



# Translation of Gender Stereotypes in Animated Films: A Case Study of Shrek 2 and Ice Age 2

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## ABSTRACT

Full time television viewing may contribute significantly to children's acquisition of stereotypic perceptions of behavior and psychological characteristics associated with males and females. There has been research interest in how children might be effected by the sex role stereotypes. The trend has always been such that female characters are attributed to certain feminine acts in contrast with males whose stereotypes portrayed in children media are expected to be major and masculine. Children in particular spend a great amount of time watching TV and are related to the content of what they watch which shapes their perception. Contrary to traditional portrayal of sex-roles in animated films in which male characters are more likely to demonstrate physical aggression and leadership roles whereas female characters are more apt to demonstrate affection, romance, and supportive roles than are male, it has recently been observed a change occurring in the way sex-roles are represented in animated movies. To realize if this change also appears in the Persian dubbed version of animated films, this study is an attempt to analyze popular television cartoons produces from 1990 to 2012, comparing the original with the dubbed version and the way their portrayals of gender stereotypes undergo change across the two languages. To this end, instances extracted of sex-role stereotypes were extracted and subjected to comparison. It must be mentioned that the present article is a small part of the researcher's MA thesis in which over one hundred animated movies were reviewed and analyzed completely (see the Appendix ). Only two of the analyzed animated movies, Shrek 2 and Ice Age 2, are discussed here. The results indicated that differences in the way the two versions portray sex-role stereotypes could be clearly indexed and categorized. The Persian dubbed version tended to ignore the worldwide occurring changes in portraying sex-roles.

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## Introduction

### Stereotype

A stereotype is a fixed or conventional belief that may be adopted about a person or group of people, but that belief is not necessarily a reflection of reality. When we hear the word stereotype, a negative feeling overcomes our thought; however, when Walter Lippmann first coined the term, he did not intend it to have a wholly and necessarily pejorative connotation. Lippmann believes that it is not stereotypes, as an aspect of human thought and representation, that are wrong, but who controls and defines them, what interests they serve.

So stereotypes can be positive or negative in connotation and are used to group people together. The assumptions are made with the belief that all individuals of a particular group behave in a similar fashion. Many different forms of stereotypes have been created to classify people into specific groups. Among them are Stereotypes involving age, race, gender, etc. Age stereotyping involves categorizing people by their age. Also called ageism, this practice discriminates against older individuals. Ageism affects individuals in many different areas, but has been prevalent in the workplace, when older employees aren't promoted due to beliefs about their abilities because of their age. Racial stereotyping is another form of grouping that affects many different people. The practice of classifying individuals based on race creates negative ideals about those people without truly understanding their culture. Stereotyping can also affect people across gender lines. This type of

stereotyping can affect people in the workplace and various other locations. For example, individuals may believe that women wouldn't fit well into job types such as police officers or soldiers. Gender stereotypes are also created through the media and popular forms of entertainment.

### Gender stereotype

Stereotypes can instigate prejudice and false assumptions about entire groups of people, including the members of different ethnic groups, social classes, religious orders, the opposite sex, etc. Although sex is usually defined as a person's biological traits, gender is defined as how a person identifies themselves to the world. Gender relates to those affectations that are attributed to men and those affectations that are attributed to women. Gender stereotypes are those ideas, usually imposed by society of what is expected of men and women in the social structure.

As stated by Talbot (2003: 26), since "people are perceived through a 'lens' of gender polarization [...] there is a strong tendency for gender stereotyping". Talbot explains that stereotypes are practiced in order to maintain the existing social order. For this reason, they "tend to be directed to subordinate groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, women)" (*ibid*: 29). Expressed in other words, stereotypes arise from the assumption that one group or one culture represents the 'normal', and is, therefore, assumed to be superior to other groups or cultures. In particular, gender stereotypes stem from the presupposition that men and

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women are two opposing categories: since men represent the norm, women are doomed to be the exception to this norm.

#### **Animated films**

Whatever its relation to the physical body, it is generally agreed that mind is that which enables a being to have subjective awareness and intentionality towards their environment and to perceive a world of concepts. Using our thought, we are able to make sense of things in the world, and to represent and interpret them in ways that are significant or which accord with our needs, attachments, goals, etc.

Then there is the question that how this awareness and perceptions, whether subjective or objective, are shaped in our minds. Going through lots of studies, experiences and historical clues, it can be observed that a mind full of known and unknown conceptions is a by-product of various influential factors which among them, media plays a crucial role.

Since the early advent of animated pictures and then gradually development of mass media, television has had a great influence on human beings, their minds, and the way they perceive concepts in the real world and therefore has become a major source for acquiring cultural information during one's development. Bandura (1994) suggests that television's representations of the social world reflect "ideological bents and . . . heavy exposure to this symbolic world may eventually make the televised images appear to be the authentic state of human affairs" (p. 75–6).

Although adults constantly may be reforming their perspectives on gender, basic foundations have been laid in their childhood when their minds were so ready to grab new ideas and attitudes in the real world. So children are forming their values and beliefs in every moment of their lives. They are more vulnerable to many types of images or stereotypes presented to them, particularly those with audio and visual reinforcement.

Witt found that in addition to the models of behavior provided by parents and peer groups, "a further reinforcement of acceptable and appropriate behavior is shown to children through the media, in particular, television" (Witt 1997: 254). McGhee and Frueh (1980) suggest that heavy television viewing may contribute significantly to children's acquisitions of stereotypic perceptions of behavior and psychological characteristics associated with males and females. Liebert et al. (1973) stressed when examining the content of television it is important to keep in mind that entertainment does more than merely entertain our children and us, "it communicates information about the social structure and it shapes attitudes about ourselves, others, and the world at large" (p. 18). Therefore, it can be assumed that children might use the portrayals of males and females in cartoon format as a model for performance of their own genders, in order to assimilate into the norms of their culture.

Animated films provide excellent opportunities for subtle indoctrination of children. As a result, children who watch more television have more sex-typed attitudes (Kimball 1986; McGhee and Frueh 1980). They mostly depict significant differences in the status, behavior and capabilities of female and male characters. Thus cartoons tell cultural stories that can't help but inform young minds about who they are to become. When looking at the sex-role stereotypes depicted in cartoons throughout the development of mass media, it is observed that female characters are represented as passive, affectionate, and romantic. On the other hand, male characters, having more roles than females, have always been represented as powerful, leading and active. However, in the recent years, there have been little changes in the portrayal of sex-role stereotypes in cartoons.

Shrek and Ice Age, two very popular cartoons in children's world and also for adults, are of the animated cartoons that represent a new face of sex-roles.

#### **Audiovisual translation**

In the twenty-first century, the media is omnipresent: to inform, arguably sometimes to misinform, to sell, to entertain and to educate. A quick perusal of traditional television programs or cinema guides will testify to the growth and importance of the media and the need for audiovisual translation (AVT) in most countries (Jorge Díaz Cintas and Gunilla Anderman).

Since the early days of the cinema, in order to make audiovisual programs comprehensible to audiences unfamiliar with the language of the original, different forms of language transfer on the screen have been required. In the main, there are two basic approaches to the translation of the spoken language of the original program: to retain it as spoken or to change it into written text. In the first instance the original dialogue is replaced by a new soundtrack in the target language in a process generally known as revoicing. The replacement may be total, whereby we do not hear the original, as in lip sync dubbing and narration, or partial, when the original soundtrack can still be heard in the background, as in voice-over and interpreting. All these modes are available to the profession and some of them are more suited to particular audiovisual genres than others. Lip sync dubbing, for instance, is mainly used in the translation of films and TV series and sitcoms, whereas narration and voice-over tend to be more used in the case of documentaries, interviews and program on current affairs. When the decision has been taken to keep the original soundtrack and to switch from the spoken to the written mode, by adding text to the screen, the technique is known as subtitling. Quicker and a lot cheaper than dubbing, it has more recently become the favored translation mode in the media world and comes hand in hand with globalization. Despite the historically strong polarization between advocates and detractors of the two different approaches, nowadays it is Audiovisual translation is a cultural process in which the semiotic dimension of cinematographic language together with the linguistic aspects are considered to help the transference of meanings and values of television and cinematographic program from one language to another.

Although translation has been described as a "cross-cultural transfer" (Vermeer 1986), it is important to note that this transfer implies an ideological transfer as well, if ideology is understood in its broad sense, i.e. as the standard set of values, ideas and beliefs that govern a community, and, consequently, a translator must possess in-depth knowledge of the ideas, beliefs, and values that connect to the languages being translated.

#### **Methodology**

As a result of the rather universal change in the way sex-roles are portrayed in the media, it would be expected that this change also appears in the translation of the animated films. This study tries to investigate how the change in the portrayal of sex-role stereotypes is represented in the Persian translation of animated films for Persian children. In order to conduct the research, the researcher has gone through a study of the two selected animated films, Shrek 2 and Ice Age 2, the selection of which was based on the frequency of gendered discourse. Secondly, both the English version and the dubbed version were watched completely to extract the samples. The selected parts then, each studied differently, were compared and contrasted and the results obtained are completely explained.

## Discussion and results

Two main characters of the work, Fiona and Donkey are studied as the best representation of a new portrayal of sex-role stereotypes. Fiona is the leading female character who behaves differently from the traditional heroine characters portrayed in previous animated cartoons. She is active, powerful, and smart. And also she is not necessarily a pretty woman since she turns into an ogre at the end of the story still being one of the two main characters. Fiona first appears passive & self-assertive, waiting for a prince charming to come & save her from a spell; however, this changes soon after the story begins. While Fiona's voice in the Persian version speaks smoothly which emphasizes on a stereotyped female characteristic in animated cartoons, it could be observed that in the original version of the movie, Fiona's voice does not claim any tenderness. Donkey is one of the male characters which behave differently from the old male characters displayed in animated cartoons. Each character's dialogues were studied thoroughly and the best representations of the new portrayal of sex-role stereotypes were selected and analyzed in details. These examples would show how this animation breaks the fairy tale paradigm and represents a new portrayal of sex-role stereotypes.

The first example is the scene in which the Magic Mirror describes Princess Fiona to Lord Farquaad. There are many cases in which the dubbed version is changed drastically so that it could easily hide the rather little change that happened in the way animated cartoons show the sex stereotypes. The mirror describes three bachelorettes, two of them are Cinderella and snow-white who both are main female characters of the old fairytales with the traditional sex-role stereotypes. When talking about them in the English version, the mirror uses words which are neutral and do not suggest any traits pertaining to traditional female stereotypes. But in the Persian version some of these words are changed to words which directly stress the traditional sex-role stereotypes. Some examples would be dolls and Indian movies for sushi and hottubbing when describing Cinderella; she is easy to reach for she is not easy in the description of snow-white. Fiona, the main female character in Shrek, is also described so much differently in the Persian version. In the English version, words such as fiery, redhead, and loaded pistol would suggest a big deviation from the traditional portrayals of sex stereotypes. The Persian version emphasizes on the traditional female stereotypes simply by omitting the above mentioned words and replacing them by some other ones.

### Example 1

**Magic Mirror:** You are not a king yet. But you can become one. All you have to do is marry a princess.

**Lord Farquaad:** Go on.

**Magic Mirror:** So just sit back and relax my lord. Because it's time for you to meet today's eligible bachelorettes. And here they are. Bachelorette number one is a mentally abused shut-in from a kingdom far, far away. She likes sushi and hottubbing anytime. Her hobbies are cooking and cleaning for her two evil sisters. Please welcome ... Cinderella. Bachelorette number two is a cape-wearing girl from a land of fantasy. Although she lives with seven other man. She is not easy. Just kiss her dead frozen lips and find out what a live wife she is. Come on. Give it up for ... snowwhite. And last but certainly not least. Bachelorette number three is a fiery redhead from a dragon-guarded castle, surrounded by a hot boiling lava. But don't let that cool you off. She's a loaded pistol who likes Pina Coladas and getting cut in the rain. Yours for the rescuing, Princess Fiona.

**آینه ی جادویی:** خوب یعنی هنوز به پادشاه نشدید. ولی خوب، می تونید باشید. تنها کاری که باید بکنید ازدواج با یه پرنسس. لرد فارکوآد: ادامه بده.

**آینه ی جادویی:** خوب پس با دقت تماشا کنید سرورم. چون حالا نوبت شماست که دوشیزه ی مورد نظرتون و انتخاب کنید. پس برو که رفتیم. دوشیزه ی شماره ی یک، در سرزمینی دور اسیره. از عروسک و فیلم هندی خوشش میاد. تفریحاتش نظافت آشپزخونه و کتک زدن خواهراشه. معرفی می کنم. سیندرلا. دوشیزه ی شماره ی دو، دختری ژنده پوش و فانتری. اگر چه با هفتا کوچولوی قلچماق زندگی می کنه، ولی دسترسی بهش کاملاً آسونه. فقط کافیه لبای مردشو ببوسی تا ببینی چه همسر شاداب و سرحالیه. خوب معرفی می کنم. سفید برفی. دوشیزه ی شماره ی سه، توسط یه اژدهای آتشین درر قلعه ای ترسناک زندانی شده. از سیرابی و نون خامه ای خیلی خوشش میاد و عاشق شوالیه ایه که بره و نجاتش بده. معرفی می کنم. دوشیزه فیونا.

**Magic Mirror:** You are not a king yet. But you can become one. All you have to do is marry a princess.

**Lord Farquaad:** Go on.

**Magic Mirror:** So watch carefully my lord. Because it's time for you to meet your eligible bachelorettes. And here they are. Bachelorette number one is shut-in from a kingdom far, far away. She likes dolls and Indian movies. Her hobbies are cooking and beating her two evil sisters. Please welcome ... Cinderella. Bachelorette number two is a cape-wearing girl from a land of fantasy. Although she lives with seven other men, she is easy to reach. Just kiss her dead frozen lips and find out what a live wife she is. Come on. Give it up for ... snowwhite. And last but certainly not least. Bachelorette number three is imprisoned by a fire-breathing dragon in a horrifying castle. She likes Sirabi and creamy bread and she loves the knight who is going to rescue her. Bachelorette Fiona.

In the second example, Donkey who is an affectionate male character and shows a new portrayal of male stereotypes in the English version is depicted differently in the Persian version. The terms which show the new traits deviating from the old stereotypes are omitted.

### Example 2

**Shrek:** come on donkey, I'm right here beside you,ok? For emotional support. We'll just hackle this thing together one little baby step after time.

**Donkey:** Really?

**Shrek:** Really really.

**Donkey:** Ok. That makes me feel so much better.

**شُرک:** آروم باش الاغ جان. اصلاً ار هیچی نترس. من اینجا پیشتم. تو می تونی با چشمای کاملاً بسته از روی پل رد بشی و اصلاً پایینم نگاه نکنی. تو می تونی پسر.

**الاغ:** جدی؟

**شُرک:** جدی جدی.

**الاغ:** گمونم یکم اعصابم آروم شد.

**Shrek:** calm down on donkey, don't be scared of anything. I'm right here beside you. You can cross the bridge with your eyes closed and not looking down. You can do this, boy.

**Donkey:** Really?

**Shrek:** Really really.

**Donkey:** Ok. That makes my nerves calm down.

In this example, the term homey touch in the English version is replaced by a few touches of a woman (سلیقه ی خانما). Here again there is the tendency in the Persian version to deviate from the English version by maintaining the traditional sex-role stereotypes.

### Example 3

**Fiona:** I need to find somewhere to camp, now!

**Shrek:** Hey, over here.

**Donkey:** Shrek, we can do better than that. Now, I don't think this is decent for princess.

**Fiona:** No, no, it's perfect. It just needs a few homey touches.

**Shrek:** Homey touches? Like what?

**Fiona:** A door. Well, gentlemen I'll be d..., good night.

**فیونا:** من باید شب و اینجا بمونم، خوب.

**شرک:** پرنسس، بیا اینجا.

**الاغ:** ای بابا، اینجا که شبیه طویله ست. در حد شاهزاده خانم نیست.

**فیونا:** نه، نه، عالی. فقط به کمی سلیقه ی خانما نیاز داره.

**شرک:** سلیقه ی خانما؟ مثلاً چی؟

**فیونا:** مثل یه در. خوب آقا یون، وقت خوابه. شب بخیر.

**Fiona:** I need to find somewhere to camp, now!

**Shrek:** Princess, over here.

**Donkey:** Shrek, this place is like a barn. Now, I don't think this is decent for princess.

**Fiona:** No, no, it's perfect. It just needs a few touches of a woman.

**Shrek:** A few touches of a woman? Like what?

**Fiona:** A door. Well, gentlemen I'll be d..., good night.

In the fourth example, when Fiona tries to yank out the arrow from Shrek's body, Shrek asks her to do it tenderly while she is doing it the opposite way. But the Persian version displays a completely different picture by using the phrase *It's not something to be done by a woman* (این کار، کار خانما نیست).

#### Example 4

**Fiona:** Now, you hold still and I'll yank this thing out.

**Shrek:** Hey! Easy with the yanking.

**Fiona:** I'm sorry, but it has to come out.

**Shrek:** No, no. It's tender. What you're doing here is the opposite...

**Fiona:** Don't move.

**فیونا:** حالا که رفت بهتره آرام و ایسی و من تیر و در بیارم.

**شرک:** اوه، نه. دست نزن.

**فیونا:** نکنه می ترسی؟ نکنه می خوای اون تیر برای همیشه اونجا بمونه؟

**شرک:** نه، نه. این کار، کار خانما نیست.

**شرک:** بهت قول می دم اصلاً درد نداره.

**Fiona:** Now, you hold still and I'll yank this thing out.

**Shrek:** Hey! Don't touch.

**Fiona:** Are you scared? But it has to come out.

**Shrek:** No, no. It's not something to be done by a woman.

**Fiona:** I promise it won't hurt.

These two examples again account for the same emphasis on the traditional sex stereotypes in the Persian version. Donkey who is a different portrayal of male characters in animated cartoons is so affectionate and this is frequently observed in the English version of the movie. But once again, the Persian version tries to ignore the change in the portrayal of sex stereotypes by replacing phrases such as I think I need a hug by the neutral phrases such as I don't have any thumbs (ندارم) and also omitting terms such as pathetic.

#### Example 5

**Donkey:** I think I need a hug.

**الاغ:** من که پنجول ندارم.

**Donkey:** I don't have any thumbs.

#### Example 6

**Shrek:** Understand? Nobody! Especially useless, pathetic, annoying, talking donkeys!

**شرک:** حالت شد؟ هیچ کس! مخصوصاً خر حراف بی ارزش مزاحمی م تو!

**Shrek:** Understand? Nobody! Especially useless, annoying, talking donkeys!

The other animated film which was selected for the purpose of the present study was *Ice Age 2: The Meltdown* which is a sequel to the 2002 animated film *Ice Age*. It tells the story of *Manny* the male Mammoth, *Ellie* the female Mammoth, *Sid* the Sloth and *Diego*, the Saber-Toothed Tiger who are on a must journey with a coterie of their fellow soon-to-be extinct Ice Age pals to escape the coming flood. The characters to be analyzed

for this research are the two leading characters, *Manny* the male Mammoth and *Ellie* the female Mammoth. After watching both the English and Persian versions of the film, it was observed that although the English voice for Ellie has a tough voice which does not accord with the traditional way of voicing female character, the Persian voice, still insisting on the old stereotyped features of female characters speaks so tenderly. There were also samples which emphasize the same thing in the Persian dubbed version of the film. One of them is Manny's Persian voice's using the word "zaeife" repetitively when he addresses Ellie, the female Mammoth. But in the English version there is not even a word in any of the scenes. Here are some other examples:

#### Example 1

The first example is from the scene in which Diego, the tiger, describes Ellie, the female Mammoth.

**Diego:** Crazy and confused, but sweet.

**دیه گو:** درسته یکم خل می زنه، اما به دل می شینه.

**Diego:** Although she is a little bit silly, but she is sweet.

#### Example 2

The other sample was observed in Manny's talking with Ellie.

**Ellie:** We'll head back and go around.

**Manny:** There's no time. The dam will burst before we make it. We'll drown.

**Ellie:** If we go through this, we get blown to bits.

**Manny:** We go forward.

**Ellie:** We go back.

**Manny:** Forward.

**Ellie:** Back.

**Manny:** Forward.

**Ellie:** Back.

**Manny:** You are so stubborn and hard-headed.

**Ellie:** Well, I guess that proves it. I am a mammoth.

**الی:** ما برمی گردیم. اینجا رو دور می زنی.

**مندى:** نه دختر جون، وقت تنگه. قبل از اینکه برسیم سد می شکنه و غرق

می شیم.

**الی:** از این وسط خرد و خاک شیر می شیم.

**مندى:** باس بریم.

**الی:** باس برگردیم.

**مندى:** می ریم.

**الی:** نمی ریم.

**مندى:** می ریم.

**الی:** نمی ریم.

**مندى:** تو خیلی به دنده و اجبازی ضعیفه.

**الی:** واسه اینکه جدیداً فهمیدم من یه ماموتم.

**Ellie:** We'll head back and go around.

**Manny:** There's no time dear girl. The dam will burst before we make it. We'll drown.

**Ellie:** If we go through this, we get blown to bits.

**Manny:** We go forward.

**Ellie:** We go back.

**Manny:** Forward.

**Ellie:** Back.

**Manny:** Forward.

**Ellie:** Back.

**Manny:** You are so stubborn and hard-headed.

**Ellie:** Because I just found out that I'm a Mammoth..

#### Conclusion

Animated films, as one of the main factors based on which human beings make their conceptions of the real world on the one hand, and their aiming at children on the other hand, are of great importance in social life and consequently have indicated so much potential for being interesting topics for researchers. They also transfer the stereotypical conceptions from one generation to another and this transference sometimes seeks its

way through translation from source language to target language. It has been observed that there was a change in the way animated films portray sex-role stereotypes in recent years. This study tried to investigate how this change is reflected in the Persian translation of the animated movie. To this end, two animated films, Dream Works' animated film, Shrek, and 20th Century Fox's Ice Age 2: The Meltdown were analyzed completely. The results indicated that the stereotypical portrayal of sex-roles are maintained to a great degree in the Persian version of the movie; however this is not the case in the English version. This could be due to various factors related to ideological perspectives of different cultures that in the case of Persian culture, religion and policy are among them. Whatever the reasons are, they lead to considerable influences on people's mind and life in general and children's in particular.

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#### Appendix: Filmography

##### List of analyzed animated movies:

- A turtle's tale (2012)
- Cloudy with a chance of meatballs (2009)
- Aladdin (1992)
- Alpha and Omega (2010)
- Anastasia (1997)
- Dino time (2012)
- Beauty and the Beast (1991)
- Coralline (2009)
- Corpse Bride (2005)
- Finding Nemo (2003)
- Delhi Safari (2012)
- Epic (2013)
- Gladiatori di Roma (2007)
- Gnomeo and Juliet (2011)
- Hercules (1997)

- Hotel Transylvania (2012)
- Ice Age 3: Dawn of dinosaurs (2009)
- Mega mind (2010)
- Monsters Vs Aliens (2009)
- Mulan 2 (2004)
- Mulan (1998)
- Rango (2011)
- Rio (2011)
- The princess and the frog (2009)
- The Emperor's New groove (2000)
- The Lion King (2001)
- The night before Christmas (1993)
- The prince of Egypt (1998)
- Treasure planet (2002)
- Wreck-it-Ralph (2012)
- Madagascar 1 (2005)
- Despicable me 2 (2013)
- The incredibles (2004)
- Shrek forever after (2010)
- Sinbad- Legend of the seven seas (2003)
- Spirited away (2002)
- Tangled (2010)
- Tarzan (1999)
- The Croods (2013)
- Open season 3 (2011)
- Open season 2 (2008)
- Brave (2012)
- Shrek 2 (2004)
- Ice Age 2 (2006)

##### List of analyzed animated with no data:

- Chicken little (2005)
- Tinkerbelle (2012)
- Ratatouille (2007)
- The flying machine (2011)
- A cat in Paris (2012)
- Paranorman (2012)
- Resident evil-Damnation (2012)
- Rise of the Guardians (2012)
- Shark tale (2004)
- Tarzan (2005)
- Ponyo (2008)
- Tod, the last explorer (2012)
- Ice Age 1 (2002)
- Shrek 1 (2001)
- Toy Story 1 (1995)
- Toy Story 2 (1999)
- Toy Story 3 (2010)
- Wall E (2008)
- Your Friend the Rat (2007)
- Monsters, Inc. (2012)
- Princess Mononoke (Mononoke-hime) (1999)
- The flight before Christmas (2008)
- barnyard 2 (2006)
- Robots (2005)