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Film Dialogue in Translation: Shifts in Function in *The Host* (2006) and Its English Dubbing

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how dubbing affects the functions of film dialogue by comparing the South Korean film *The Host* (2006) and its English-dubbed version. Using Kozloff's categorization of dialogue functions as a framework, the study reorganizes dialogue functions into three categories: film diegesis, narrativity, and control of viewer evaluation and emotions. This regrouping allows a more focused analysis of the distinct but interconnected ways dialogue operates in both the original and dubbed versions. The findings reveal three key shifts. First, the English-dubbed version exhibits a weakened anchoring of diegesis, with references to culture-specific items including specific locations becoming less prominent than in the original Korean dialogue. Second, the narrativity of the film is translated more explicitly and coherently; ambiguous or implicit elements in the source dialogue are clarified to better serve the target audience. Third, the dubbing process heightens the control over viewers' evaluations and emotions by incorporating appraisal language absent in the original, reducing ambiguity and making emotional cues more explicit. These results demonstrate that dubbing not only translates language but also actively alters the narrative structure. This shows that dubbing unavoidably alters essential elements of the original film's diegesis, narrativity, and audience engagement. The study concludes that dubbing plays a significant role in modifying film dialogue functions.

Keywords: Audiovisual Translation; Film Dubbing; Film Dialogue Functions; *The Host* (2006)

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1. Introduction

Film dialogue is intentionally designed for the audience to overhear and serves unique functions ^[1]. When analyzing film dialogue, the initial inquiries often revolve around questions such as “Why is this line here?” or “What function does this line play in the film as a whole?”. Kozloff provides an in-depth examination of film dialogue functions in narrative films ^[1], a topic that has traditionally received limited scholarly attention in film studies, often regarded merely as “complements” or “adds” to the image. Film dialogue holds a crucial function in conveying specific events or information to the audience. Therefore, it is essential to carefully consider its functions and examine how these functions are preserved or altered in translation.

Film dialogue can be categorized into two groups based on their functions ^[1]. The first group encompasses functions related to conveying the film narrative to the audience and the second group involves functions such as aesthetic effect, ideological persuasion, and commercial appeal. Kozloff identifies the first group as the fundamental function of film dialogue and emphasizes its primary role in communicating the film narrative to the audience. This involves anchorage of the diegesis and characters; communication of narrative causality; enactment of narrative events; character revelation; adherence to the code of realism; and control of viewer evaluation and emotions. In this study, these functions are regrouped into film diegesis, narrativity, and control of viewer evaluation and emotions. By grouping these functions into three main categories, the analysis more effectively captures the distinct yet interconnected functions of film dialogue in both the original and dubbed versions. Firstly, the category of film diegesis combines the anchorage of the diegesis and characters with adherence to the code of realism. These functions are essential in creating the fictional world and its credibility, ensuring that the audience willingly maintains the suspension of disbelief, where viewers are inclined to overlook the possible unnaturalness of the dubbed dialogue ^[2]. Secondly, narrativity encompasses the communication of narrative causality and enactment of narrative events, as well as character revelation. These functions work together to drive the plot forward and develop the story. The final category, control of viewer evaluation and emotions, remains distinct, recognizing the unique role of dialogue in molding the audience’s emotional response and interpretation of the film. Each of these three categories employs distinct methods to fulfill its function, which will be elaborated on in the following section.

Bong Joon-ho, a renowned South Korean filmmaker who received international acclaim with his Palme d’Or and Oscar-winning film *Parasite* (2019), has shown a deep interest in translation issues in his works. In his film *Okja* (2017), he deliberately included a mistranslation in the

subtitles to compensate for a Korean line that was impossible to translate with the same emotional impact ^[3]. His statement at the Oscar that “Once you overcome the 1-inch-tall barrier of subtitles, you will be introduced to so many more amazing films” shows his continued interest in the role of translation. Among Bong’s films released between 2006 and 2020, *The Host* (2006) offers a uniquely fitting case for this study’s objective: to examine how dubbing alters the functions of film dialogue. While later works such as *Snowpiercer* (2013) and *Okja* (2017) were primarily English-language productions designed for global audiences, *The Host* was created for a domestic Korean audience but achieved notable international success. Its focus on Korean-American tensions, combined with its strong emotional and narrative structure, provides an ideal context for investigating how dialogue modifications in the English-dubbed version affect diegesis, narrativity, and audience engagement. Thus, *The Host* was selected as the most appropriate and meaningful subject for exploring the relationship between dubbing and dialogue function.

The significance of adopting a cinematographic approach to film dubbing has been emphasized in audiovisual translation studies (AVT) ^[4-8]. The integration of film studies into AVT has proven instrumental in defining the sophisticated interaction between image, verbal language, and sound ^[4]. Chaume presented twelve codes that offer a cinematographic perspective for analyzing dubbing ^[5], marking a significant milestone in advocating for interdisciplinary research bridging translation and film studies. Similarly, Matamala also argues for the need to examine the relationship between synchronization and specific shot types ^[6], such as close-up shots, and the presence or absence of actors on-screen. Rемаel further emphasizes that the semiotic complexities inherent in film texts must be accounted for in both AVT research and pedagogical practices ^[7]. Yoon utilizes a multimodal corpus and segments the film texts into individual shots and reveals that the dubbing of on-screen and off-screen dialogue is independent of each other ^[8]. However, despite these contributions, limited studies in audiovisual translation have attempted to adopt an interdisciplinary approach. Additionally, due to Anglophone audiences’ hesitation to watch dubbed contents ^[9], English dubbing does not yet have well-established norms and conventions ^[10].

This study seeks to examine how dialogue functions differ between *The Host* and its English-dubbed version, shedding light on the ways in which translation alters film dialogue across linguistic and cultural boundaries. By analyzing how diegesis, narrativity, and audience perception are maintained or altered, this study aims to understand how dubbing influences narrative coherence and emotional engagement. In doing so, it offers insights into the interplay between translation and cinematic storytelling, enriching both audiovisual translation studies and film studies.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. The Host

Rather than merely adhering to the conventions of the monster film genre, Bong Joon-ho's *The Host* (2006) places an emphasis on exposing the origins of disaster. The film urges viewers to look beyond the surface-level catastrophe and examine its underlying structures. *The Host* draws inspiration from the 2000 McFarland incident, in which toxic chemicals were illegally dumped into the Han River by U.S. military personnel in South Korea. The film's opening scene, depicting American military personnel pouring formaldehyde into the Han River, transitions to the mutation and growth of a monster as a consequence of this contamination. The unequal power dynamics between South Korea and the United States, as revealed through real-life events and their handling, serve as a central thematic concern throughout the film. The monster, a byproduct of the U.S. military presence in South Korea, lurks beneath the bridge for a man to jump and devours him upon his fall. This striking opening sequence immediately establishes *The Host* as an overtly political film.

While Bong's previous film, *Memories of Murder* (2003), employed paradox through its futile pursuit of an elusive serial killer, *The Host* presents a different kind of paradox: the United States, the root cause of the crisis, positions itself as the problem's sole authority and ultimate savior, only to exacerbate the situation. The U.S. unilaterally grants itself the exclusive right to assess the monster's threat and dictate the means of its eradication. This intervention leads to further devastation along the banks of the Han River, as both the city and its inhabitants become collateral damage. Meanwhile, the South Korean government and its law enforcement institutions are now rendered as mere subordinates to U.S. authority. The U.S. classifies Seoul's citizens as either infected or uninfected by an allegedly unknown virus, yet the existence of this virus remains uncertain. The South Korean government, instead of actively protecting its citizens, assumes a passive stance and follows American directives, even going so far as to deploy untested chemical agents along the riverbanks. This portrayal positions the South Korean government as an extension of foreign power rather than an autonomous governing body.

Amid this widespread negligence, Hyun-seo, Gang-du's daughter who has been abducted by the monster, becomes the unifying force that compels her scattered family members to reunite. The family's reunion takes place in a chaotic funeral hall, where they initially accept Hyun-seo's presumed death and blame each other for their misfortunes. However, the moment they discover signals from Hyun-seo, who is still alive in the monster's hiding place, their fate undergoes a dramatic reversal. Resolving to

take matters into their own hands, they spend all their remaining money to acquire weapons and infiltrate the government-restricted zone to rescue her. Their actions position them at the heart of the film's broader political struggle.

The film's conclusion, which hints at the monster's potential return, emphasizes a sobering realization: the monster has not been eradicated, and the restoration of a stable society remains an unattainable goal. This ending conveys a sense of disillusionment and cynicism regarding the persistent failure of societal recovery. It also reflects despair over the notion that genuine social upheaval remains confined to the realm of fantasy. Ultimately, *The Host* imagines the possibility of reversing power dynamics while simultaneously reaffirming their inescapability. By envisioning both systemic transformation and its inevitable obstruction, the film articulates Bong Joon-ho's own ambivalence toward political change. Compared to Bong's later internationally targeted films from 2006 to 2020, *The Host* remains closely tied to Korean socio-political contexts while still achieving global resonance. Its domestic grounding, combined with its international reception, makes it uniquely valuable for analyzing how dubbing navigates cultural and linguistic boundaries, thereby aligning directly with the research objective of examining how dubbing impacts the functions of film dialogue.

2.2. Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative analysis to examine how dubbing modifies the functions of film dialogue between the original Korean version of *The Host* (2006) and its English-dubbed version. As an analytical framework, the study draws on Kozloff's categorization of film dialogue functions. However, rather than applying Kozloff's model uncritically, the study reorganizes her categories into three overarching groups to better suit the research objectives: (1) construction of film diegesis, (2) development of narrativity, and (3) control of audience evaluation and emotions. This regrouping reflects a critical engagement with Kozloff's original framework, recognizing both its analytical strengths and its need for adaptation in the context of dubbing studies.

The methodological process proceeded through several steps. First, Kozloff's detailed functions were reviewed and reorganized to foreground the ways dialogue supports world-building, narrative progression, and audience alignment. This reorganization also acknowledges that certain original categories overlap in practice when dialogues are translated, thus involving a more context-sensitive classification. Second, corresponding scenes from the Korean original and the English-dubbed version were selected for detailed comparison, focusing on instances where shifts in function were most evident, such as

modifications in character portrayal, narrative cohesion, and emotional signaling.

Each divergence between the original and dubbed dialogue was coded according to the three regrouped categories and classified as either weakening, strengthening, or altering the original function. The analysis emphasized not only lexical shifts but also broader changes in tone, implication, and audience positioning.

2.3. Film Diegesis: Culture-Specific Items and Multilingualism

The concept of diegesis, originating in Plato's philosophical discourse *The Republic*, has evolved to incorporate the cinematic space, where it serves as a foundational element in constructing fictional worlds. In this cinematic space, characters emerge as integral agents, giving life to narratives and guiding the trajectory of the unfolding story ^[11]. As Chatman notes ^[12], characters are the driving force behind plot actions as well as the agents that imbue narratives with purpose and direction. Film dialogue is the verbal expression of characters within the diegetic world and becomes a means of character delineation and narrative progression. The linguistic choices made in film dialogue, whether spoken by characters or modified through dubbing, contribute to the overall character portrayal and audience engagement.

Films use dialogue to identify the diegetic world. For instance, In the *Wizard of Oz* (1939), the flat farmland on screen could have been anywhere—Oklahoma, Texas, Nebraska—but it becomes Kansas when Dorothy says, “Toto, I don’t think that we’re in Kansas anymore” ^[1]. In essence, the connection between diegesis, character, and film dialogue shapes cinematic narratives. From the explicit definition of character traits to the indirect presentation through action and dialogue, the process of characterization contributes significantly to the immersive experience of storytelling.

Diegesis is a fictionalized world depicted within the narrative of a film ^[13]. Real cities and neighborhoods are the basis for creating fictional worlds. However, buildings such as skyscrapers that dominate a city skyline and vast natural landscapes are similar everywhere. Therefore, it is essential for film dialogue to convey the location of these places. The name of the place can be spoken directly by the characters, or the audience can be reminded of the place indirectly through cultural references. These elements inject a sense of realism and help audiences suspend disbelief, accepting what they see on screen as natural parts of film diegesis. As such, analyzing cultural references between original and translated films can illustrate how a sense of where the film is set is delivered, including specific names of locations.

Categorizing cultural elements and determining suitable translation approaches has been a persistent

challenge in translation studies, with various classifications available ^[14–16]. In this study, Ranzato's categorization for dubbing is adopted due to overlapping issues in existing taxonomies ^[17].

Dubbed films aim to align closely with the target culture audience ^[18]. Ranzato's classification is intended to analyze culture specific items of dubbing, based on source culture, target culture, intercultural culture, and third culture ^[17]. Source culture elements pertain to items originating from the culture of the original film. Intercultural elements demonstrate the dialogic relationship between source and target cultures, as seen in instances like a singer or brand from the source culture having a presence in the target culture. Third-culture elements come from a culture distinct from both the source and target cultures. This classification addresses cultural dynamics in the dubbing process. Building on Díaz-Cintas and Remael's groundwork ^[14], Ranzato proposes eleven translation methods ^[17]. This comprehensive framework encompasses loan, official translation, calque, explicitation, generalization, concretization, substitution, lexical recreation, compensation, elimination, and creative addition. It ensures meticulous treatment of culture-specific items in dubbing.

When multilingual dialogue is dubbed into English, not only is it impossible to tell which language is the original language, but the whole context of interpretation is erased. In this case, the film diegesis is also shaken, and the audience may feel confused about the background against which the narrative world unfolds. The growing trend of multilingualism in films is a reflection of our increasingly globalized world ^[19], and Korean films are no exception to this trend. Over the past decade, studies on multilingualism have proliferated ^[20], with scholars recognizing the difficulties that on-screen linguistic diversity presents for audiovisual translators ^[21]. In *The Host*, Americans are portrayed as being “responsible for unleashing a giant, mutated animal” and English dialogue is spoken by American characters from United States Forces Korea ^[22]. When dubbed language (English) is same as the multilingual language in the source film, just like this case, it becomes “impossible to appreciate any multilingualism” ^[23]. In essence, examining the modifications made to multilingual dialogue is crucial for understanding the efforts to preserve or alter film diegesis during the translation process.

2.4. Narrativity: Dubbing Strategies

The ulterior motive of film dialogue lies in its ability to communicate “why” and “how” events transpire ^[1]. As Kukkonen states ^[24], a narrative is a textual depiction of a world with a meticulously arranged plot, that is with events and characters' actions arranged in causal and temporal patterns. Barthes' perspective stresses the role of characters in classical narratives as bearers of causality ^[25], who drag a

chain of interconnected events. Film dialogue is a propelling force that provides “narrative causality,” thus offering the necessary traction for characters to carry this narrative load ^[1].

Unlike image sequences, explicit verbal expressions of causality, embodied in phrases like ‘because,’ ‘therefore,’ and ‘in order to,’ find a unique articulation in dialogue and act as the conduit through which characters communicate these causal links ^[26]. The evidence that film dialogue is invented for delivering narrative causality is from the scenes where dialogue is omitted since audience already has necessary information through visual elements ^[1]. This linguistic capability to convey narrative causality becomes pivotal in communicating not only the present but also the past. For instance, historical exposition, including significant events depicted in flashbacks, is seamlessly conveyed through the characters’ spoken words, which establishes the importance of film dialogue in delivering narrative causality and shaping audience understanding ^[1].

As Kozloff asserts, sometimes “the main narrative of a film is expressed as a verbal act” ^[1]. Central to this concept is the idea that linguistic acts within a film trigger essential narrative events. Speech act theory, grounded in the belief that speaking is an impactful act ^[27,28], pertains to this function of film dialogue in the narrative movement. Kozloff identifies two primary narrative acts communicated through this function: the disclosure of a secret or crucial information that thrusts the characters into danger; and the declaration of love, which serves as a plot resolution ^[1]. The weight and significance of speech acts may vary by genre, but the information uttered by characters in the form of dialogue consistently plays a crucial role in setting the narrative in motion.

As Remael notes ^[7], film dialogue transcends its role as mere conversation; it is inherently narrative. Vandaele also asserts that all the actions in films, including dialogue, double as narration and what audience seems to witness are always what they are “told about” ^[29]. The two functions that deliver narrative causality and act as verbal events are the main impetus of narratives in films.

A key to conveying causality through film dialogue is to ensure the ‘why’ and ‘how’ are effectively communicated to the audience. In dubbing, causal relations can sometimes be more explicit, whereas they can take on a more metaphorical form during translation. The differences between the original and dubbed dialogue can be effectively analyzed using established translation strategies. Additionally, verbal enactment, which involves presenting crucial information, can also be scrutinized through these translation strategies. Utilizing translation strategies as a framework allows for a comprehensive examination of how translation impacts the narrative clarity and delivery of essential information in dubbed films.

Matamala provides an in-depth view of translation strategies made during film dubbing ^[6]. The strategies are derived from corpus building and text analysis of three Hollywood films that underwent dubbing in Spanish and Catalan. Six translation strategies are identified: reduction, repetition, amplification, modification, change order, and deletion. These strategies encompass not only synchronization but also linguistic modifications and the final recording stages, making them comprehensive dubbing translation strategies. The current study analyzes the translation of dubbed dialogue based on the aforementioned six strategies as shown in **Table 1**.

Matamala focuses on language pairs, Spanish and Catalan ^[6], where the number of syllables in the original and dubbed lines frequently match; change order and modification are based on the assumption that the syllable count matches. However, for Korean and English, matching of syllable counts is rare between Korean and English dialogue. Unlike the language pair examined in Matamala ^[6], the current study focuses on Korean and English, which possess distinct cross-linguistic characteristics, and thus require an adjustment in the approach to examining dubbing strategies. Since it is uncommon for the original and dubbed versions to have the same syllable count, comparing syllable counts between Korean and English is not a meaningful approach. Therefore, this study primarily examines modification, defined as changes in meaning, as a key dubbing strategy.

Table 1. Six translation strategies for dubbing.

Modification	The dubbed line changes the content of the original line, regardless of the number of syllables in the original and dubbed lines
Change order	The order of the sentences in the original dialog is changed in the dubbed version
Repetition	Words, phrases, or sentences are repeated in the dubbed dialogue
Reduction	The syllable count of the original dialogue is reduced in the dubbed version
Amplification	The number of syllables in the original line is increased in the dubbed line
Deletion	All lines in the shot are deleted

2.5. Control of Viewer Evaluation and Emotions: Appraisal

Film dialogue operates as a powerful tool to guide audience interpretations and elicit specific emotions ^[1].

Dialogues can be wielded to distract the audience, foreshadow a tragic ending, or build tension, which all function as a surrogate for the audience’s own interpretations and assessments. For instance, a simple description like “cute and bubbly” granted to a child

character on screen instantly shapes the audience's perception and thus leaves little room for alternative interpretations.

Moreover, dialogue takes on the role of an emotional catalyst, evoking specific reactions from the audience. In scenarios featuring monsters, a character's exclamation, "Run! Get out of there!" does not impart specific information but functions akin to a visceral sound effect. This line instills fear within the audience about the impending threat. As such, film dialogue subtly guides the audience's emotional responses and interpretations.

The appraisal theory focuses on how speakers engage in dialogue to construct evaluative judgements about external elements, such as persons, situations or things. Appraisals are lexicalized forms of evaluation, which can unravel how speakers and writers select words to convey their perspective on reality. This theory originates from the "Write It Right" project led by J. R. Martin and represents an extension of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) with a particular focus on interpersonal meaning. Martin contends that SFL had paid little attention to "the emotions and judgments speakers hold regarding various phenomena or experiences," leading him to develop a lexically oriented framework for appraisal^[30]. Unlike traditional SFL analyses, which emphasize clause-level examination centered on mood and modality, appraisal theory provides a lexico-grammatical framework specifically designed to address interpersonal meaning. It focuses on analyzing evaluative language that expresses a speaker's or writer's stance along a continuum of "good/bad" evaluation^[30]. Since speakers and writers inevitably convey positive or negative attitudes toward people or events, these attitudes play a crucial role in shaping relationships with others—whether they be characters within a narrative, readers or audiences, or real conversational interlocutors. In essence, appraisal refers to linguistic expressions that indicate a speaker's attitude, emotion, or degree of certainty regarding a given phenomenon^[31]. Thus, appraisals serve as a critical analytical tool for examining how evaluations and emotions of film characters are altered between the original and translated films.

Appraisal is composed of three domains: attitude (feelings and emotional reactions), engagement (play of voices around opinions in discourse, and graduation (grading phenomena of feelings)^[32]. Among these, attitude is the most fundamental system to understand interpersonal meanings. Attitude denotes the expression about characters' personal emotions ("affect" as in whether he or she is in/secure, dis/satisfactory, un/happy); their assessment of actions based on social norms and standards ("judgement" as in someone is normal, capable, tenacious); and their perspectives on the value of things ("appreciation," as in something is valuable, well-balanced)^[32]. By adopting appraisals, particularly focusing on attitude, emotional reactions of film characters, their assessment of others, and their perspective on externality can be comprehensively analyzed.

3. Results

The results demonstrate that dubbing can significantly modify the functional integrity of film dialogue. These modifications impact the audience's perception of diegesis, strengthen narrative coherence, and alter emotional engagement. In Section 3.1., the analysis reveals that changes in dubbed dialogue often result in the omission or alteration of culturally specific references and environmental cues. In Section 3.2, examples show that dubbing introduces shifts in narrative causality. Lastly, in section 3.3, examples illustrate that viewers of the dubbed version may interpret character intentions differently. By making emotional expressions more explicit and presenting situations with greater clarity, functional shifts in dubbed dialogue assist viewers in forming clearer assessments of characters and narrative developments.

3.1. How Dubbing Modifies Diegesis

Among 46 culture-specific items identified, all originate from source culture. The predominant translation strategies used are substitution and deletion. Regarding substitution, currency is converted from Korean Won to US dollars. Furthermore, the Korean local sausage brand "천하장사 소시지" (*chun-ha-jang-sa sausage*; meaning 'strongman sausage') is rendered as "Italian sausage," "짜장면" (*jjajang-myeon*; meaning 'black bean noodle') is translated into "dumplings," and "민방위" (*min-bang-ui*; meaning 'Korean civil defense') is dubbed "Boy Scout."

A case in point is the scene where two boys sneak into a cafeteria near Han River to steal food. The older boy tries to justify their action with the term "서리" (*seo-ri*), a Korean euphemism used to describe petty theft, often involving crops and produce from fields. *Seo-ri* carries a playful connotation and is used in a context where the act is seen as mischievous wrongdoing rather than serious crime. To soothe his younger brother and relieve anxiety, the older boy introduces the term, which is translated into "Robin Hood" in the English-dubbed film as shown in **Example 1**. Examples consist of the source text (ST), back translation (BT) of the source text, and target text (TT).

Se-jin, the older boy, references Robin Hood, a legendary figure in English folklore who robbed from the rich and gave to the poor. In English-dubbed version of *The Host*, *seo-ri* is substituted with Robin Hood, a figure commonly known to Anglophone audiences. Additionally, culture-specific items are sometimes deleted. When the host of virus emerges from the river, the bus passengers hear the following radio broadcast as illustrated in **Example 2**.

Example 1.

ST	세주야. 이건 도둑질이 아니야. 우린 지금 매점 서리를 하는 거야, 매점 서리. 수박 서리, 참외 서리할 때 서리. 너 근데, 서리가 무슨 뜻인지 알긴 아냐? 서리! 진짜 모르냐? 세대 차이 심각하구만. 아무튼 서리는 배고픈 자들의 특권이 되겠다 이 말이야.
BT	Se-joo, this isn't stealing. What we're doing is a <i>seori</i> from the cafeteria. Like when you seori watermelons or melons. But do you even know what <i>seori</i> means? <i>Seori</i> ! You really don't know? The generation gap is serious. Anyway, <i>seori</i> is the privilege of the hungry.
TT	Se-joo, this is not stealing. We're like Robin Hood right now. We're becoming legendary, you know? Robin Hood. Exactly like the story. By the way, do you know what being like Robin Hood means? Do you? You really don't know? This is a serious generation gap here. A Robin Hood would be a privilege for the poor.

Note: I, as the author, assume full responsibility for the accuracy of the literal translation of the original Korean dialogue presented in this article.

Example 2.

ST	경부고속도로에는 조금 교통량이 늘어서 서울 쪽으로 서울에서 죽전까지 속도가 떨어지고, 부산 방면으로는...
BT	On the Gyeong-bu Expressway, traffic volume has increased slightly, causing a backup from Seoul to Juk-jeon. As for the direction towards Busan...
TT	Next station, Han River. Next station, Han River. Please exit to the right.

In the original film, culture-specific terms referring to locations, such as Gyeong-bu (meaning ‘the route from Seoul to Busan and vice versa’), and city names like Seoul, Juk-jeon, and Busan are mentioned in the traffic report on the radio. Except for Seoul, these names can be unfamiliar to English-speaking viewers. In the dubbed film, the entire lines are adapted to a public announcement, informing passengers of the next stop and advising them to disembark if it is their destination. Instead of transliterating the city names, the dubbed version omits all the location names and presents it as a general bus announcement.

The Host features multilingual situations where English dialogue is spoken. The film starts with a United States Forces Korea employee, McFarland, dumping a large volume of formaldehyde down a drain. This first scene implies that U.S. is responsible for the creation of mutant. Following McFarland, an American scientist appears in the film. The U.S. military spreads disinformation about virus and the doctor quarantines and examines the protagonist who allegedly contacted the mutant. He is accompanied by a Korean scientist who interprets between the American scientist and the protagonist. However, in the dubbed version, the interpretation is all erased and substituted with adaptation. The literal translation of his Korean lines, which would semantically mirror the American's, would not make

any sense. Therefore, the English-dubbed version opts for creative adaptation, transforming the entire scene into a normal interaction among three persons rather than an interpretation. Here is an excerpt from the scene in

Example 3.

The original dialogue of the Korean scientist paraphrases the American's words, but the English-dubbed dialogue is utterly rewritten. The Korean scientist's line “the world is so small” and the suggestion to “ask for help” do not significantly change the meaning, but they alter the dialogue from interpretation to a three-way conversation.

Aschied argues that characters in dubbed films are “uttering translated, which always also means interpreted, appropriated, and recreated new text, thus undergoing fundamental shifts,” serving as “ventriloquist's puppets”^[33]. From this perspective, a film undergoes substantial changes and is recontextualized to a new cultural context during the dubbing process. In the analysis, culture-specific items are mostly deleted or substituted with references familiar to the target culture audience. Furthermore, the multilingual situation is adapted to efface the foreign setting of the film. In this regard, the dubbed version of *The Host* appears to convince the target culture audience to accept the source cultural references as their own.

Example 3.

ST	(American scientist: Haven't you considered contacting television stations or human rights organizations or something?) Korean scientist: 아니, 방송국이나 인권단체 같은 데라도 애길 좀 해보지 그랬어요!
BT	Korean scientist: Well, you should have talked to television stations or human rights organizations!
TT	Korean scientist: I mean, the world is so small. It is easier for anyone to ask for help. You realize that, don't you, sir?

3.2. How Dubbing Modifies Narrativity

In the dubbed version of *The Host*, causality is delivered more explicitly. A total of 78 cases of modification strategies are identified. When the meaning in the original dialogue is suggestive or ambiguous, the

dubbing clarifies it to avoid any misunderstanding. For instance, in the scene following McFarland's dumping of toxic chemicals, a man attempts suicide on the Han River bridge. The brief but significant appearance of the suicidal man in the film's opening foreshadows its thematic trajectory. After glimpsing the monstrous figure lurking

beneath the water, he dismisses those attempting to dissuade him from jumping, muttering, “You idiots. Just keep living your lives,” before plunging into the river.

There are rescuers who persuade him from jumping and their English-dubbed line is modified as shown in **Example 4**.

Example 4.

ST 윤가야! 거기 가지마!

BT Mr. Yoon! Don’t jump!

TT It’s not the first time you’re bankrupt!

In the original dialogue, the rescuers simply persuade the man from a distance, with one saying not to jump. However, the dubbed dialogue is altered, “It’s not the first time you’re bankrupt,” denoting that the man has faced financial hardship before. The dubbed dialogue provides a clear reason for his suicide attempt. In a society where American intervention persists and the South Korean government remains indifferent; individuals are left with only two possible fates: those who have yet to witness the monster and those who have seen it but remain powerless to

act. However, this addition, which is absent in the original, is an adaptation in the dubbed version to create a specific motive for the character’s action.

Moreover, rhetorical questions or questions that do not require answers in the original film are modified in the dubbed dialogue into clear question-answer exchanges. **Example 5** is a conversation between the protagonist, Gang-du, and his father just before the monster abruptly approaches them.

Example 5.

강두: 보는데...

ST 희봉: 어?

강두: 우릴 봐. 쏘!

Gang-du: (It) sees us.

BT Hee-bong: What?

Gang-du: (It) sees us. Shoot!

Gang-du: Be quiet.

TT Hee-bong: Why?

Gang-du: It’s coming back. Now!

In the original Korean dialogue, Gang-du’s line starts with “(It) sees us.” In Korean, as subjects are often implied and understood through context, Gang-du omits the subject and does not mention who sees them. Hee-bong asks him back for clarification, but Gang-du simply repeats that something “sees us” and then shouts, “shoot!” In its dubbing, however, the conversation becomes more interactive than the original. Gang-du tells his father to “be quiet,” prompting Hee-bong to ask “why.” Gang-du then explains that the monster is “coming back.” Instead of merely repeating his earlier statement without addressing the question, the dubbed version has Gang-du clearly explaining why his father must take immediate action. This translation strengthens the causal relationship between the characters’ dialogue and makes the exchange more coherent.

In **Example 6**, a quarantine officer asks if anyone directly touched or made contact with the creature. In

Korean dialogue, Gang-du says, just “a few drops” of its blood splashed on his face. Although this small amount is enough for the officer to sequester him, the English-dubbed version intensifies the narrative by modifying the content. Instead of blood splashes, the dubbed dialogue states that “a bit of its tale” slapped his face.

This change in the dubbed version suggests that Gang-du had direct contact with the monster by its tale, which is not mentioned in the original film. The addition of this detail makes the following act of quarantine officers to catch him more convincing, since he is now a direct contact who can transmit virus. This modification enhances the narrative by reinforcing the function of verbal enactment, making the unfolding action more persuasive and dramatically impactful.

Example 6.

검역관: 아, 참. 피생물체 직접 만지거나 접촉하신 분 계십니까?

ST 강두: 저기요, 저 만진 건 아니구요. 그놈 피가 얼굴에 팍! 그... 몇 방울 튀었는데...

검역관: 움직이지마! 거 꼼짝하지 말라구!

Quarantine officer: Oh, by the way, has anyone directly touched or contacted the monster?

BT Gang-du: Excuse me, I didn’t touch it. Its blood splashed on my face, though. Just a few drops...

Quarantine officer: Don’t move! Stay right there!

Quarantine officer: Come on. Oh, I need to tell you something really important, okay? Someone made contact with monster?

TT Gang-du: Hey, you! I aint’ touched it. The blood... it’s pewk! And maybe... a bit of its tale.

Quarantine officer: Don’t move! Freeze! Stop him!

3.3. How Dubbing Influences Viewer's Emotions

In *The Host*, there are 56 instances of appraisal in the Korean dialogue. Interestingly, the dubbed version adds 32 cases of appraisals, while only 3 from the original are deleted. This tendency to add appraisals serves to make the dialogue more purposeful. For instance, when Hyun-seo calls her father from a drain along the Han River to let him know that she is alive and needs help, an appraisal is added to show her emotion.

In **Example 7**, the Korean dialogue simply has Hyun-seo ask her father to listen carefully. However, in the dubbed version, she explicitly lets out her fear by using the appraisal “scared.” Given the situation, Hyun-seo is in a dark drain, using the phone taken from a victim by the monster; it is natural to assume that she would feel scared. The dubbing enhances the emotional impact by omitting

inconsequential request (“listen carefully”) and instead highlights her fear. Another instance also reveals the character’s attitude, which is not expressed in the original film.

In **Example 8**, Hee-bong attempts to cross a restricted area along the Han River to rescue his granddaughter. He disguises his identity and bribes a manager. After throwing the bag of money to the manager, he looks back at his son, saying “Gang-du, you see...”. In this moment, he appears to be relieved not to have been caught. Dubbed dialogue makes his emotion explicit by adding the phrase “that was a little close.” The appraisal “close” is an appreciation of the situation, indicating that his action could have led to bad result. By incorporating appraisals that are absent in the original film, the dubbed dialogue makes characters’ emotions more explicit and provides clearer judgement of the situations, thereby helping the audience evaluate the character and events more easily.

Example 7.

ST 아빠! 내 말 잘 들어.
BT Dad! Listen to me carefully.
TT I’m scared.

Example 8.

ST 과장님. 시방 내가 지금 가진게 이거밖에 없어놔서... 미안합니다. 이따 보십시오. 강두야, 저기...
BT Manager, this is all I have right now. I’m sorry. I’ll see you later. Gang-du, you see...
TT Manager, this is all I have with me right now. I’ll see you later. Thank you. Thanks again. Oh, that was a little close.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that dubbing significantly modifies the functions of film dialogue, particularly in relation to diegesis, narrativity, and audience evaluation. First, the weakening of film diegesis in the English-dubbed version suggests that cultural specificity is often sacrificed to enhance accessibility for the target audience. The omission or substitution of culture-specific references, alongside the neutralization of multilingual situations, results in the detachment of the narrative from its original Korean context. This shift potentially enables Anglophone viewers to interpret the story as occurring within a more familiar, English-speaking environment, illustrating how dubbing can universalize localized narratives.

Second, the increased explicitness of narrativity in the dubbed version reflects a broader translation strategy that favors clarity over ambiguity. The clarification of previously implicit dialogue and the reinforcement of narrative links serve to enhance the coherence of the story for target audiences. While this adjustment supports comprehension, it also alters the original film’s narrative style, which often relied on subtlety and implied meaning.

Third, the enhanced control over viewer evaluation and emotions in the English-dubbed version demonstrates how dubbing can guide audience interpretation more forcefully. By adding evaluative language absent in the original, the dubbed dialogue actively steers viewers’ emotional and moral responses, reducing the openness of interpretation inherent in the original text.

Overall, these findings suggest that dubbing is not merely a linguistic translation but an active process of cultural and narrative adaptation. While dubbing facilitates accessibility, it inevitably transforms key aspects of the original film’s communicative intent. These observations stress the need for further research to examine a broader corpus of dubbed films, in order to fully understand the extent and patterns of these transformations across different cinematic and cultural contexts.

5. Conclusions

This study examined the ways in which dubbing modifies film dialogue functions by analyzing Bong Joon-ho’s *The Host* (2006) and its English-dubbed version, using Kozloff’s categorization as an analytical framework. The findings indicate three key patterns of transformation. First, the film’s diegesis—referring to its grounding in specific cultural and geographical settings—is weakened through

the dubbing process. The original Korean dialogue frequently specifies particular locations and cultural elements that root the narrative firmly in its South Korean context. However, the English-dubbed version often omits or replaces these references with more neutral or generalized terms. This reduction in cultural specificity potentially allows Anglophone viewers to interpret the narrative as taking place in a less localized or even an English-speaking environment, although this study does not include reception data to confirm audience interpretations.

Second, the narrativity of the film—defined here as the explicitness and coherence of the storyline—is enhanced in the English-dubbed version. Instances of ambiguity and implicitness in the original dialogue are systematically clarified in the dubbing, resulting in a more linear and accessible narrative structure. The dubbing strengthens the verbal enactment function of dialogue, offering clearer narrative information and reinforcing plot progression for the target audience.

Third, the dubbing process amplifies the control over viewers' evaluation and emotional responses. By inserting explicit appraisals and emotive cues that were absent in the original, the English-dubbed version guides the audience's interpretation of characters' emotions, moral positioning, and narrative developments. However, while this study discusses the potential consequences of such modifications on audience reception, it does not empirically test actual viewer responses. Therefore, conclusions about emotional impact remain theoretical and would require empirical validation through reception studies or psycholinguistic analysis.

The study's limitations must be acknowledged. This research is based on a single case study focused on one film and one target language, which constrains the ability to generalize the findings to broader dubbing practices or to other linguistic and cultural contexts. Moreover, the absence of empirical audience data means that claims regarding viewer engagement, interpretation, and emotional resonance remain speculative.

Future research should address these limitations by adopting empirical methodologies, such as audience reception studies, eye-tracking experiments, or psycholinguistic surveys, to assess the actual impact of dubbing modifications on viewers' emotional and cognitive processing. Expanding the scope to include a broader corpus of films across different genres, periods, and language pairs would also allow for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the systematic ways in which dubbing reshapes the communicative functions of film dialogue. In particular, comparative studies between subtitled, dubbed, and original versions could yield important insights into the intersections between translation strategies, narrative construction, and audience reception in global media circulation.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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