

Applying Multimodal Transcription to Persian Subtitling

Daugiamodalinio transkribavimo taikymas subtitruojant persų kalba

TRANSLATION / VERTIMAS

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Subtitling reduction is a way of tackling subtitling constraints that can facilitate the watching experience of the viewers. Recently, multimodal transcription has been employed by Taylor (2003, 2013) to investigate the audiovisual requirements of films as well as to investigate the possibility of editing and shortening the subtitles based on the nonverbally informed content. Since this approach has rarely been empirically examined, the current study attempted to investigate the possibility of reducing the subtitles of the French language film *Amelie* (Jeunet, 2001), and the impact of so doing on the comprehension achievement and the reception of the Iranian viewers. To this aim, in an experiment, the full Persian subtitles of the film were reduced based on the said framework. Then, the comprehension achievement of the control group who watched the full subtitles was compared with that of the experimental group who were shown the reduced subtitles. Moreover, the reception of the reduced subtitles was qualitatively investigated using retrospective interviews with selected participants of the treatment group. The results of the experiment revealed no significant difference between the comprehension achievements of the two groups, indicating the adequacy of the reduced version of the subtitles. The interviews revealed mixed results, indicating that the reduced subtitles were well-received by some for their brevity, but they were also criticized by some others for their fairly negative interference with the watching flow.

KEYWORDS: audiovisual translation, multimodal transcription, subtitling, subtitling reduction, Persian language.

In today's world, there is a huge demand for multimodal products like feature films and television series. One of the most cost-effective modalities (Deckert, 2013, p.57) for tailoring these products for international audiences is subtitling. Although subtitling is an addition to the original material and does not take over or ruin an existing component, to serve its purpose, this form of audiovisual translation ought to be in the most succinct form (Gottlieb, 1994; Kruger, 2012; Di Giovanni, 2016). Nevertheless, considering that the intended meaning in multimodal programs emerges from an interactive cooperation of the verbal, auditory and visual channels (Mayoral *et al.*, 1988; Baldry, 2000, 2004; Zabalbeascoa, 2008), subtitling reduction is certainly a challenge.

One of the newly recommended tools for investigating the said cooperation of verbal and

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Introduction



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nonverbal contents of the films is multimodal transcription that was employed by Taylor (2003, 2013) to reduce the subtitles by ignoring the nonverbally transferred information. Multimodal transcription was first used by linguists in the 20th century (Boas, 1911, as cited in Duranti, 2007) and is now widely used in various fields of humanities and socio-behavioral sciences (Duranti, 2007, p.301). According to Wildfeuer (2015), its use in multimodal analysis was started in 2000 by Baldry (cf. O'Halloran, 2002) and developed significantly within the past two decades by outstanding works of Kress and van Leeuwen (e.g. 1996, 2002).

Subtitling Reduction

Subtitling is, according to Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014, pp.8–9), translating audiovisual content of multimodal materials into textual frames that are placed on the lower part of the screen and is constrained due to the synchrony requirements of subtitles with image, speech and sound. Mayoral *et al.* (1988, p.359) mention four types of synchrony for audiovisual translations as 1) temporal-spatial synchrony; 2) content synchrony; 3) phonetic synchrony, and 4) character synchrony that according to de Linde (1995, p.13), Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014, p.9) and Matamala *et al.* (2017, p.425) make full rendering of the verbal tracks away from possible.

Guardini (1998, p.97) mentions three justifications for subtitling reduction such as: 1) coexistence of different communication modes within multimodal materials; 2) requirements of temporal-spatial synchrony; and 3) the linguistic differences between subtitles and the original language which are identified by Georgakopoulou (2009, pp.21–23) as: 1) Textual constraints; 2) Technical constraints; and 3) Linguistic constraints of subtitling, respectively.

One aspect of subtitling textual constraints is that, according to Mayoral *et al.* (1988, p.359), from the relation of the information that is at any time transferred by verbal, visual and auditory modes of communication in multimodal materials, various degrees of redundancy occur. d'Ydewalle *et al.* (1991, p.651) mention two types of redundancy as: 1) redundancy of image to speech; and 2) redundancy of subtitles to both image and speech. This feature makes it possible to reduce subtitles by ignoring the information that is transferred nonverbally as Taylor (2013, p.102) believes that it is sometimes possible, in subtitling, to ignore the verbal content that is transferred by nonverbal elements such as action and setting. It is also mentioned by Deckert (2013, p.59) that visual content can be helpful in reducing the cognitive burden of subtitles. Stöckl (2004, p.17) and Díaz-Cintas (2008, p.3) indicate that image and nonverbal content of multimodal texts are more absorbing than the content transferred by other modes of communication.

Another aspect of the textual constraints is that each mode has its own cognitive load. The differences in the cognitive loads of various modes include: 1) slower analysis of text than image (Delabastita, 1989; Nornes, 1999; Deckert, 2013); 2) slower analysis of text than speech (Perego, 2003; Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2014); and 3) slower speed of reading than talking and the difficulty of analyzing long subtitles (Gottlieb, 2005, p.19). These differences, again, suggest the necessity of reducing subtitles in order to reduce the cognitive burden of watching subtitled movies and prevent the over-occupation of viewers with subtitles.

Regarding technical constraints of time and space, Gielen (1988, as cited in d'Ydewalle & Gielen, 1992, p.420) indicates that while watching, eyes are more directed to the lower part of the screen close to where the subtitles are. Therefore, as mentioned by Georgakopoulou (2009, p.21) and Gottlieb (1994, p.101), they must be economized to let the eyes enjoy the visual. These statements suggest that subtitles must be as much succinct as the temporal-spatial requirements of the screen allow. This restriction according to Nedergaard-Larsen (1993, p.214) can cause a feedback effect in that loss of meaning at one time can be compensated through the nonverbal content at another time. Temporal-spatial requirements, however, are not the

same for all distributors. Gambier and Suomela-Salmi (1994) look at the difference between technical and financial aspects of cinema and television in terms of their audience, screen size, visual flow, and linguistic requirements. Also, Gottlieb (1994, pp.115–116) mentions that cinema, unlike television, puts aesthetic aspects of synchrony before perception. Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014, pp.23–24) indicate that cinema, since it has more selected viewers than television, consider faster reading standards and faster flow of subtitles.

Reduction in audiovisual translation is, according to Delabastita (1990), sometimes more important than syntax or style. It is, according to Nedergaard-Larsen (1993, p.219), a solution to culture-bound problems that is, according to Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014, p.146) and de Linde (1995, p.13), applied in two ways: 1) by removing the content that does not make a significant contribution to comprehension; and 2) by rewriting full subtitles into shorter ones.

Multimodal transcription is a film analytic tool that is used to investigate the inclusion and exclusion of modes other than speech within the meaning-making structure of multimodal materials that is done in three phases as framing, selecting and highlighting (Bezemer and Mavers, 2011, p.191). It has been applied for 1) recognizing verbal-nonverbal relations in frames of optimal lengths (Baldry and Taylor, 2002; Baldry and Thibault, 2006); or 2) for identifying the meaning-making potentials of the constituent modes of multimodal texts by transcribing them in terms of speech, image, text and kinetics (Baldry, 2004).

Taylor (2003) employs multimodal transcription in terms of 1) time; 2) visual frame; 3) visual image; 4) kinetic action; 5) soundtrack; and 6) subtitle (See Figure 1) to investigate the meaning-making contribution of visual image, kinetic action and soundtrack to the intended message of speech in the feature film *La Vita e Bella* [*life is beautiful*] (1997), the soap opera *Un Posto al Sole* (1996), and the cartoon series *The Flintstones* (1960) and, therefore, reduce the subtitles.

Remael (2004), after a careful study of the role of narration in the semiotic structure of multimodal materials, concludes that sometimes the intentions of dialogues can be transferred through nonverbal content including speech tone. Ortega (2011), by benefitting from the study of Taylor (2003), investigates the contribution of nonverbal language in *Spanglish* (2004) to interpersonal interactions and indicates that the density of the nonverbal content can be a determining measure of subtitling length. Vignozzi (2016) investigates, through transcription, how the idioms are visualized and verbalized in animated movies so that both children and parents enjoy them.

T	Visual Frame	Visual Image	Kinetic Action	Soundtrack	Subtitle
31		CP static HP frontal D medium VF Guido>officer VS Guido v soldiers Contrasted clothes CR blue/ grey/ brown CO natural	Guido turns towards officer, begins to speak	{Guido} Si vince a mille punti Il primo	The first one to get 1,000 points Le premier qui obtient 1,000 points

According to Dwyer (2017, p.27), the polemics of foreignization/ domestication, faithful/ free and equivalence/ function in movies are discussed by literary versus dialogue orientation of the movies and are narrowed down by notions such as enjoyment of watching, filmic aesthetics and the multimodal structure of the movies. He regards audience and reception as the major concerns of the movies that are challenged by subtitling since it ruins the visual and

Multimodal Transcription

Table 1

Multimodal Transcription of *La Vita e Bella* (adapted from Taylor, 2003, p.196)

Subtitling Reception

the aural subtleties and requires the audience to adjust their reading and normal watching performances (p.28). The importance of evaluating viewers' reception can be inferred from Ascheid (1983, cited in Downey, 2008, p.30) that the product of subtitling is a double text compared to the single original text, therefore it misleads the audience and takes away a large share of the enjoyment of watching.

According to Díaz-Cintas (2001, p.200), as the subtitle language coexists with the original language, subtitling mistakes can rarely get away unnoticed. He mentions three major problems that can be found with subtitles as asynchrony, excessive reduction and insufficient reading time. Downey (2008, p.30) regards asynchrony between subtitles and oral tracks as a disturbing subtitling error. Inferred from these three statements, it seems that asynchrony is the most severe deficit of subtitling.

Evaluating subtitles, however, according to Gottlieb (1994), does not have a straightforward procedure since it requires the comparison of a three-channel original with a four-channel target text. Zoe de Linde and Kay (2014, p.35) consider three analytic approaches to subtitling reception as 1) asking viewers about their habits of watching subtitles; 2) surveying viewers' opinions about predefined subtitles; and 3) eliciting controlled viewers' responses to controlled mediums of subtitling.

Orrego-Carmona (2016, pp.172–173) considers type of clips and reading difficulty, though not familiarity with subtitles, as determiners of subtitling enjoyment. He also finds a significant effect of type of subtitling on fixations on the image and gaze switches between subtitles and the visual. He indicates that there are interpersonal differences for the length factors of subtitling. He indicates that measures of subtitling length differ for each viewer. Orrego-Carmona (2015, p.231) mention, based on the results of an eye-tracking study, that longer time spans between the subtitles provides smoother reading and easier alternation between subtitles, while shorter spans cause more fixations on the subtitles. Faster subtitles, according to de Linde and Kay (2014, p.76), require faster reading speed and may disappoint the audience while slower subtitles may induce re-reading and confusion. Di Giovanni (2016, pp.72–73) mentions, as a result of a survey, that subtitles, very long or very short, reduce movie comprehension but the former is more interfering; nonetheless every individual has their own evaluative measures. According to Orrego-Carmona (2015), since subtitlers and viewers hold different evaluative measures for subtitling, studying subtitling reception might sound challenging though helpful in acquiring new subtitling strategies.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the current study is to investigate the possibility of reducing Persian subtitles drawing on the nonverbally transferred content of the films by benefitting from the multimodal transcription models applied by Taylor (2003, 2013).

In line with this aim, the current study attempted to answer the following questions:

- 1) Is it possible to reduce the length of the subtitles by relying on the content which is presented through the nonverbal channels?
- 2) Is there a significant difference between the achieved comprehensions through the original subtitles versus that of the reduced version?
- 3) How do the Iranian audiences receive the reduced subtitled?

Methods

To address the first question of the study, based on the multimodal transcription model proposed by Taylor (2003, 2013) concerning visual frame, visual image, kinetic action, and soundtrack. the Persian subtitled French language movie *Amelie* (Jeunet, 2001) was tran-

scribed and investigated for the adequacy of the meaning-making potentials of the visual elements, their contribution to the meaning conveyed by verbal content, and the possibility of using them to reduce subtitles.

In response to the second question concerning the difference between the comprehension achievements of the reduced subtitles versus that of the full, subtitles, an experiment was managed. To this aim, 38 students of English Translation at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran, were selected based on two criteria as: 1) being a native speaker of Persian language; and 2) not having a working knowledge of French or Italian languages.

Initially, using a multiple-choice comprehension pretest based on the Italian language movie *Life is beautiful* (Benigni, 1997), the participants were grouped and then randomly assigned to two comparable groups to comprise a control group and an experimental group. Then using a multiple-choice posttest on selected scenes of the movie *Amelie* (Jeunet, 2001) with the full subtitles and the reduced subtitles, the comprehension of, respectively, the control group and the experimental group was evaluated and compared using an independent samples *t*-test on IBM SPSS 19.0.

Finally, to address the third question concerning the reception of the reduced subtitles by the related audience as the third study question, selected members of the experimental group ($n=5$) with the highest scores on the posttest were qualitatively interviewed for the quality of the reduced subtitles in terms of length and duration, and the interference with the enjoyment of watching. Also they were asked if they felt any loss of information and if they would recommend watching reduced subtitles.

Due to the length limits of an article, a selection of four segments out of the 49 reduced subtitling segments is presented in this paper.

To understand the transcription tables that are presented in this chapter, the used abbreviations in the Column *Visual Image* are, according to Baldry and Thibault (2006, pp.191–202), explained below:

- a) Camera Position (CP): it shows if the camera is static or moving and if moving how the movement is.
- b) Horizontal Perspective (HP): it presents one of the two stances of the characters or the selected objects towards the camera on the horizontal line as direct or oblique.
- c) Vertical Perspective (VP): it presents one of the three stances of the characters or the selected objects on the vertical line as low, median and high.
- d) Visual Focus (VF): it refers to the object that gets prominence in the eyes of the main participant in the scene.
- e) Distance (D): it shows the distance of the selected object from the camera. It has six different scales as very close shot, close shot, medium close shot, medium long shot, long shot, very long shot on the horizontal line, and three different scales as close, median and far on the vertical line.
- f) Visually Salient item (VS): it refers to the most prominent object of the visual frame that carries the most significant load of information.
- g) Visual Collocation (VC): it refers to the secondary items in the visual frame such as clothes which transfer some information about the status and the activity of the selected objects.
- h) Color (CR): it refers to any color used in the visual frame that has a significant contribution to its intention.
- i) Coding Orientation (CO): it refers to one of the three ways reality is depicted in the scene as naturalistic, sensual or hyper real.

Results of the Subtitling Reduction

The scene transcribed in Table 2 is part of a longer scene that begins with the coincidence of Amelie's planning to go to the train station with that of another man that is not going to be identified but by his lower body that is presented by white pants and red trainers, and also by his blue car when he gets to the train station. Earlier in the movie, in the end of a long sequence, a man in red trainers

Table 2

The scene where the mystery man arrives at the station

T Visual Frame	Visual Image	Kinetic Action	Soundtrack	Subtitle	
85:47		A man is walking.	High-pitched sound.	↓	
85:48		↓	↓	↓	اصل: در همان زمان مردی از خیابان لکوره خونه اش رو ترک کرد.
85:49		↓	↓	↓	↓
85:50		↓	↓	↓	↓
85:51		↓	↓	↓	↓
Shots 85:52 to 86:02 is intentionally left blank.					
86:02		A car approaches.	[quiet screeching of the tires]	اصل: همزمان مردی با کفش های قرمز بیرون از ایستگاه پارک کرد کوتاه شده: همزمان مردی وارد ایستگاه شد	
86:03– 86:05		The car stops.	↓		
86:06		It is 11:40.	[strike]	زمان دقیق ۱۱:۴۰ دقیقه	

got into a blue car that seems to be the same car that is presented in the current scene. According to the original great emphasis on the image that includes the pants, the trainers and the blue car, the author decided to remove those pieces of information that duplicate the said emphasis as follows.

Original subtitle:

همزمان مردی با کفش های قرمز بیرون از ایستگاه پارک کرد

[Simultaneously, a man in red shoes parked outside the station]

Reduced subtitle:

همزمان مردی وارد ایستگاه شد

[Simultaneously, a man entered the station]

The scene that is transcribed in Table 3 presents an apparently unattended garden of daffodils where Amelie's childhood friend, the teddy-bear, is resting. The garden witnesses different weathers that signify the pass of life. The morose image of Amelie at the beginning of the scene combined with the unattended garden and its occupant and also the pass of the seasons that end with a new spring with shiny chrysanthemums suggest the happy-ending of the boring life of Amelie, the only child where a bird comes in to get some twigs to build a nest and flies away like a messenger that is coming to say that it is the time to start a new life. Based on the meaning-making of the said visual actions, salience and collocations of this scene, therefore, it seems that rephrasing the original subtitles into reduced subtitles as follows does not damage the intended message although the reduced subtitles sound more idiomatic than the original ones.

Original subtitle:

روزها، ماهها و سالها میگذرند/ در چنین دنیای مرده‌ای/ املی ترجیح میدهد در رؤیا زندگی کند تا روزی که بتواند خانه را ترک کند

[Days, months and years pass by/ In such a dead world/ Amelie prefers to dream until she's old enough to leave [Father's] house]

Reduced subtitle:

روزها میگذرند/ و املی پشت پنجره منتظر خبری است تا خانه را ترک کند

[Days go by/ And Amelie is anticipating a message to leave [Father's] house]

T	Visual Frame	Visual Image	Kinetic Action	Soundtrack	Subtitle
09:09– 09:11		CP: tilting HP: frontal D: close/ VS: Amelie VF: Amelie/ window CR: orange CO: natural	Amelie is looking out the window. She looks depressed.	[a motor cycle passes]+[sad soundtrack continues loudly]	
09:12		CP: tilting HP: frontal D: close/ VS: window/ wall/ VF: teddy CR: orang/ CO: natural	[camera is heading down]	↓	
09:13		CP: tilting HP: frontal D: close VS: garden VF: teddy/ daffodils VC: pan CR: orange CO: natural	↓	↓	

Table 3

The scene where the child Amelie is anticipating news

T	Visual Frame	Visual Image	Kinetic Action	Soundtrack	Subtitle
09:14– 09:16		CP: static/ HP: frontal/ D: close/ VS: garden/ VF: teddy/ trodden daffodils/ VC: pan, pail CR: orange/ CO: natural	There is a garden where white daffodils are trodden and a teddy bear is resting.		اصل: روزها، ماهها و سالها می گذرند
					کاهش یافته: روزها می گذرند
09:17– 09:19		CP: static/ HP: frontal/ D: close/ VS: garden/ VF: teddy/ dry flowers/ VC: pail/ CR: green CO: surreal	Shower washes the flowers away.	[raining] [music gets a happy rhythm and continues loudly]	
09:20– 09:22		CP: static/ HP: frontal/ D: close/ VS: garden VF: teddy/ flowers VC: snow pail CR: white/ CO: surreal	The garden is covered up in snow.	[wind blowing] [soundtrack continues louder and faster]	اصل: در چنین دنیای مرده ای
					کاهش یافته: و املی پشت پنجره
09:23– 09:31		CP: static/ HP: frontal/ D: close/ VS: garden VF: chrysanthemum/ teddy/ VC: twigs, teddy, pail, pan CR: green/ CO: natural	Red chrysanthemums replace the white daffodils. A magpie flies in, gets some twigs and flies off.		اصل: املی ترجیح میدهد در رویا زندگی کند تا روزی که بتواند خانه را ترک کند
					کاهش یافته: منتظر خبری است تا خانه را ترک کند

In the scene transcribed in Table 4, the red color of Amelie's dining table that can signify love and desire comes into contrast with the corn yellow color of the curtains that can signify irritation and hatred. Yet, the main theme of the original subtitle is a contrast between loneliness, signified by the oneness of the items on the twin dining table as the visual salience, and association. Therefore, reducing the original subtitles into shorter subtitles, on the basis of the contrasts made by the visual salience and the colors of the scene, as in the following seem to better communicate the main message of the visual without damaging the intended message.

Original subtitle:

اون دختر نمی‌تونه دیگران رو تو زندگی اش جا بده/ از کودکی اش تنها بوده و همیشه تنها خواهد موند

[She can't relate to other people/ she was lonely as a child and she'll be lonely forever]

Reduced subtitle:

اون دختر از جمع بیزاره/ اون به تنهایی اش عادت کرده

[She hates communicating/ she is used to her loneliness]

T	Visual Frame	Visual Image	Kinetic Action	Soundtrack	Subtitle
36:43– 36:45		CP: dollying HP: oblique/ D: long VS, VF: Amelie VC: kitchen/ CR: red CO: natural	She is looking at her dining table.	[none]	
36:46– 36:47		CP: static/ VP: median D: medium VS, VF: table/ VC: food CR: red/ CO: natural	She has the same things on her table as dufayel does.	↓	
36:48– 36:50		CP: static/ HP: oblique D: close/ VS: Amelie VF: Amelie/ CR: red CO: natural	She gets upset and looks at Dufayel's again	↓	
36:49– 36:50		CP: static/ HP: oblique D: close/ VS: Amelie VF: Amelie/ CR: red CO: natural	She looks at Dufayel's.	↓	
36:51– 36:54		↓	She looks back at her table and mocks Dufayel's words.	↓	اصل: اون دختر نمی تونه دیگران رو تو زندگی اش جا بده کاهش یافته: اون دختر از جمع بیزاره
36:55– 36:57		↓	↓	↓	اصل: از وقتی بچه بوده تنها بوده و همیشه تنها خواهد ماند کاهش یافته: اون به تنهایی اش عادت کرده

Table 4

The scene where Amelie mocks Defayel

The scene transcribed in Table 4 presents a man who is reciting a report on behalf of Amelie. The black and white background, the man's serious and tough gesture and his tone of speech in different positions seem to be better communicated by shorter lines than those of the subtitles. At a time, the said man stands high and stares away as though he is assessing the probable circumstances that are ahead of Amelie that do not seem to be reflected in the related subtitles. Therefore, based on visual focus, kinetic action and tone of speech, the original subtitle can be rephrased into a shorter subtitle as follows to convey the feel of the scene.

Original subtitle:

تلاش دوفائل برای فضولی کردن غیر قابل تحمل است/ املی اختیار دارد تمام عمرش در رویا زندگی کند/ و تمام احساساتش را برای خودش نگه دارد/ اصلا حق دارد هر طور شده زندگی اش را به هم بریزد

[Dufayel's attempts to meddle are intolerable/ If Amélie chooses to live in a dream and remain an introverted young woman/ he has an absolute right to mess up her life].

Reduced subtitle:

کنجکاوی این مرد محکوم است/ فرضا که املی خیال پرداز باشد/ اصلا بخواهد تنها بماند/ این مرد حق دخالت ندارد

[Dufayel's meddling is condemned/ say that Amélie is a dreamer/ say that she wants to live alone/ this man has no right to interfere]

Table 5

The scene where a man is condemning Dufayel meddling in Amélie's life

T	Visual Frame	Visual Image	Kinetic Action	Soundtrack	Subtitle
99:23– 09:24		CP: static/ HP: oblique D: medium/ VS: man/ typewriter/ VF: man/ VC: TV/ CO: natural	A man is walking slowly while talking. A typewriter is typing.	[typewriter keys clanking] +[shutter rolling]	اصل: تلاش دوفائل برای فضولی کردن غیر قابل تحمل است کوتاه شده: کنجکاوی این مرد محکوم است
99:25– 99:28		↓	The man brings her arm down forcefully.	↓	
99:29– 99:31		CP: panning/ HP: frontal/ D: close/ VS: Amélie/ VF: Amélie/ CO: natural	Amélie agrees.	↓	
99:32– 99:37		CP: dollying/ HP: oblique/ D: close/ VS: man/ typewriter/ VF: man/ VC: type machine/ CO: natural	The man stops and looks at a distance as if he is considering probabilities. His arms waving forcefully.	↓	اصل: املی اختیار دارد تمام عمرش در رویا زندگی کند کوتاه شده: فرضا که املی خیال پرداز باشد
99:38– 99:40		↓	↓	↓	اصل: و تمام احساساتش را برای خودش نگه دارد کوتاه شده: اصلا بخواهد زندگی اش را خراب کند
99:41– 99:42		CP: dollying/ HP: oblique D: close/ VS: man/ typewriter VF: man/ VC: type machine CO: natural	↓	[clanking and shuttering continues] +[consistent dramatic music]	

T	Visual Frame	Visual Image	Kinetic Action	Soundtrack	Subtitle
99:43– 99:46		↓	He raises his hand and hits the table.	↓	اصل: اصلا حق دارد هر طور شده زندگی اش را به هم بریزد کوتاه شده: این مرد حق دخالت ندارد
99:47		CP: panning/ HP: frontal/ D: close VS: Amélie/ VF: Amélie CO: natural	Amélie seems distressed.	↓	

In the experimental stage the difference between the comprehension achievements of the control and the experimental groups which respectively watched the full and the reduced versions of the subtitles were investigated. The sample of the participants in the viewing session included 38 Iranian adults ($Men=9$, $Women=29$) within the age range of 20–50 ($M=28.95$, $SD=7.64$) from three educational levels ($BA=6$, $MA=26$, $PhD=6$).

The results of the pretest, a multiple-choice comprehension test on a selected Persian subtitled scene (15 minutes) of the Italian movie *Life Is Beautiful* (Benigni, 1997), that was run to assign the participants to two comparable groups as a control group and an experimental group, are presented in Table 6. Overall, the results ($M=17.94$, $SD=1.25$) indicate an acceptable comprehension achievement.

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Pretest	38	15.00	20.00	17.947	1.250

Results of the Experiment

Table 6

Descriptive information of the pretest on film *Life Is Beautiful*

The mean score of the control group on the full subtitle ($M=15.47$, $SD=1.57$) and the mean score of the experimental group on the reduced subtitle of *Amélie* ($M=14.84$, $SD=0.83$) are presented in Table 7. As can be seen, the performance of the control group is slightly better than the performance of the experimental group.

Pairs	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Posttest (full Subtitle)	19	12.00	18.00	15.4737	1.57651
Posttest (Reduced Subtitle)	19	13.00	16.00	14.8421	.83421

Table 7

Descriptive statistics of the results of the posttest on film *Amélie*

As, later in the experiment, the difference between the comprehension achievement of the full subtitles and that of the reduced subtitles was calculated as non-significant, it was interesting to calculate the difference between the comprehension achievement of the (full) subtitles of the pretest material and the overall achievements of the posttest subtitles. The result of this comparison ($M=15.157$; $SD=1.28$) is presented in Table 8.

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Posttest	38	12.00	18.00	15.1579	1.28455

Table 8

Descriptive information of the posttest results

Results of the Comparison

Table 9

The results of t-test between the comprehension achievements through full subtitles vs. reduced subtitles

The significance of the difference between the comprehension achievement of the full subtitles and that of the reduced subtitles, as measured by a paired samples *t*-test, is presented in Table 9 ($t(19) = 1.93, p = .069$).

Pair	M	SD	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Extended Ver.–Reduced Ver.	.63158	1.42246	1.935	18	.069

The significance of the difference between the comprehension achievement of the pretest subtitles and the overall achievements of the posttest subtitles, as calculated using a *t*-test is presented in Table 10 ($t(38) = -8.83; p < .05$).

Table 10

The Results of t-test between the Posttest vs. Pretest

Pair	M	SD	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest–Posttest	-2.78947	1.94739	-8.830	37	.000

Results of the Retrospective Interview

The interview questions regarding the quality of the reduced subtitles and the responses of selected members of the experimental group are presented in the following.

Q1: What are your opinions about the length of the subtitles you watched?

In response to this question, some mentioned that subtitles sometimes seemed to contain less than the dialogues but it was not an issue for them since, as they reported, they were related to the visual that did not seem to imply anything more or because French words are generally larger than equivalent Persian words ($n = 2$). On the contrary, some found the length of subtitles, compared to the length of the dialogues, so short that they could not switch properly between the subtitles and the visual ($n = 3$).

Q2: Did you feel any loss of information during watching?

In response to this question, some respondents mentioned that sometimes the subtitles seemed to contain less details than the dialogues but it did not cause loss of information since they were relevant and communicative ($n = 2$). Some others just mentioned that they did not feel loss of information and they did not feel any discrepancy between the details of the subtitles and the dialogues while watching ($n = 3$).

Q3: What are your opinions about the duration of the subtitles you received?

In response to this question, some individuals mentioned that equal duration of the short subtitles with lengthy dialogues, made them switch more often than usual to the subtitle area with expectation of a subtitle change that was vain ($n = 1$). Some others, however, mentioned that the subtitles had proper durations ($n = 4$).

Q4: How did the subtitles affect your enjoyment of watching?

The individuals who found the subtitles too short compared to the dialogues reported that the subtitles confused them between the subtitles and the visual ($n = 3$). The others, however, did not mention any influence of the subtitles on their enjoyment of watching ($n = 2$).

Q5: Would you recommend watching programs with reduced subtitles?

In response to this question, some individuals mentioned that the reduced subtitles were distracting, hence, they cannot be recommended as desirable subtitles ($n = 3$). Some others, however, stated that the reduced subtitles as long as they are relevant and they transfer the main message are desirable and they would recommend it to those who use subtitles for getting the main message rather than the details ($n = 2$).

Discussion

Transcription of the people-oriented film *Amelie* (Jeunet, 2001) in terms of time, visual frame, visual image, kinetic action, and soundtrack revealed that nonverbal content, including camera perspective and position, visual salience and focus, colors, body language, tone of speech and music, acts in close cooperation with the verbal content to communicate the intended messages. In the said film, nonverbal content has a huge role in communicating emotions such as terror, guilt, regret, sympathy, yearning and relief that is believed by the author to make a considerable share of the general intended message. According to such and similar meaning-making role of the nonverbal content, the subtitling segments that were redundant to the visual were identified and reduced through rephrasing or deletion, with an attempt to avoid loss of meaning. Deletion was used in cases that a word or a phrase was redundant to the visual and rephrasing was applied in cases where, as believed by the author, verbal and visual were semi-relevant to each other or when shorter subtitles could transfer the feel of the scenes more effectively than could the full subtitles as is presented in Tables 3, Table 4 and Table 5. Similar finding has been mentioned by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014) and de Linde (1995). The reduction procedure that was managed in the current study, so, resulted in reduced subtitles for 49 scenes mostly on the basis of the meaning-making capacities of the setting, including the objects in the scenes and the lighting, camera perspectives, colors, body language and speech tones. However, it is noteworthy that *Amelie* (Jeunet, 2001), that is categorized as a fantasy comedy, may not have the regular amount of verbal content that is expected from a comedy film. Rather, it is an image-oriented movie that is trying to communicate a great deal of the message through silent scenes and scores. Therefore, the amount of reductions may seem low compared to the length of the movie (2h 9m).

The term reduced, however, when employed for an entity, brings notions such as loss of information, or denial of information and censorship to the mind. Besides, it cannot be expected that all individuals have same shares of understanding the message of images and nonverbal contents. Therefore, the difference between the comprehension achievements of the reduced subtitles and the comprehension achievements of the full subtitle was measured through a comprehension test from a control group ($n=19$) on the full and a comparable experimental group ($n=19$) on the reduced subtitles. This comparison is, as stated by Orrego-Carmona (2015), essential in that not everyone has same perspectives on the nature of subtitling, hence, such comparisons help better identification of working strategies of subtitling.

The results of the comparison, as evaluated on IBM SPSS, showed that the performance of the control group who were on the full subtitle ($M=15.47$) was slightly higher than the performance of the experimental group on the reduced subtitle ($M=14.84$). However, the difference between the mean scores, as measured by paired samples t -test, was not significant ($p=.069$).

This is a confirming result since the reduced subtitles if their comprehension is comparable to the comprehension of full subtitles, as is in this study, can be recommended to those types of viewers who do not like to spend their time on the lower part of the screen reading long subtitles, rather they prefer to enjoy the best of the scene and the characters and, hence, to receive short subtitles that are communicating the gist of the message of the scenes. However, comprehension is not the only concern of films, rather aesthetics and enjoyment of watching are, as mentioned by (Dwyer, 2017), two other factors that are concerned by any multimodal material. Therefore, it is essential to survey the viewers about the quality and applicability of the reduced subtitles.

To this aim in the current study, selected members of the experimental group ($n=5$) with the

highest scores on the comprehension test were interviewed about their impression of and the quality of the reduced subtitles including its probable interferences with flow or enjoyment of watching. The findings of this survey are noteworthy in that viewers as the final consumers of films must be regarded as authorized to think critically of what is provided to them and their opinions must be benefitted in tailoring the strategies employed to produce quality materials. Orrego-Carmona (2015) identifies viewers as authorized critics of subtitles who according to Luque (2003) define translation method. Some of the interviewed participants mentioned that sometimes the reduced subtitles appeared to contain less than the dialogues but that was not a big problem for them since they could get enough information from them and the visual did not seem to imply more than the visuals ($n=2$). The others, however, rated against the reduced subtitles by mentioning that reduced subtitles were so short compared to the perceived length of the dialogues that they could not divide their attention proportionally between the subtitles and the visual ($n=3$), hence they lost their interest in watching. This contrast is interesting since the selected viewers were all regular consumers of subtitles and it is in line with the statement of Orrego-Carmona (2016) that there is no relation between viewers' familiarity with subtitles and their rating of the subtitles in the other words reception of a particular quality cannot be predicted by the viewers' familiarity with or frequency of watching the subtitles.

Nevertheless, the respondents had shared opinions regarding the relevance of the subtitles and the visual. They all reported that the subtitles, although they were shorter than the dialogues, were successful in conveying the necessary information to comprehend the scenes; in the other words they did not report any loss of information or being cheated out of information as a probable consequence of placing short dialogues under long dialogues that is mentioned by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014).

Another finding, yet not directly related to the questions of the study, was that the performance of the research sample on the pretest was significantly higher than the performance of the control and the experimental group together. The idea of this comparison came up as the difference between the comprehension achievement of the control group and that of the experimental group was not significant, hence, it did not seem irrational to consider the posttest groups as one group and compare their achievement of the posttest with their achievements of the pretest. The result was interesting due to the fact that the subtitles used for the pretest were full fast subtitles that, according to Di Giovanni (2016) and de Linde and Kay (2014), seemed to be more distracting and disturbing than the subtitles of the posttest even in their full version.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the findings of the current study cannot be expected to be conclusive since every phase of the study was faced with certain limitations. The first phase, subtitling reduction, was limited to the fact that different films have different levels of dependency on the verbal and nonverbal content and cannot be expected to have equal capacities of subtitling reduction. The second phase, the experiment, was limited to the size and demographic characteristics of the sample in that it is only a very small proportion of the real life audience of subtitled materials that only consists a very small group of academic audiences and it apparently cannot represent all the interpersonal differences in comprehension mechanisms of the concurrent visual and verbal data. And the third phase of the study was limited to the fact that interviews are not capable of yielding definite results about the frequency of switches between the subtitles and the visual, the rate of attention allocation to either of the said channels, or the enjoyment of watching.

It was shown by the first phase of this study that the subtitles can be reduced drawing on the information that is conveyed through the nonverbal content of the scenes such as distance or position of the camera on the vertical or horizontal lines, visual focus, salience and collocation, color, feel and kinetics of the scenes. Multimodal transcription, the framework that was used to manage this phase, is actually employed in film studies for identifying modes of communication other than speech that are contained in the meaning-making structure of multimodal materials; however, this study similar to the studies of Taylor (2003, 2013) showed that it can also be employed to investigate the meaning-making share of various modes involved in subtitled materials and decide on the possibilities of benefitting from the redundancies or irrelevances of modes to or with each other in order to reduce the subtitled content. By the second phase of the study, it was found that there might be differences between the comprehension achievements of reduced subtitles and the comprehension achievements of full subtitles; however, the difference might not be always significant. Therefore, reduced subtitles can be helpful for those who prefer concise subtitles over exact subtitles so that they can enjoy best of the visual. And, by the third phase, it was found, drawing on the interviewees' responses, that reduced subtitles may cause rereading and decreased enjoyment of watching. Yet, drawing again on the interviewees' responses, they can also be in service of the audience who seek relevance rather than exactness in subtitles. The third phase of the study also highlights the importance of tailoring subtitling qualities based on particular viewers' preferences. Yet, more subtitled materials, larger samples, different test structures and different research methods are required to be investigated or employed to gain full understanding of subtitling reduction mechanisms, cognitive performance of the audience while watching movies with different subtitles of different qualities and also the usefulness of different subtitling strategies.

Discussion

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Santrauka

Zahra Abdi, Masood Khoshsaligheh. Daugiamodalinio transkribavimo taikymas subtitruojant persų kalba

Norint pagerinti subtitruotų kino filmų žiūrėjimo patirtį, mažinamas subtitrų skaičius. C. J. Taylor'as (2003, 2013) pasitelkė daugiamodalinį transkribavimą tirdamas audiovizualinius filmų reikalavimus ir galimybę redaguoti ir sutrumpinti subtitrus pagal informaciją, kuri gaunama iš nežodinio turinio. Kadangi šis metodas empiriškai mažai analizuotas, šiame tyrime buvo nagrinėjama galimybė sutrumpinti prancūzų režisieriaus Jeano-Pierre'o Jeunet'o 2001 m. filmo „Amelija iš Monmartro“ subtitrus ir tokio sprendimo įtaka iraniečių žiūrovų filmo suvokimui ir priėmimui. Šiuo tikslu, naudojant minėtą metodą, buvo sutrumpinti filmo subtitrai persų kalba. Tada kontrolinės grupės, žiūrėjusios filmą su pilnais subtitrais, filmo suvokimas buvo palygintas su eksperimentinės grupės, kuriai buvo rodomi sutrumpinti subtitrai, suvokimu. Be to, pasitelkus retrospektyvius pokalbius su pasirinktais dalyviais iš eksperimentinės grupės, buvo kokybiškai tiriama, kaip jie priėmė sutrumpintus subtitrus. Bandyto rezultatai atskleidė, kad abiejų grupių filmo suvokimas mažai skiriasi. Tai rodo, jog sutrumpinti subtitrai yra pakankami. Pokalbiai atskleidė įvairius rezultatus: dalis eksperimentinės grupės žiūrovų sutrumpintus subtitrus įvertino gerai būtent dėl jų trumpumo, bet kitiems žmonėms jie trikdė sklandų filmo žiūrėjimą.

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