

## Taboo translation by Iranian state TV after the Islamic Revolution of Iran: a historical corpus-based study

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## Abstract

The Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 caused the replacement of a pro-western government with an Islamic republic which also affected the broadcast of foreign audio-visual products on the state TV. As such foreign products contained taboos, censorship seemed necessary according to Islamic laws. This study aimed to investigate how the State TV has administered censorship in English series broadcast during four different decades after the Islamic Revolution. Procedures suggested by Brownlie (2007) were utilized to analyse taboo translation. The findings indicated that the most frequent procedure was the total change of taboo terms: rendering them into irrelevant expressions. This procedure was not included in Brownlie's framework. Other frequent procedures included omission, toning down, leaving an ST content in the SL, and substitution respectively. It was concluded that procedures for taboo censorship have been inconsistent during all these four decades and the reason might be ideological.

**Keywords:** Taboo; State TV; translation procedure; ideology; Islamic Revolution.

## 1. Introduction

Culture and Language are inseparably interconnected and culture itself can be defined as a collection of shared beliefs and customs among members of a certain speech community that serve to shape people's ideas and behaviour (House, 2009). Almost universally, taboo items are also regarded as integral components of each language and are transmitted from generation to generation at deep unconscious levels of behaviour.

This study aimed to clarify the procedures used in the translation of taboos in four dubbed foreign series that the State TV (IRIB)<sup>1</sup> aired in Iran following the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The study also sought to determine whether or not the IRIB has consistently censored taboo items over the course of these several decades. Different governments with various ideologies (whether moderate, reformist, or conservative) have been elected by people during different decades and the researchers aimed to clarify whether all these political and social changes caused by the governments have affected the censorship procedures of IRIB or not. The classification of taboos in Iran developed by Sharifi and Darchinian (2009) was used in these series to identify the items that are perceived as taboo language based on the Iranian culture.

To address the above-mentioned issues, the following research questions were developed:

1. What translation procedures for taboo items suggested by Brownlie (2007) have been mostly employed by IRIB translators after the Islamic Revolution of Iran?
2. Have different governments with various ideologies affected IRIB translators' procedures for translating taboo items during four recent decades of the Islamic Revolution?
3. Have IRIB translators acted consistently in translating taboo items during different decades after the Islamic Revolution? If not, what caused these discrepancies?

## 2. The Islamic Revolution and IRIB

The Islamic Revolution of Iran occurred in 1979 and resulted in the ousting of the Pahlavi dynasty under the Shah (Mohammad Reza Pahlavi) and its replacement with the Islamic Republic which was backed by several leftist and Islamist groups. The previous government used to favour a pro-Western absolute monarchy and subsequently was replaced with an anti-Western theocracy.

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1 Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) is a state media corporation that enjoys a monopoly on national radio and television services as private TV channels are banned. It receives its budget from the government, but it is considered independent and its chief is appointed directly by the Iranian Supreme Leader. It is known to support the ideology of Islam.

### 3. Literature review

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

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

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

Sharifi and Darchinian (2009) stated that Persian translators must handle a broader and significantly diverse variety of subjects as taboo language:

- a) Expressions related to kissing, hugging, sleeping with, and cheating used to describe personal relationships between boys and girls, whether legal or illegal; b) boy-girl relationships before marriage; c) citing sexual organs; d) using words related to alcoholic drinks and drugs; e) using swear words and curses; f) immoral behaviours such as stealing, etc.; g) religion and beliefs incompatible with the translator's society; h) Political factors inconsistent with the translator's society.

Sedighi and Najian Tabrizi (2012) examined the frequently employed procedures for rendering taboos in several English-to-Persian dubbed romantic films during the Islamic Revolution of Iran using Toury's (1995) proposed framework for norm classification. Their research evaluated the standards that drove movie subtitlers and dubbers to translate taboo items from English into Persian. According to their findings, “euphemism” was the most frequently used procedure for rendering and dubbing words and expressions in romance films.

Khoshsaligheh and Ameri (2014) also investigated the procedures used by Iranian audio-visual translators to render taboos in four American crime films that were dubbed into Persian. A model of four procedures was established after the evaluation of the methods for translating the original taboos into Persian. They included: a) translating taboo from the source culture to another taboo in the target culture, b) deleting taboo from the source culture, c) replacing the source culture taboo with a target culture non-taboo, and d) translating the taboo from the source culture to a euphemism from the target culture. Their findings showed that audio-visual translators often reduced the impact of taboo language by either removing the taboo from the source culture or replacing it with a non-taboo or euphemism, although about one-third of the taboos were preserved in the dubbed versions.

Hashemian and others (2014) also examined the procedures employed in five Hollywood movies dubbed by IRIB to render taboos from English into Persian. Utilizing Venuti's (1995) domestication and foreignization strategies, the findings were analyzed. The study of the data showed that the most commonly used procedure for translating taboo items was "deletion".

#### 4. Taboo translation

Brownlie's (2007) study appears to be one of the most noteworthy investigations in the field of taboo translation as she analysed the motives and impacts of self-censorship in literary translation by comparing five various translations of Emile Zola's *Nana* and detecting specific self-censorship procedures that emerge as modifications in comparison with the source text (*ibid.*). The following are the procedures she's noticed:

1. Omission: where some references in the target text are omitted
2. Addition: adding phrases to create a less insulting target text
3. Substitution: substituting a less offensive item for a deleted one
4. Literal translation: a type of self-censorship tactic utilized to avoid using a taboo item
5. Toning down: employing less expressive words or phrases instead of rough language
6. Leaving an ST content in the SL: leaving a term in the target text without explaining it, expecting the target readers to figure out what it means based on the context.

### 5. Methodology

#### 5.1. Corpus

The data of this descriptive and comparative study were collected from a corpus consisting of original scripts of four English television series that related to four distinct decades (the 1980s to the 2010s) as well as their Persian dubbed versions. The classification of Iranian taboos developed by Sharifi and Darchinian (2009) helped to select these series which con-

tained a high frequency of taboos. Table 1 lists the information for both the original series and their dubbed versions.

**TABLE 1**

The English corpus of the study

TITLE	CREATORS	RELEASE YEAR	DUBBING YEAR
<i>Secret Army</i>	Gerard Glaister	1977	1990
<i>Early Edition</i>	Ian Abrams Patrick Q. Page Vik Rubinfeld	1996	1998
<i>Yes, Minister</i>	Antony Jay Jonathan Lynn	1980	2005
<i>House of Cards</i>	Beau Willimon	2003	2016

## 5.2. Procedure

This study employed a parallel corpus to identify the textual practices of translation agents in microscopic analysis to achieve this purpose. To collect the required statistics, the first seasons of the television series (*Secret Army* with 16 episodes, *Early Edition* with 23, *Yes, Minister* with 7, and *House of Cards* with 13 ones) were compared to the original version. To ensure the accuracy of the comparisons, Springfield website<sup>2</sup> was utilized to provide the English screenplay for every episode. Then, each taboo item was subsequently classified using one of the translation procedures suggested by Brownlie (2007). The corpus was examined manually and 1 176 taboo items (*Secret Army* with 256, *Early Edition* with 484, *Yes Minister* with 139, and *House of Cards* with 297 taboo items) were carefully chosen. Two university lecturers who possessed expertise in English culture studies were consulted for the data collected and as a result, some sections of analysis were re-examined and changed.

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

Furthermore, investigating all taboo renderings made the researchers realize that IRIB translators have utilized a translation procedure that was not mentioned by Brownlie. They

2 [www.springiledspringfled.co.uk](http://www.springiledspringfled.co.uk).

translated lots of taboos to irrelevant words, phrases, or sentences and this procedure was termed as “change” by the researchers.

## 6. Results and discussion

### 6.1. The 1980s

The year 1979 should be deemed a turning point in the contemporary era of Iran. The events of this year initiated a process of ongoing ideological reformation. The Iranian Revolution and subsequent events established Islamism as a powerful ideology and the organs of the government started serving the revolution cause. The end goal of the revolution was never a single nation, but rather its expansion to other parts of the world. During this decade, four presidents were elected that mostly upheld Islamic conservatism (Banisadr, 1980-1981; Rajai, 1981; Khamenei, 1981-1989). Following the 1979 Revolution, the government also imposed strict regulations on the way foreign audio-visual products were selected and translated to be aired on the State TV since the Islamic culture did not accept all cultural facets of Western films and series that were supposed to be translated.

#### 6.1.2. Secret Army examples

The researchers selected the “Secret Army” series as a sample to investigate how taboo items were censored in audio-visual products in IRIB during the first decade of the Islamic Revolution. It was a drama series produced by the BBC and the Belgian national broadcaster BRT (now VRT). It narrated the story of a fictitious Belgian resistance movement in German-occupied Belgium during World War II devoted to returning Allied airmen, who were typically shot down by the Luftwaffe, to the United Kingdom. Some instances of taboo items and their renderings conducted by IRIB are provided below.

#### A. Taboo of private relations between men and women

- a. And you sleep with the Boche.  
باز کن. باز کن در رو.  
Back translation: Open. Open the door. (Change)
- b. That kiss up on the roof.  
میدونی که اسم رمز عجیبی برای خودت انتخاب کردی.  
Back translation: You know you chose a strange password for yourself. (Change)

#### B. Taboo of boys' and girls' relations before marriage

- a. My girlfriend is an orderly at the hospital.  
دوست قدیمیم تو بیمارستان سورماتیا کار میکنه.  
Back translation: My old friend works in Surmatia Hospital. (Substitution)

- b. Give my regards to your wife.

سلام به خواهرت برسون.

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

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

### C. Taboo of words and expressions related to alcoholic drinks and drugs

- a. Look after the bar, will you?

مراقب بار باش.

Back translation: Look after the bar. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

Islam has also stated that alcohol consumption can be potentially sinful and its disadvantages are by far more than its benefits since it confuses people to distinguish between right and wrong, but some references to all kinds of alcoholic drinks, the places they are served, and their effects on the mind are preserved in this series.

### D. Taboo of swearing, cursing, and impolite expressions

- a. What the hell do you think you are doing?

معلوم هست چیکار داری میکنی؟

Back translation: What do you think you are doing? (Omission)

- b. I have only seen Negros twice.

و منم تنها دوبار سیاهپوست دیدم.

Back translation: I have only seen African-American guys twice. (Toning down)

Also, all references to harsh swear words have been omitted in the dubbing of this series since the Islamic culture values politeness and opposes any disrespect (example a). Furthermore, negative references to races are also toned down because Islam believes in equality between various races (example b).

### E. Taboo of Issues relating to religion

- a. I'll stay by the church in case they come through it.

منم از کنار کلیسا مراقب همه چیز هستم.

Back translation: I will take care of everything near the church. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

- b. But you are being even more naïve in presuming you could change sides in the middle of a war and simply say I repent the error of my ways and go to a martyr's grave.

ولي خيال نكنين ميشه در وسط يك جنگ ميشه تغيير جهت داد و راحت گفت من از کرده هاي خود توبه ميكنم و بعد هم در قبر يك قهرمان دراز كشيده.

Back translation: Do not presume that you can change direction in the middle of a war and say easily that I repent of my deeds and then lie in the grave of a hero. (Substitution)

Islam respects other religions specified by God and IRIB translators have kept signs of the Christian religion intact in this series (example a). Islam also values martyrdom culture and any war staged against oppressors and pagans but referring to this word in a foreign context has been replaced with the equivalence of “hero” (example b).

## F. Taboo of political issues

- a. Heil Hitler.

... (Not translated)

- b. But they are communists.

ولي اونها قبلا دستگير شدن.

Back translation: But they were arrested already. (Change)

- c. Once they wear the Star of David, it is too late.

آخه بعضيهاشون متاسفانه كاملا شناخته شده ان.

Back translation: Unfortunately, some of them are so famous. (Change)

- d. So freedom lies with the Anglo-Americans, does it?

خب شما فكر ميكنين آزادي در جبهه اونهاست؟

Back translation: So you think freedom belongs to them? (Omission)

- e. I don't think the BBC would say anything if it wasn't true.

من اين فكر رو نميكنم چن خودم اونها رو ديدم.

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

Any mention of Hitler and salutation of his forces towards him has also been omitted since the government considers him a criminal and a dictator who committed genocide (example a). Iran also ended diplomatic relations with Israel following the Islamic Revolution and its theocratic government refuses to recognize Israel since it believes that Israel has occupied Palestine illegally. Therefore, all references to this state have been converted by IRIB translators (example b).

The Islamic Revolution also caused grave enmity between Iran and countries like England and America since they were regarded as the greatest enemies of the Islamic Revolution. Therefore, all references to them have been omitted or changed (examples d and e).

## 6.2. The 1990s

The 8-year war between Iran and Iraq had finished in this decade and a new social and political era was established. People took part in presidential elections and selected Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-1997) and later Khatami (1997-2005). In the Islamic Republic of Iran, Rafsanjani was described as a pragmatic figure. Internationally, he sought to avoid conflict with the United States and the West by maintaining a moderate stance. Khatami also supported liberalization and reform and proposed Dialogue among Civilizations. In addition, he advocated for free speech, tolerance, and civil society, as well as constructive diplomatic relations with other countries.

### 6.2.1. Early Edition examples

The researchers used “Early Edition” as a case study to examine how IRIB censored taboo items in audio-visual products during the second decade of the Islamic Revolution. This series as an American fantasy comedy-drama was broadcast on CBS between 1996 and 2000 and its story took place in Chicago and was centred upon the adventures of Gary Hobson who strangely obtained each Chicago Sun-Times newspaper the day before it was released and used this information to prevent daily catastrophes by conferring with Chuck Fishman (an ex-fellow stockbroker) and Marissa Clark (the blind former receptionist at the brokerage) as his co-workers and friends.

#### A. Taboo of private relations between men and women

- a. Well, kiss Eric and the children for me.  
به اريك و بچه ها سلام برسون.  
Back translation: Say hi to Eric and the children for me. (Change)
- b. At what age did you have your first sexual experience?  
اولين باري كه از كلاس اخراج شدي دقيقا چندسالت بود؟  
Back translation: When was the first time you were expelled from class? (Change)

#### B. Taboo of boys' and girls' relations before marriage

- a. It is probably from an old girlfriend or something.  
فكر كنم قبلا به دوستي بهت هديه داده باشه.  
Back translation: I think a friend has given you this gift before. (Toning down)
- b. Besides, I saw this gorgeous nurse down the hall.  
تازه ته راهرو يك پرستار پدخالق ايستاده.  
Back translation: A grumpy nurse is standing at the end of the aisle. (Change)

Chuck Fishman as one of the main characters was a seducer in this series and was always looking for girlfriends and dates, but he was portrayed as a man seeking a girl for marriage and thus all his dialogues and sexual references to pretty girls have been converted (example b).

### C. Taboo of words and expressions related to alcoholic drinks and drugs

- a. Two beers.

دوتا نوشابه.

Back translation: Two sodas. (Substitution)

- b. So, you handing out cigars?

چقدر خوبه که دوقلو هستن.

Back translation: So good that you are twins. (Change)

- c. You must be on crack or something.

لابد يك چيزي زدي.

Back translation: You may have consumed something. (Toning down)

Using drugs is prohibited as Prophet Muhammad clearly stated that "all intoxicants are forbidden in Islam as they harm body and mind".

### D. Taboo of swearing, cursing, and impolite expressions

- a. Getting anything to work is a pain in the butt.

راه انداختن وسايل هم مشکل و اعصاب خردکن شده.

Back translation: Fixing things has become a problem walking on my nerves. (Toning down)

### E. Taboo of Issues relating to religion

- a. Is the Pope in town?

حتما رييس پليس راهنمايي خوابه.

Back translation: The traffic police chief is certainly asleep. (Change)

- b. Sister Mary Agnes found a winning lottery ticket on her doorstep and donated the dough to a foster care centre.

خانم مري اگنس خير كوپن برنده قرعه كشي رو جلوي در خونه اش پيدا كرد و تصميم گرفت مبلغ جايزه رو به يك يتيم خونه اهدا كنه.

Back translation: Ms. Mary Agnes found a winning lottery ticket on her doorstep and donated the dough to a foster care centre. (Substitution)

### F. Taboo of political issues

- a. Get married, Have kids, American dream.

ازدواج كنيم بچه دار بشيم، خواسته هاي هر جواني.

Back translation: Get married, have kids, wishes of any young person. (Change)

- b. The White House announced it will not attend trade talks with Japan.

وزارت بازرگانی اعلام کرد برخی از پروژه های تجاری...

Back translation: The Ministry of Commerce announced that some commercial projects ... . (Change)

- c. Nixon's birthday?

روز تولد کسیه؟

Back translation: Is it somebody's birthday? (Change)

### 6.3. The 2000s

The Iranian society experienced significant social changes and developments during this decade since reformist president Khatami finished his term of presidency and Ahmadinejad as an Iranian conservative politician was elected and served as the sixth president of Iran from 2005 to 2013. He was known for his animosity towards Western countries, especially the United States. He was also renowned for his support of conservative ideas and often proclaimed his intention to establish an exemplary administration for the world in Iran. In addition, he was thought to be a fundamentalist who acted politically following Islamic and revolutionary ideas.

#### 6.3.1. Yes Minister examples

The researchers examined how IRIB censored taboo items in audio-visual products during the third decade of the Islamic Revolution using the series "Yes Minister" as a case study. This is a British political satire comedy created by Jonathan Lynn and Antony Jay. Comprised of three seven-episode seasons, it debuted on BBC2 between 1980 and 1984. It depicts the profession of Jim Hacker as a British minister, mostly in his office at the fictitious Department of Administrative Affairs in Whitehall. The British Civil Service, specifically his Permanent Secretary Sir Humphrey Appleby, resists his many efforts to establish and execute policies or to achieve departmental reforms.

#### A. Taboo of private relations between men and women

- a. We have sex education, too. Should we subsidize sex perhaps?

ما آموزش حیوانات هم داریم. باید به این بخش هم یارانه بپردازیم آقای وزیر؟

Back translation: We have animal education. Should we subsidize it too, Minister? (Change)

#### B. Taboo of boys' and girls' relations before marriage

- a. She and her boyfriend are going to conduct a 24-hour Save the Badgers vigil in Hayward Spinney unless protection order I restored.

اون و دوستهایش میخوان یک تحصن 24 ساعته بعنوان گورکنها را نجات دهید در هیواردز برپا کنن تا دستور محافظت از اونها صادر بشه.

Back translation: She and her friends are going to conduct a 24-hour Save the Badgers vigil in Hayward Spinney unless protection order I restored. (Change)

### C. Taboo of words and expressions related to alcoholic drinks and drugs

a. A cigarette, I can't find any.

يك شكلات. فشار خونم پايين افتاده.

Back translation: A chocolate. My blood pressure has dropped. (Change)

b. Do you give brandy to an alcoholic?

ميشه به يك بيمار قندي شيريني داد؟

Back translation: Can we give sweets to a diabetic? (Change)

### D. Taboo of swearing, cursing, and impolite expressions

a. You are a pain in the ass.

تو شدي موي دماغ.

Back translation: you are pestering us. (Toning down)

b. 35 men in grubby raincoats or 35 women in silly hats.

سى و پنج مرد با بارونيهاي چرك و كثيف و سى و پنج زن.

Back translation: 35 men in grubby raincoats and 35 women. (Omission)

c. The frigging Chinese.

از فر و شكوه چينيها نميترم.

Back translation: I am not afraid of the grandeur of the Chinese. (Change)

### E. Taboo of issues relating to religion

a. Tormented by the knowledge that we violated their sacred Islamic law in their own country.

مجبوريم درمورد چيزهايي كه از سفارت برديم اعتراف كنيم.

Back translation: we have to confess to taking things away from the embassy. (Change)

b. I don't care if it is the queen and the Pope.

من هيچ اهميتي نميدم كه ملكه پشتشه يا نخست وزير.

Back translation: I don't care if it is the Queen or the Prime Minister. (Change)

c. The Sermon on the Mount could be misinterpreted.

حتي از نطق ملكه هم ممكنه تفسير نادرستي بشه.

Back translation: Even the Queen's lecture could be misinterpreted. (Substitution)

d. If you want to martyr yourself, then go ahead and press for an inquiry.

با اين حال اگه ميخواهي خودزني كني حرفي نيست. برو جلو و دستور تحقيق بگير.

Back translation: Anyway, if you want to harm yourself, that is no problem. Go ahead and ask for an inquiry order. (Change)

- e. We could not post women ambassadors to Iran or any Muslim nation.

میخوام بگم بعضی از پستها هستن که بهیچ عنوان همیشه زنان رو متصدیشون کرد

Back translation: I want to say that we can't appoint women to some posts. (Change)

IRIB has been also sensitive about any mention of Islam in this political series as one episode relates to the minister and his co-workers' trip to an Islamic African country where they violate some of their Islamic laws and make jokes about their religious culture (example a).

## F. Taboo of political issues

- a. From now on every strike in Great Britain will be my fault.

هر اعتصابی تو انگلستان بشه تقصیرش به گردن منه.

Back translation: Every strike in England will be my fault. (Omission)

- b. I've just come from the House of Commons.

اینم جلسه حیواناته دیگه.

Back translation: This is the animals' session. (Change)

- c. If the diplomatic service had nowhere to immerse its recruits in Arab culture for example, the results could be catastrophic, we might even end up with a pro-Is-raeli foreign office.

چنانچه کارگزاران وزارت امورخارجه جایی رو برای غوطه ور کردن نوآموزان مثلا در فرهنگ عرب نداشته باشن نتایج

میتونن فاجعه آمیز باشند و شاید منتهی به تعطیلی کار اقتصادمون در وزارت امور خارجه بشه.

Back translation: If the diplomatic service had nowhere to immerse its recruits in Arab culture for example, the results could be catastrophic, we might even end up with the closure of our economic activity in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. (Change)

- d. Most of it was done by FDA in Washington.

راستش بیشتر کار توسط شرکتهای چندملیتی انجام شد.

Back translation: Indeed, most of it was done by multinational companies. (Omission)

- e. You know we already sell arms to Syria, Chili, and Iran?

میدونی که ما به خیلی از کشورهای آمریکای جنوبی و آفریقا اسلحه میفروشیم؟

Back translation: You know we already sell arms to many South American and African countries? (Change)

- f. We are going to ratify a contract for one of the biggest export orders Britain's ever made in the Persian Gulf.

ما داریم میریم تا یکی از بزرگترین قراردادهای صادرات انگلستان رو که تابحال تو اون منطقه بسته نشده به تصویب نهایی

برسونیم.

Back translation: We are going to ratify a contract for one of the biggest export orders Britain's ever made in that region. (Toning down)

g. I was out with the trots.

با کمونیستها راه می‌رم.

Back translation: I walk with communists. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

## 6.4. The 2010s

Hassan Rouhani was an Iranian politician who acted as the seventh president from 2013 until 2021. He was generally characterized as a moderate reformer who tried to mend Iran's diplomatic relations with other nations by exchanging letters of reconciliation and joint talks, strengthening unstable ties with Western nations, encouraging personal freedom, and drafting a charter of civil rights. He also pledged increased transparency and the restoration of the nation's global image. Regarding censorship, he made the following statement: "No longer can a wall be constructed around the country. Currently, there are no barriers in the World".

Additionally, Rouhani seemed to embrace expanding political and social liberties. In an interview, he stated, "We want the people to be entirely free in their private lives. To access information, to have free conversation, and to think freely are the rights of all people, including the Iranian people in the modern world".

### 6.4.1. House of Cards examples

Using the "House of Cards" series as a case study, the researchers investigated how IRIB censored taboo items in audio-visual products throughout the fourth decade of the Islamic Revolution. It is an American political television series as an adaptation of both the 1990 BBC series and the 1989 Michael Dobbs's novel of the same name. The first season including thirteen episodes was made available on Netflix in 2013.

It chronicles the lives of Democratic Congressman Frank Underwood and his wife Claire Underwood in Washington, D.C. He intends to be appointed as the Secretary of State, but this does not occur; thus, he launches a systematic procedure to obtain power with Claire's support. The series covers taboo issues such as ruthless pragmatism, abuse, dishonesty, and power among American officials and media professionals, as well as several forbidden topics.

#### A. Taboo of private relations between men and women

a. You fucked a Congressman to get ahead.

تو برای پیشرفت باهاش رابطه داشت.

Back translation: you had an affair with him to get ahead. (Toning down)

- b. I need you to put your long, wet, talented tongue between my thighs and make me squeal like Monica.  
 مونيكا لوينسكي منشي بيل كلينتون تو کاخ سفيد که يادته؟  
 Back translation: do you remember Monica Lewinsky as Bill Clinton's secretary in the White House? (Change)
- c. The bridal suite is on the top floor, at the end of the hallway, if you change your mind.  
 نبايد کمک مالي جيكوب رو رد ميکردي اون اشتباه اولت بود.  
 Back translation: you should not have rejected Jacob's financial help. That was your first mistake. (Change)
- d. I fucked around a bit, ok?  
 يك كم الواطي کردم خب؟  
 Back translation: I fucked around a bit, ok? (Leaving an ST content in the SL)
- e. A great man once said that everything in life is about sex except sex.  
 ما در سرزمين آزادي پيرو مکتبي هستيم که ميگه شالوده زندگي شهوته به جز خود شهوت.  
 Back translation: We follow a school of thought in the land of the free which states that lust is the basis of life except lust. (Toning down)
- f. How often did you solicit prostitutes in D.C.?  
 چندوقت يکبار روسپهائي واشنگتن رو ميپيئين؟  
 Back translation: How often do you visit prostitutes in Washington? (Leaving an ST content in the SL).

There was a character called Zoe Barnes, a young political reporter, who secretly started a sexual relationship with Underwood to enhance her job status while having other relations with other boys and references to such relations have been kept but toned down to prove corruption among American officials and media as in example a. Another example of widespread corruption relates to a congressman called Peter Russo, as a troubled alcoholic man, who had a child but was involved in an erotic love affair with Christina Gallagher as a congressional staffer. His talk with Gallagher on the phone referring to Monica Lewinsky (Bill Clinton's former mistress) indicates this erotic relationship but IRIB translators have completely changed this taboo to something irrelevant.

## B. Taboo of boys' and girls' relations before marriage

- a. I even had a feeling with a congressman.  
 حتي با يك عضو کنگره تعاملاتي داشتم.  
 Back translation: even I had some interaction with a congressman. (Toning down)
- b. Are you dad's girlfriend?  
 تو نامزد پدرم هستي؟  
 Back translation: Are you dad's fiancée? (Change)

### C. Taboo of sex organs

- a. I've always thought of it as a clitoris.  
 من همیشه به این موضوع فکر میکردم.  
 Back translation: I always thought about this issue. (Omission)
- b. When the tit is that big, everybody gets in line.  
 آره خفت باره میدونم.  
 Back translation: yeah it is humiliating, I know. (Change)

### D. Taboo of words and expressions related to alcoholic drinks and drugs

- a. Right now I am a drinking companion.  
 الان يك هم پياله ام براي تو.  
 Back translation: Right now I am a drinking companion for you. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)
- b. I was at the bar around the corner.  
 تو بار سر نبش بودم.  
 Back translation: I was at the bar around the corner. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)
- c. He brought bourbon, blow, stayed the whole night.  
 الكل و هروئين آورد و تم شب رو اونجا موند.  
 Back translation: He brought bourbon, blow, stayed the whole night. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

### E. Taboo of swearing, cursing, and impolite expressions

- a. It's a chicken-shit move.  
 عجب حرکت بزدلانه اي.  
 Back translation: What a cowardly move. (Toning down)
- b. You are just an uppity dago in an expensive suit turning ticks for the Union.  
 تو يك بچه مهاجر اسپانيايي مرفه با يك كت شلوار گروني كه براي اتحاديه ها كار ميكنه.  
 Back translation: You are just an uppity dago in an expensive suit working for the Unions. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)
- c. I'm a white-trash cracker from a white-trash town that no one would even bother to piss on.  
 من يك بچه روستايي سفيدپوستم از يك محله سفيدپوست آشغالي كه هيچكس بهش توجهي نداره.  
 Back translation: I'm a white-trash cracker from a white-trash town that no one would even bother to care about. (Leaving an ST content in the SL)

## F. Taboo of Issues relating to religion

- a. Bibles, barbecues, and broken backs.

جايي كه پر از گوشت و كباب و آدمهاي پيره

Back translation: A place full of meat, kebab, and old people. (Omission)

In the English corpus used for this study, 1176 instances of taboos were identified. The procedures, frequency, percentage, and sum of taboos in the Secret Army series are displayed in table 2.

The results showed that IRIB translators used the "change" procedure as the most frequent one in Secret Army (34.76%). Also, omission and leaving an ST content in the SL were utilized as the second and third frequent procedures respectively (32.03% and 15.23%). Substitution and toning down were also used as the fourth and fifth ones (10.15% and 7.81%). Furthermore, procedures of addition and literal translation were not used at all by IRIB translators.

**TABLE 2**

Procedures, frequency, and percentage of Secret Army series

PROCEDURE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Omission	82	32.03
Addition	0	0
Substitution	26	10.15
Literal translation	0	0
Toning down	20	7.81
Leaving an ST content in the SL	39	15.23
change	89	34.76
Total	256	100

Table 3 indicates the procedures, frequency, percentage, and sum of taboo language in the Early Edition series. Like the previous decade, change and omission procedures were the most frequently used ones (47.31% and 26.23%). Toning down and substitution were also the third and fourth ones (17.56% and 4.75%) and leaving an ST content in the SL procedure was also utilized as the fifth most frequent one (4.13%), while addition and literal translation were not used at all.

**TABLE 3**

Procedures, frequency, and percentage of Early Edition series

PROCEDURE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Omission	127	26.23
Addition	0	0
Substitution	23	4.75
Literal translation	0	0
Toning down	85	17.56
Leaving an ST content in the SL	20	4.13
Change	229	47.31
Total	484	100

Table 4 displays the procedures, frequency, percentage, and sum of taboo language in the Yes Minister series. The change procedure was again the most frequently used one and omission was ranked as the second one like the previous decades (49.64% and 23.02%). Toning down and substitution procedures were the third and fourth ones (10.79% and 9.35%), while leaving an ST content in the SL procedure was the fifth procedure utilized (7.19%). Like previous decades, addition and literal were never used by IRIB at all.

**TABLE 4**

Procedures, frequency, and percentage of Yes Minister series

PROCEDURE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Omission	32	23.02
Addition	0	0
Substitution	13	9.35
Literal translation	0	0
Toning down	15	10.79
Leaving an ST content in the SL	10	7.19
Change	69	49.64
Total	139	100

Table 5 indicates the procedures, frequency, percentage, and sum of taboo language in House of Cards series. Unlike other previous decades, toning down was the most frequently used procedure in the translation of this series (42.42%). Change procedure was the second one (26.93%) and omission and leaving an ST content in the SL were ranked as the third and fourth ones respectively (15.15% and 10.10%). The substitution was also the fifth procedure in terms of frequency (5.38%). Similar to the previous decades, addition and literal translation procedures were never used for rendering.

**TABLE 5**

Procedures, frequency, and percentage of House of Cards series

PROCEDURES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Omission	45	15.15
Addition	0	0
Substitution	16	5.38
Literal translation	0	0
Toning down	126	42.42
Leaving an ST content in the SL	30	10.10
Change	80	26.93
Total	297	100

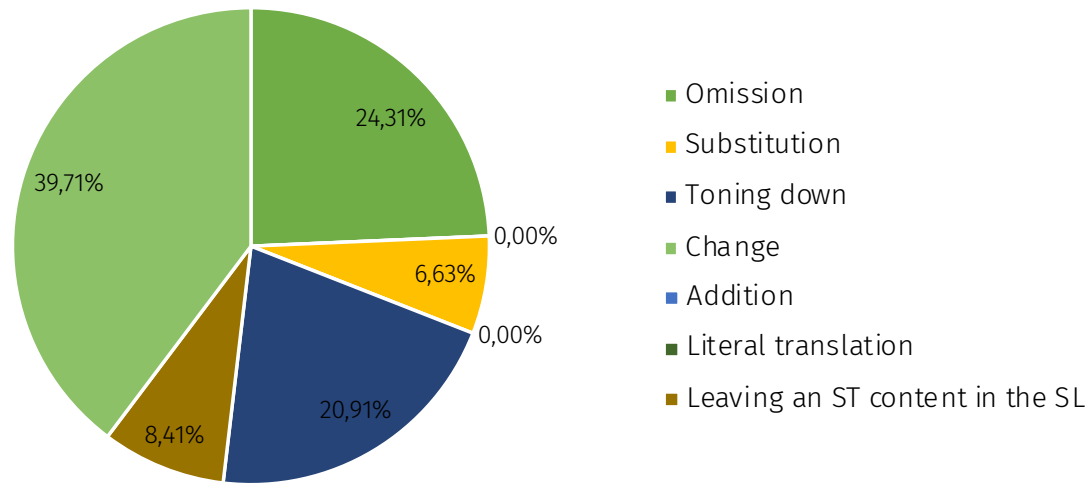
Generally speaking, investigating all 1176 taboos existing in these above-mentioned series indicated that changing taboo to something completely different from the main content has been the most frequent procedure adopted by IRIB which was not included in Brownlie's framework during all these four decades of the Islamic Revolution (39.71%) as indicated in figure 1. The second frequent procedure was omission (24.31%) and the third and fourth ones included toning down and leaving an ST content in the SL respectively (20.91% and 8.41%). The fifth procedure was substitution (6.63%) and addition and literal translation were never employed.

## 7. Conclusions

According to the results of this study, IRIB translators have utilized change and omissions procedures mostly in their renderings of taboos to generate an acceptable translation according to Islamic laws after the Revolution in 1979 and different governments with various ideologies and discourses did not influence the overall censorship policies in IRIB. Western

**FIGURE 1**

Percentage of Procedures in All Decades



countries enjoy a secular culture which is very different from the Islamic one. Therefore, IRIB does not readily embrace cultural interference from others and has adopted a defensive stance against Western taboos displayed in audio-visual products and its translators endeavour to impose censorship on the original taboo items according to cultural conventions of Islam. IRIB may suppose that if taboos are translated without any change, they can be threats against the Islamic culture. In other words, the ideology of IRIB translators guides their entire translational decisions and procedures to create an acceptable rendering most compatible with the target culture. Such a trend is also reflected in other contexts as some taboo items were also censored in audio-visual products in Hong Kong (Chen, 2004), Italy (Parini, 2014; Beseghi, 2016; Zanotti, 2016), and Spain (Ávila-Cabrera, 2016).

However, several problems existed regarding the censorship of taboos in IRIB. First, the policies of censorship are not clarified and the final renditions seem to be inconsistent as some taboos are censored in a decade and are then left without change in another decade. For instance, references to Christianity were not censored in the first decade but later they were regarded as taboo during the next decades, while Islam has no opposition towards other religions specified by God. It seems that IRIB imposes such censorship at its discretion and the underlying reason might have been IRIB officials' fear that people would get familiar with Western religions and their fundamentals and might decide to convert to them and forget about Islam. References to alcoholic drinks were not also censored during the first decade and the reason might be it was the beginning of the Islamic Revolution and the policies were not set and administered completely and some traces of the previous regime's prevalent culture remained. But they were all changed or omitted during the second and third decades. As another instance, political factions were removed in renderings during

the first decade (communism) but later they were considered legitimate and not censored in another decade like the one mentioned in the Yes Minister series.

Second, a negative reference to the Chinese has been changed in the Yes Minister series and it might be because China has been a political ally of Iran for a long time after the Islamic Revolution, while negative references to other Western countries were not censored. Negative references to Islamic rules, the treatment of women in Islamic countries, Iran, and the expansion of Britain's influence in the Middle East have been also converted in this political series.

Third, some taboos relating to private relations between men and women, boy-girl relationships before marriage, drugs, and swearing were always censored during the first three decades of the Islamic Revolution but IRIB indicated some leniency in the last decade and showed them to Iranian audience in House of Cards series, although it was rated as TV-MA (specifically designed to be viewed by adults and therefore unsuitable for children under 17) according to American TV parental Guidelines. This trend has been unprecedented in IRIB after the Islamic Revolution. Another interesting point is that IRIB has added “سرزمین آزادی” (the Land of the Free) to one dialogue in this series to create an irony on liberalism in the US. Negative references to races and nationalities were not also censored and it might be due to IRIB's endeavour to prove the Americans' impoliteness and racism, while such references were omitted during previous decades. Such leniency might be caused by ideologically-driven policies as IRIB has used this series to prove widespread corruption among American officials and media because of its long-standing enmity with the US.

All these inconsistencies certainly confuse the audience since changes in the plots and characters of such series disrupt the logical relation that the directors have tried to create between their products and the audience. This may make the audience prefer to watch the original audio-visual products that are easily accessible in the underground market of Iran. The sudden leniency of IRIB in translating taboos as it was proved in the “House of Cards” series for ideological purposes may also lead to distrust of the Iranian audience.

Regarding taboos and censorship, what can be researched in the future is an investigation of the taboos in English movies that were broadcast after the Islamic Revolution or even a comparison can be made between translations of taboos in the movies or series that were aired before and after the Islamic Revolution. Such an analysis also can be applied to animations aired before and after the Islamic Revolution.

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