content validity. After collecting the comments and feedback from the experts, the draft was revised by rewriting or excluding several items and adding a few new ones.

To establish the face validity of the questionnaire (see Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010), the fine-tuned and finalized version was piloted on 10 participants at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. Using the participants’ feedback on readability and ambiguity, a few more items were rephrased. Using a Likert scale, the final version of the questionnaire, containing 40 items, was applied for data collection. To prevent bias, the participants of the survey phase were selected based on criterion sampling (Saldanha & O’Brien, 2013) to include only college students who favored dubbing over subtitling.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to establish the validity of the findings (Field, 2009). EFA was run on the responses of 477 participants from across Iran. The participants (207 females, 265 males, five cases did not mark gender) came from four broad fields of study (1) humanities, (2) engineering and basic sciences, (3) arts, and (4) medical sciences.<sup>1</sup>

The 40-item questionnaire was based on a five-point Likert scale. The response options on the scale were strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), no opinion (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5), in which the respondents could rate the importance of each item in their own opinion. The instrument was in Persian, matching the participants' native language. The participants were allowed to complete the questionnaire in their own time, but it took 10 minutes on average. During distribution of the questionnaire copies, one of the authors or a research assistant was present. The respondents were also reassured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected.

SPSS 21.0 was used to run the necessary descriptive and inferential statistics, including EFA, internal consistency reliability, independent-samples *t*-tests, Mann–Whitney, one-way ANOVA, and tests of Scheffe, Welch, and Games-Howell, to address the questions. The results of the statistical analyses are reported in the following sections.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Dubbing reception dimension categorization

In response to the first research question and to establish the construct validity of the findings, EFA was run to summarize the data set for the easier interpretation of the data (Field, 2009; Loewen & Gonulal, 2015). EFA helped to identify the underlying constructs and remove the less relevant items in the survey (Mellinger & Hanson, 2017).

After checking that the data met Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin and Bartlett's criteria as prerequisites (Loewen & Gonulal, 2015), the authors ran Varimax with Kaiser Normalization for EFA, and a six-factor solution was achieved. Nine (6, 9, 10, 21, 31, 32, 33, 36, 40) of the 40 items were excluded due to cross- or insignificant loading values. The common notion, shared by all the variables representing each factor, was worded into a single term and used as the factor label: (1) technicality, (2) preferences, (3) agents, (4) faithfulness, (5) censorship and (6) domestication (see Table 1).

The lay viewers were asked to rank the importance of quality standards, as well as their preferences, the results of which can be seen in Table 1. The table also shows the loading value of each item to their corresponding factor or dimension. Five of the factors – technicality, agents, faithfulness, censorship and domestication – are associated with quality standards in dubbing, while the factor labeled preferences represents a more diverse set of general issues, including advantages of watching dubbed content.

Additionally, Table 1 illustrates the value of the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for each factor as the degree of the internal consistency reliability. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.71 or higher for each factor reveals acceptable reliability (Field, 2009; Nunnally, 1978).

### 5.2. Dimensions of importance

As another objective, the most important aspects of dubbing reception were identified. Table 2 shows the highest- to the lowest-rated aspects of dubbing according to the

**Table 1.** Loading values and internal consistency reliability of the dubbing reception factors

Dubbing Reception Factors	Loading	Cronbach's $\alpha$
<b>Factor 1: Technicality</b>		<b>.85</b>
Consistency of dubbing actors through to the end of a series	.76	
Respecting character synchrony	.70	
Respecting lip synchrony	.68	
Following pitch and tone of the original character by dubbing actors	.64	
Entirely removing the original characters' voices	.64	
Familiarity of translators with cinema and popular culture	.60	
Respecting isochrony	.59	
Familiarity of translators with dialogue writing	.51	
A fluent and natural language in dubbing	.50	
An age label for dubbed products	.40	
<b>Factor 2: Preferences</b>		<b>.83</b>
Preference for watching social movies with dubbing	.76	
Preference for watching action movies with dubbing	.75	
Better communication with the movie through dubbing	.72	
Distraction from subtitling	.68	
Preference for watching horror movies with dubbing	.66	
Preference for watching comedies with dubbing	.66	
Following the movie's dialogue more easily through dubbing	.61	
Completing several tasks simultaneously while watching dubbing	.58	
Watching dubbed products due to the low quality of subtitles	.50	
<b>Factor 3: Agents</b>		<b>.88</b>
Crediting the name of the dubbing director	.88	
Crediting the names of the dubbing actors	.85	
Crediting the name of the translator	.83	
<b>Factor 4: Faithfulness</b>		<b>.71</b>
Respecting coherence between translation and visuals	.70	
Faithfulness to the original content	.64	
Cohesion and coherence among dialogue	.56	
Preserving the stylistic features	.53	
<b>Factor 5: Censorship</b>		<b>.86</b>
No visual censorship	.90	
No content censorship	.85	
<b>Factor 6: Domestication</b>		<b>.72</b>
Dubbing the third language spoken in the product	.72	
Replacing the original songs with Persian ones	.62	
Using pure Persian words	.50	

participating Iranian lay viewers: technicality, faithfulness, censorship, agents, preferences and domestication. The participants seemed to care more about technicality and faithfulness, which are the two issues related to dubbing quality standards.

Overall, for the Iranian lay viewers of dubbing, the technicality category, which included items on various kinds of synchrony (Chaume, 2004), was the most significant and seemed to play a pivotal role. The second most important factor was faithfulness, or loyalty in translation, as the participants expected to receive a full and coherent translation of the original AV text. The least important factor, localization of the target text,

**Table 2.** Mean scores of the dubbing reception factors

Factors	M
F1: Technicality	4.34
F4: Faithfulness	4.14
F5: Censorship	3.94
F3: Agents	3.81
F2: Preferences	3.23
F6: Domestication	2.98

received the lowest rating. The result reflected a disregard for adaptation of the content to the target conventions by the viewers; it may cautiously be interpreted as indicating that Iranian lay viewers prefer watching dubbing with a foreignized translation, in Venuti's (1998) terms.

### 5.3. Quality standards of importance

The findings in this section address the second research question, which asks what dubbing quality standards are most expected by Iranian lay viewers of Persian dubbing. Preferences, as discussed earlier, were not considered at this stage of analysis because they are not related to dubbing quality standards. The participants marked the importance of each item on a five-point Likert scale, *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *no opinion* (3), *agree* (4), and *strongly agree* (5). Table 3 shows the mean scores of those items, ranging from 4 to 5 (indicating agreement). For lay viewers of dubbing, issues pertaining to voice in dubbing were significant, in particular consistency of dubbing actors in a given series, and character synchrony. This revealed a strong relationship to dubbing reception discussed in the previous section.

### 5.4. Dubbing preferences

The factor labeled preferences, which was not a category related to Persian dubbing quality standards, was marked approximately 3 on average, indicating the option *no opinion*. This result seems to indicate that the lay viewers had little preference in this regard. This result is unsurprising, as the viewers might not pay attention to issues such as genre. Two items in this dimension received a value just below the *no opinion* option, while others obtained a neutral value. The two items were 'the low quality of subtitling as a reason for watching dubbing', and 'preference for watching horror movies with dubbing'. Generally speaking, Iran does not generate formal and professional subtitling, as far as fiction content is concerned, and subtitling only exists in the form of fansubbing. The participants disagreed as to whether they watch dubbed programs because of the low quality of subtitling by fans in Iran. This could mean that non-professional subtitling does not have low quality, as evidenced by Orrego-Carmona (2016) in the Spanish context. A second reason behind such a

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics of dubbing quality standards

Items	M
01 Consistency of dubbing actors through to the end of a series	4.53
02 Respecting character synchrony	4.49
03 Following pitch and tone of the original character by dubbing actors	4.40
04 Faithfulness to the original content	4.40
05 Respecting isochrony	4.39
06 Entirely removing the original characters' voices	4.37
07 Respecting lip synchrony	4.37
08 Familiarity of translators with cinema and popular culture	4.35
09 A fluent and natural language in dubbing	4.23
10 Respecting coherence between translation and visuals	4.23
11 Familiarity of translators with dialogue writing	4.15
12 Cohesion and coherence among dialogues	4.11
13 An age label for dubbed products	4.11
14 No content censorship	4.00

choice could be that Iranian satellite channels such as *Manoto TV Channel* and *BBC Persian* show some programs with professional subtitling, since they are broadcast from the UK (because they are affiliated with opposition to the ruling government in Iran), and they tend to follow UK norms. Thus, this might be a possible reason for such disagreement, or perhaps lay viewers are not able to distinguish good translation from bad. It was not clear to the authors why respondents gave a value just below the *no opinion* point to the twelfth item, which said they were not interested in watching horror movies through dubbing.

### 5.5. Dubbing reception and gender

A total of 477 Iranian adults, who qualified as lay viewers and consisted of men ( $n = 265$ ) and women ( $n = 207$ ), participated in the study. In terms of the third research question, the results of independent-samples *t*-tests on the data from dimensions 1, 2, 5 and 6, as well as the results of Mann–Whitney U tests on dimensions 3 and 4 – which did not meet the assumption of data distribution normality, such that the nonparametric equivalent test was used (Pallant, 2001) – revealed that there were no significant differences between the Iranian male and female lay viewers' reception with regards to all aspects of Persian dubbing, as the *p*-values were all larger than 0.05. All in all, it is safe to claim that dubbing reception was not affected by the factor of gender.

### 5.6. Dubbing reception and field of study

To address the fourth research question, on the possible relevance of the field of study of the participants as a potential factor in different dubbing receptions of Iranian lay viewers, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed, except for the first factor, for which the assumption of homogeneity of the variance was not met. Therefore, for this fact the Welch test – the nonparametric equivalent of one-way ANOVA – was used instead. The results of the one-way ANOVA revealed that except for domestication, the other dubbing reception dimensions did not significantly vary across the various fields of study, as *p*-values were greater than 0.05.

However, the follow-up *post hoc* analysis (Scheffe for initial one-way ANOVA, and Games–Howell for Welch) showed that cross-comparisons of the humanities with the engineering and the basic sciences and the arts did not reveal a significant difference for domestication. However, the reception of the humanities was found to be different from that of the medical sciences in that the former was more inclined towards a domesticated translation strategy (Venuti, 1998). In addition, it was revealed that the field of the study significantly influenced the reception in terms of technicality. Cross-comparisons of reception of the humanities with that of the arts did not reveal a significant difference in terms of technicality, whereas the humanities cluster was found differ from engineering and basic sciences, and medical sciences. It appears that viewers trained in the fields of engineering and basic sciences and medical sciences pay more attention to technical issues. This is probably because they have been more involved with positivism and objective technicality in their own fields, unlike participants who majored in the humanities, who are more acquainted with subjectivity and holistic interpretation of concepts. Overall, it can be concluded that dubbing reception dimensions do not significantly

vary across the various fields of study, except for the dimensions of domestication and technicality.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

Four questions were raised in the study about the reception of dubbing in Iran among lay viewers. Considering that dubbing reception has barely been investigated in the Iranian context, this study was conducted to determine the dimensions of dubbing reception, perception of quality standards and the probable effects of gender and different fields of study on dubbing perception. The findings revealed six dimensions of dubbing reception, five of which were about quality standards.

An interesting finding indicated a tendency of the viewership towards a foreignization strategy (Venuti, 1998) in Persian translation for dubbing. Bijani, Khoshsaligheh, and Hashemi (2014) also indicated that Iranian readers of translated fiction preferred foreignized translation. The results revealed that for the lay viewers, technicality was the dimension of the highest priority, followed by faithfulness.

In an article on quality standards in dubbing, Chaume (2007) raised many interesting questions in terms of dubbing reception – questions that have to be addressed empirically (Chaume, 2012, pp. 14–15). A simple yet unanswered question was what constitutes good dubbing (Chaume, 2012, p. 15). The present study assumes significance in having empirically addressed this question, particularly what ‘the audience expect[s] from a translated audiovisual product’ (Chaume, 2007, p. 73). The expectations identified empirically in this study address the quality standards discussed by Chaume (2007). However, these results should be considered with caution because this research offers evidence only on the reception of dubbing of a limited sample in the specific context of Iran. For that reason, further analysis and research should be carried out before generalizing and extending the findings to an international level.

The findings also showed that the lay viewership seems to pay special attention to technical issues, particularly character synchrony, the coherence between the dubbing actor and the original actor’s visual image on the screen (Fodor, 1976), and faithfulness to the original in general and semantic synchrony in particular – that is, the semantic agreement between the translation and the original script (Paquin, 1998). For the audience to appreciate dubbed versions, the key challenge posed to the producers is voice selection by choosing the right dubbing cast. This is also profitable because an appropriate cast of dubbing actors can guarantee its success (Bosseaux, 2015, p. 65; Chaume, 2012, p. 36; Sánchez Mompeán, 2015, p. 288). In other words, as Chaume (2004, pp. 46–47) stressed, the success or failure of dubbed movies hinges on various synchronization techniques. Given the important role played by dubbing actors in the dubbing industry (Sánchez Mompeán, 2015, p. 287), the findings of the study also stressed the attention paid by the Iranian lay viewers of dubbing to the execution of technical issues, especially those associated with the dubbing cast.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Iranian dubbing viewers’ appreciation of dubbing quality tends to be influenced by issues such as synchronization. Di Giovanni and Romero Fresco (2016, February), in an eye tracking experiment, provided evidence that viewers watching dubbing tend to focus more on the eyes of the characters than on their lip movements. However, the results of another eye tracking study on

synchronization suggested that ‘poorly synched lips’ distracts the attention of viewers and disrupts their typical viewing process (Smith, Batten, & Bedford, 2014). Additionally, the attention to technical issues in AV products, including dubbing and subtitling, is a result of the nature of AV texts in that several codes – visual, auditory, verbal and nonverbal – work together for the program to make sense (Zabalbeascoa, 2008). Thus, the visual and auditory channels can potentially attract the attention of viewers and influence the general acceptability and believability of the dubbed versions, given that dubbing typically aims to generate a believable product ‘with easily recognized characters and realistic voices’ (Chaume, 2012, p. 20). Future studies on voice in dubbing can certainly provide further evidence to complement and corroborate the findings of the few existing investigations (e.g. Bosseaux, 2008, 2015; Sánchez Mompeán, 2015), as this contribution hopes to partly pave the way to further voice studies in dubbing. Perhaps unsurprisingly, two of the themes found regarding the expectations of professional viewers of Persian dubbing in Ameri et al. (2015) were dubbing actors and dubbing directors. Interestingly, as evidenced by Di Giovanni (2016), good translation and synchrony are the most predominant subtitling quality standards according to viewers.

Furthermore, the current study examined the possible relevance of gender as a factor in reception dimensions. The evidence did not indicate any significant role of gender in terms of reception of dubbing in any of the dimensions. Bijani et al. (2014) also found that expectancy norms in terms of literary translation are not gender-specific. Nonetheless, in Di Giovanni’s (2012) project, gender was found to impact the reception of subtitling and voice-over – the younger generations, particularly women, tended to appreciate subtitling more. Additionally, in the current research the possible influence of the field of study as a factor on the dubbing reception was examined. The statistical evidence did not reveal any significant difference between the reception of the viewers of various fields of study, except for two dimensions – technicality and domestication.

This exploratory research was intended to address a gap in the literature and provide insights into dubbing reception in Iran, as a country that traditionally uses dubbing. The study was based on a mixed-methods design using both qualitative and quantitative phases. The present investigation yielded original findings that are conceptually and practically relevant and useful. The results can serve various purposes for translators, dubbing directors, dubbing actors and dubbing studios to produce viewer-centered dubbings and to be better able to meet the expectations of lay viewers, which constitutes the majority of the dubbing audience, in Iran for their further appreciation and satisfaction. More specifically, the findings are of value for the dubbing industry in helping them to prioritize significant factors during the dubbing process. In terms of methodological implications, the article designed, applied and validated a survey instrument for researching dubbing reception, which could be employed in similar contexts and dubbing communities.

The results do not claim extended generalizability, as the study was limited in a number of ways, including nonprobability and a statistically fairly small sample, and use of self-report data. This study was also delimited to investigating the reception of dubbing only, while other types of AVT are actively used in Iran.

To extend, supplement and cross-validate the findings of this preliminary project, future studies are recommended. Initially, further investigation of the reception of Persian dubbing in controlled, experimental settings using eye tracking devices could

help to advance our understating of the current picture of dubbing reception. It is noticeable that this device has recently been increasingly used for similar purposes (e.g. Di Giovanni & Romero Fresco, 2016, February; Orrego-Carmona, 2016; O'Hagan & Sasamoto, 2016). More generalizable findings could be achieved if future research targeted nationwide or cross-national scopes in investigating dubbing reception (e.g. Perego et al., 2016). Although the reception of nonprofessional subtitling has been examined in a few studies (Orrego-Carmona, 2014, 2016), little is known about the reception of fandubbing, as well as other professional and non-professional AVT modalities, such as voice-over or video game localization.

As 'potential audience satisfaction is disciplined by genre' (Di Giovanni, 2012, p. 177), future research is recommended to empirically explore the relevance of genre (e.g. crime, drama, and animation) to dubbing reception. Besides genre, further research is recommended to control variables of literacy and age as possible moderating factors in such inquires in Iran – or, for that matter, in other locales.

## Note

1. The authors did not include translation and language students in the study. This is because, based on our experiences in the context of Iran, language and translation students are mainly interested in watching original or subtitled films and TV series. The other point is that their linguistic consciousness can affect their responses and they can thus not be taken as lay viewers. Thus, the humanities group included students from majors such as geography, social sciences, history, management, accounting and so forth.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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