CHALLENGES OF SUBTITLING CULTURAL ELEMENTS OF ENGLISH FILMS FROM ENGLISH TO ARABIC

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In the name of Allah the most Merciful. First of all, all my thanks and gratitude due to Allah, the almighty. Who enable me to complete this study which may help in shedding light on the cultural subtitling in the translating English to Arabic.

I am also thankful to every single one of my teacher at the university of sebha who guided me to reach this majestic stage of my academic demonstration, and all appreciation goes to my father and my mother and my colleagues who had the patience and stood right by my side when I needed them most.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor MS: Safia Alsied for this unwavering support, collegiality, and mentorship throughout this project.
Challenges of subtitling cultural elements of English films from English to Arabic

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Abstract

Subtitling is considered as one of the main translation methods in our modern day, but most of the translation students at University of Sebha aren't familiar with most of the cultural elements that occur in many American or British movies or in general, they don't have enough background of the entire cultural elements of the target language.

Therefore, in this project I tend to investigate those challenges that face translators when it comes to subtitling the cultural elements.
Dedication

This project is dedicated to my mother and my father who have always believed me and stood by my side and provided me all that I wished for to become the graduate I am today. I would like to thank them for their unwavering and endless support and advice throughout all these years.
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CAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of digital era, audiovisual translation (AVT) has begun in earnest all over the world with an increasing audience, albeit it's most common form (i.e. subtitling dubbing, etc.) have been the general ruck of debate and research.

Very much replete with my rids of Linguistic, technical, Semiotic, cultural problems and so forth, the job of audiovisual translator has largely been viewed as challenging and demanding.

According to Karamitroglou(2000::p.104) “The number of possible audiovisual translation problems is each one of them can never be finite”, and the beauties of the original text are due to evaporate as such (Tytlter 1790:20) As consequence “no one has ever come a ways from a foreign films admiring the translation, inasmuch as all of us have, at one time or another, left a movie theat- re all of use have, at one time or another, left a move theat- re wanting to kill the translator ”(Nornes 1999:17; see also Gamal 2009:4) When subtitle cultural are appreciated, however, Nornes argues that (1999/p. 17.34)“it is only a desire for reciprocal venges for the text in face its corruption”(ibid). violence, are

Suffice it to say, being a sagacious translator is not a panacea for solving the everlasting number of subtitling cultural problems, for not only these can be linguistic or cultural as is the case with literary translation, but also technical.

On the differences between cultural translation and AVT, Neves (2004) states that in audiovisual translation the problem which arise are some Which similar to those of cultural translation with the extra stress that the fidelity factor is dictated whereas in written translation -by constraints that lie beyond words or language fidelity lie in two extreme point the source-text or target-text in Audience that that is in need of communicative effectiveness, rather than is search of artistic effect-as is the case in cultural translation or of exact equivalence as happens with technical translation in this, communicative effectiveness should be an ultimate goal in so far as subtitles are concerned, and it can be achieved by means of different channels.

According to Baker (1998:p.245) these channels include :(1)The verbal auditory channel, i.e, dialogue, background voice, and sometimes lyrics;(2)The non, verbal auditory channel i.e, music, natural sound and sound effects; (3) The written signs on the screen ; and verbal visual channel i.e, superimposed titles and (4) The non-verbal visual channel i.e, picture composition and flow.
Viewed as a technology-laden process, subtitling cultural requires that, a long side linguistic and cultural competence, a fully fledged subtitler should be a "whiz/kid" computer expert so that technical constraints, of which (AVT) is full can be handled Georgackopoulou (2009:p.30/31), however, some people, believes that, subtitlers can work from templates (i.e. word documents with time codes) where by "the subtitling cultural process has been split in to two distinct tasks.

The timing of a film or audiovisual programme is made by English native speakers who produce a unique timed subtitle file in English, that is, a file where all the in and out times have been decided.

1.2 Research problem

The real challenges when it comes to subtitling cultural phrases is trying to convey the concept without distorting the message. so, in this case the translator must find a ways to explain it so it makes sense to the audience.

As (Neves 2004) argues in AVT, with two significant point the SL or the target language "fidelity is particularly due to an Audience that is need of communicative effectiveness rather than is search of artistic effect as in the case of literary translation or as exact equivalence as in technical translation."

1.3 Research objectives

This study will attempt to shed light on the following:

To investigate the challenges that face 6th semester students in translating subtitling cultural elements.

1.4 Research Questions

In order address the challenges of English to Arabic subtitling, this study has formulate the following research question:

1/ What are the cultural that encounter translator in subtitling films English to Arabic?

1.5 Significance of study

This studying a problem that suffers a lot in the translation of some words in cultural terms in films that are difficulties to understand, so we must high light the study of cultural translation in American films because it's the most watched in Arab world.
1.6 Organization of the study

This study is organized to be produced in five chapter:

The first chapter is the introduction of the study.

The second chapter will introduce the literature review.

The third chapter will include the methodology that will be addressed in this study.

The fourth chapter is about the data analysis and discussions.

The final chapter will summarize and give an overall conclusion about the study and mention the limitations and recommendation.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the previous studies and definition of subtitling and cultural.

2.2 The concepts of terminology

2.2.1 The concepts of subtitling cultural

Cultural

Bahmed (2008) states there is no commonly a greed /upon definition of cultural. However, cultural (Latin: cultural, Lit .cultivation)is a modern concept based by the Roman or a tor, cicero: culture . animi "Specifically, the term" culture in American anthropology had two meaning (1)the evolved human capacity to classify and represent experiences with symbols and to act imaginatively and creatively and(2)the distinct ways that people different part of the world classification and represented their experiences, and acted creatively.

This is fact generally accepted because language reflects various aspects of cultural (Larson1984). According to Rohner (1984), culture is a system of symbolic meaning that shape one's way of thinking.

2.3 Translation

Translation is undoubtedly not just replace/ment of words or expressions from one language (SL) by mean of an equivalent.(TLT) on the one hand, Bell (1991:p.5) defines translation as "the expression in another language or(TL)of has been expressed the source one, preserving sematic and stylistic what equivalences."

3 Problem of translating culture

As stated above, language and culture are closely interrelated since the former reflects various aspects of the latter (Larson1984)

Additionally, culture plays the major role in the course of the translation. AL.shawi (2012) points out that words which have various connotation is one language may not have the same emotive association in another
Subtitles deal with the verbal words that are heard and seen as they occur in tandem with dialogue inseparable from the sound and the images of the films. (Bnon, 2010). It is clear from the previous definitions that subtitling is a very important procedure as it is one of the main two ways to translate a foreign programme and it cannot be constant because of the linguistic, technical and most importantly cultural difficulties.

It was argued by Gilbert (2010) that subtitling is cross media transference of the meaning and the message, the process involves a double conversation traversing from one language in to another and from one medium into another.

According to Ying-Ting (2001) subtitles include a diversity of "semiotic modes" that give the form to the film transcript and the subtitled film text subtitles seal with the spoken word.

4 Strategies of translating culture

The translation strategies that are often adopted for translating culture are those proposed by Baker (1992-2011). She mentions five main strategies for translating the culturally bound expressions namely (a) full equivalent {Using an expression of similar meaning and form}  (b) partial equivalent {using an expression of similar meaning but dissimilar form} (c) translation by borrowing the SC cultural sign (d) translation by paraphrase (e) compensation strategy.

5 Theories of translation and their relevance to subtitling

5.1 Cultural Equivalent

Total cultural equivalent (Same form + same meaning) Baker (1992-2011) affirms that finding an equivalent in TC similar in form and meaning to the SC expression seems to be the ideal choice and solution "but it is not necessarily always the case (ibid). (Newmark, 1988/p.83). for instance, the Arabic expression (رأساً على عقب) is culturally rendered to English as "head over heals" consider the following examples from English to Arabic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English expression</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To ask for hand</td>
<td>Willing to marry her</td>
<td>يطلب يدها للزواج</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light-handed</td>
<td>Will-experienced thief</td>
<td>هو خفيف اليد</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Equivalence at word level

Baker (1992) argues that the primary task for the translator is to search for equivalence for the SL vocabularies, he also adds that translator usually consider words as a unit of translator to find a direct TL equivalence at word level, Nevertheless, Baker(1992) emphasizes that a single word may have than one meaning or have different meaning in different language.

5.3 Grammatical equivalence

Baker (1992) points out says that grammatical rules may differ among languages and this may cause some difficulties in terms of finding a suitable equivalence in the TL. She argues that different grammatical structures in SL and TL may cause unexpected changes may encourage the translator either to add or omit information in the TT because of the lack of particular grammatical devices in the TL itself.

5.4 Textual Equivalence

Baker (1992) considers 'texture' as a crucial feature in translation as it offers beneficial guidelines for the understanding and analysis of the ST which can assist the translator in his endeavors to translate a cohesive and coherent text for the target culture reader in a certain context.

She adds that "it is the Translators choice to agree whether or not to preserve the cohesive ties as well as the coherence of the TL."

Bakers theory

Baker combines both linguistic and communicative methods to address the notion of equivalence at many levels linked to translation studies.

5.5 Conclusion

To recapture things, the previous studies were according to different critics and scholars, it is clear that the translators encounter several problems when it comes to subtitling cultural bound elements to the TL. The research has also reviewed some theories related to cultural and subtitling.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology. This section will also mention the instruments that were used to collect Data.

3.2 Research design

The main purpose of the present study is to investigate the difficulties of subtitling cultural item from English to Arabic, is based on qualitative methodology because the study investigates specific participants and uses specific instrument while implementing a specific approach to figure out it's impact on students.

3.3 Participants

The participants who took part in this research are 6th semester students at the English department of Sebha University. They were 10 students, the male is 5 and the female is 5. Their ages are ranged between 20-21 years old.

3.4 Instrument

The present study used the following instrument:-

1 A questionnaire with an agree and disagree options to provide and support this research with the students opinions about the challenges that faced them during the test that was given to them and what they want through in general.

3.5 Data collection procedure

As mentioned in the previous section, first of all the researcher adapted and presented a task for the students which contained a number of cultural expressions to be translated to Arabic to test the students understanding and quality in translating cultural expressions. After that the task was followed by a questionnaire which contained questions to occupy the students opinions on the challenges that they faced while they were translating the cultural expressions. After that the research started analyzing by using descriptive statistics. The analysis, findings and discussion are to be presented in the next chapter.
Chapter Four

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will cover the details of the way the data was analyzed, and answer the questions of the study which aimed at investigating the pragmatic areas students face when they subtitle cultural elements from English to Arabic.

4.2 Data Analysis

4.2.1 The Data Analysis of the subtitling Test

The data was analyzed statistically to test where the actual problem lies when it comes to subtitling cultural elements from E to A As the study previously mentioned that Data was collected using several expressions to translated which were chosen from different movies and series that were personally seen by the researcher, After collecting the answer, The grades of the test were evaluated using a percentage. The following table shows an overall students grades and how they were recorded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no</th>
<th>Correct Answer</th>
<th>Acceptable Answer</th>
<th>Wrong Answer</th>
<th>NO Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Freq</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Item one

"I don’t hang around with Dwayne, **because he tried to fuck my life up**"

(kevin hart, laugh at my pain)

The model subtitle suggested by the experts was:

"لأنه حاول تدمير حياتي"

The table of results shows that only 2 participants, 16% provided correct and a direct subtitle to item 1, and were able to understand the pragmatic meaning of the expression.

As in these example:

"لأنه حاول تدمير حياتي"

Only 6 participants, 50% provided an acceptable answer and were able to understand the expression and it could be understandable to the reader, as these examples:

"لأنه حاول افساد حياتي"

"لأنه حاول ان يدمر حياتي"

"لأنه حاول تخريب حياتي"

The result table also shows that only 4 participants, 33% provided the wrong subtitle by phrasing the following:

"لأنه حاول اللعب بحياتي"

"لأنه حاول ان يمنحني حياة أفضل"

2. Item Two

"The 'G' may be silent, **but it costs three 'G's to get there**, I'll have to talk to my father"

(scent of a women, Jimmy)

The original subtitling is:

"ولكنها ستكلف ثلاثة آلاف دولار للوصول هناك"

The table shows that none of the participants, 0% managed to provide the correct and acceptable meaning of expression.
Whereas 4 of the participants, 33% provided the wrong subtitling to the expression due to the lack of awareness of the culture as the following example:

"قد تكون الجي هادي لكنها ستكلف ثلاثة جيات لتصل هناك"

"قد يكون الجي صامت"

"ستكلف 3 جيات للوصول هناك"

The remaining 7 participants, 58% left the spaces empty and were not able to render the meaning.

3. Item Three

"How short are you"?

(Harry, scent of women)

The original subtitle is:

"كم ينقصك من المال"؟

Only 2 participants, 16% provided the correct and direct cultural render of the expression above as in the following example

"كم ينقصك من المال"؟

"كم ناقصك من المال"؟

And none of the participants 0% provided an acceptable answer.

However 10 of the participants, 83% provided the wrong answer to the expression because most of them rendered the meaning literally using the words for words technique as in the following:

"كم أنت قصير"

"كم يبلغ قصرك"؟

"أنت قصير جداً"

4. Item Four

"ok guys they've let the cat out of the bag, but it is no use to cry over spilt milk, let's get our revenge.

(The wolf of wall street, Leonardo Di Caprio)

The original subtitle is:

"لقد كشف السر ولكن لا فائدة من التحسر"
The table shows that none of the participants managed to provide a correct and acceptable meaning, in this case they were also led to translate the expression literally and using the word for word technique.

And 7 participants, 58% were victims to this sort of technique and provided the wrong answer as the following example:

"لقد سمحوا بخروج القط من الحقيبة، ولكن ما فائدة البكاء على الحليب المسكوب"
"لا فائد من البكاء على اللبن المسكوب"
"لقد اخرجوا القط من الحقيبة ولا مجال للرجوع"

And 4 participants, 33% didn't try to answer the expression perhaps due to the hidden meaning of the expression.

4.2.3 Results of questionnaire

In order to take the participants overall opinions about the subtitling test, a questionnaire needed to be conducted to know their feeling and thought about translating the cultural elements, The results were listed statistically and each question was discussed separately.

4.2.4 Findings of the Questionnaire

Table (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subtitling British expressions is far more difficult than American expressions?</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above is a comparison between which is more difficult British or American expressions and 58% of the participants agreed with the British expressions whereas the remaining 42% disagree with them and think that the American expressions are more difficult.
Table (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When it comes to subtitling proverbs and idioms it is best to find an equivalent in the TL?</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The question shows that half of the participant, 50% agree with finding a suitable equivalent when it comes to subtitling idioms and proverbs, and the remaining disagree with them.

Table (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The American cultural is easy to understand and guess because it's similar to the Arabic culture?</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows a big balance 50/50 between agreeing and disagreeing on whether the American culture is similar to the Arabic culture or not.

Table (4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural differences is the main challenges that encounters translators in the process of translation?</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question was asked to identify the main barrier the faces translation students in the process of subtitling and they all agree 100% on the cultural differences.
4.3 Discussion

The findings of the subtitling test have been compared to a study done previously by Mr. Saleh Majed AL Abwaini in the Middle East University in Amman Jordan, and the finding were the following:

_ Most of participants answers of both studies were translated literally.
_ All the participants have lack of knowledge of the English cultural in general due to the lack of practice of the translation procedure.
_ Lack of experience in the field of translation in general and especially the field of subtitling.
_ Lack of creativity in translating cultural expressions.
_ Most of the participants have a lack of precision.
_ Using machine translation wasn't a solution to all participants to overcome the challenge of subtitling cultural elements in both studies

The findings also indicated lack of source and target language cultural knowledge among the participants that resulted in misunderstanding several item of the translation test, the lack of cultural awareness is a major reason behind these differences.

The findings also indicated that it is the translator's responsibility to be aware and committed to present the type of required good translation that is worthy of reading and viewing either in books or movie subtitle, and that he/she must be honest and faithful to their work and put some effort into it.

The findings also revealed that the problems that the translators encountered in their subtitling of culturally-bound expressions indicated that most of the participants found it difficult to render the cultural Arabic equivalent of cultural expressions used in the translation test.

In addition the findings related to the questionnaire revealed that, the majority agree with having a strong background of both languages in order for them to decrease the challenge that faces them when it comes to subtitling any cultural expression. They also show that the major differences between both languages and both cultures effect their understanding the expressions.
Most of participants agree with being creative to grab the attention of whoever is watching, and not only the attention but also provide a proper translation of the expression. There was also a balance of agreement and a disagreement on the American culture sharing similarities with the Arabic culture.

The findings also revealed that most of the participants agreed with the difficulty of translating swear words due to having multiple meanings. And the majority also agreed with the recommendation to the English department of paying more attention to the subtitling subject because it requires experience, in addition to experience the majority agree with having certain strategies to be followed.
Chapter five

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The data obtained by means of the subtitling test and the questionnaire indicated that translators encountered many problems while translating the cultural elements in general, such as rendering the cultural Arabic equivalent, and the participants were unfamiliar with the scope of translation studies and it using the appropriate translation techniques in subtitling. The literal translation and the cultural influence resulted in mistranslating and poor performance by the participants in the translation test.

5.2 Recommendation

This study addressed the problems that translators face when they subtitle cultural elements of pragmatics translation from E to A, and the reasons behind them in addition to suggestions on how to overcome them, in light of the results the following are recommendation:

- It would be better if translators were given the opportunity to be in touch with the SL culture.

- Teachers of translation could make use of technology and update their teaching aids to make subtitling learning interesting and enjoyed.

- Translating workshops ought to be provided for translation teachers and students

- Translation methods and techniques to be taught as the main part of any subtitling training.

5.3 Limitations of the study

Any research is open to criticism and has limitations, this research is no exception. The main limitations can be summarized as follows:

First of all this research had some electricity and internet problems, and not forgetting the recent events that happened in the city of sebha, which lead to the delay of the research. It was also hard to judge whether the participant answers were genuine and honest. Therefore, there could be some bias in the analysis and presentation of the data In addition to the lack of enough research in the Arab world on this topic.
References


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Cultural Aspects, Vol. 12, No. 1


Rohner (1984), culture is "a system of symbolic meanings that shape one's way of thinking."

Dear student,

Thanks for taking the time to consider my subtitling test. If anytime you do not wish to answer a question please leave it blank and move on to the next one. Your answer will do me a great favor to try and overcome this subtitling issue.

You have been requested to translate these underlined expressions from English to Arabic:

1/ "I don’t hang around with Dwayne anymore, because he tried to fuck my life up".  
*(Kevin Hart, laugh at my pain)*

2/ "The 'G' may be silent, but it costs three G's to get there, I’ll have to talk to my father" *(Scent of a women, Jimmy)*

3/ "How short are you"? *(Harry, Scent of a women)*

4/ "Ok guys they’ve let the cat out of the bag, but it is use to cry over spilt milk, let’s get our revenge." *(The wolf of wall street, Leonardo Di Caprio)*
Questionnaire

1/ Subtitling British expressions is far more difficult than American expressions
   • Agree
   • Disagree

2/ When it comes to subtitling proverbs and idioms it is best to find an equivalent in the TL (Target language)
   • Agree
   • Disagree

3/ The American culture is easy to understand and guess because it is similar to the Arabic culture.
   • Agree
   • Disagree

4/ Cultural difference are the main challenges that encounters translator the process of subtitling
   • Agree
   • Disagree