

## DUBBING OR SUBTITLING ENGLISH ANIMATED FILMS INTO ARABIC

### THE CASE OF THE ADVENTURE ANIMATED FILM *HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON: THE HIDDEN WORLD*

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#### **Abstract**

This study investigates certain stylistic, linguistic, technical and cultural constraints that translators usually encounter in the subtitling and dubbing of English films into the Arabic language. It highlights the solutions that they used in tackling these constraints by comparing the subtitled and dubbed version of the third instalment of the popular English adventure animated film *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*. In light of the basic technical constraints and the specific stylistic, linguistic and cultural constraints rooted in translation for audiences whose mother-tongue is Arabic, it is suggested that particular elements of translation theory can be beneficial in overcoming these identified constraints. Furthermore, the analysis of 16 scenes chosen from the English film sheds light on the similarities and differences in the translation methods and strategies adopted by the translators in the subtitled and dubbed versions. The results indicate that the subtitler only resorts to 8 techniques while the dubber relies on nine techniques. The findings also show that Adaptation and Deletion are the most frequent in subtitling, while Formal Equivalence and Expansion are the least applied. On the contrary, Deletion and Economy are the most common in dubbing, whereas Formal Equivalence, Literal Translation and Dynamic Equivalence are the least frequent.

**Keywords:** Audiovisual translation, animated film, Modern Standard Arabic, discourse analysis, cultural aspects

## INTRODUCTION

The ever-growing importance of animated films is indubitably seen in children's entertainment culture; hence their translation has become more significant to translators who thrive to deliver the most adequate outcome. While many studies have covered the rendering of English film into different foreign languages, not many have yet brought insight to the translation of English animated films into the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Therefore, the English adventure animated film *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World* was chosen in its MSA subtitled and dubbed versions, by adopting the critical discourse analysis methodology which is deemed adequate for highlighting the translator's role regarding the stylistic, linguistic, technical and cultural aspects of the original content and the different methods and strategies adopted by the subtitler and the dubber when rendering the film into MSA. And while most foreign animated films in the Arab world, especially in Lebanon, are either only subtitled or dubbed into Arabic, translated product may differ from the source language culture, image and aesthetics when comparing the two versions. For that reason, it is crucial to find out which of these two audiovisual translation (AVT) modes serves the film better, subtitling or dubbing, even though various AVT modes appeared over the years?

## AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION MODES

Audiovisual translation (AVT) has existed as a practice since early cinema, but studies encompassing this subject has taken longer to be recognized as an academic field. Following the first specialized 1960 issue of *Babel* partially dedicated to this specific field and the 2004 issue of *META* featuring a variety of AVT-dedicated articles, it can therefore be argued that AVT has undoubtedly earned the right to establish an independent and well-founded field of studies, capable of matching the standing of any other specialization in translation and interpreting (Gambier, 2013, p.45). And although the term AVT is widely recognized today, translation scholars did not initially agree on a unified nomenclature ("film translation", "cinema translation", "language transfer", "screen translation", "translation for the media" and "multimedia translation"), in part due to technological progress and expansion in the audiovisual field and research related to AVT (Gambier, 2013, p.46).

Furthermore, research in this field has gained remarkable importance in the past 10 years with the arrival of digitalization that brought about a new digital culture where, in a more interactive use of the web, the previously passive audience member takes part not only in creating audiovisual content and creatively developing new ideas, but in their translation as well (Chaume, 2018, p.47). On that note, the various modes of audiovisual translation have long been discussed due to the continuous change in the field of technology and media, which may differ from one society or period to another. Therefore, it is normal for the known AVT modes to vary in line with the technical means

used to carry out the linguistic transfer of audiovisual content from one language to another (Chaume, 2006, p.31).

For instance, Georg-Michael Luyken (1991) and Maria Jose Chaves Garcia (2000) highlighted 6 main AVT modes: dubbing, subtitling, voice-over, simultaneous interpreting, narration and free commentary. However, Rosa Maria Agost Canos (1999) re-added another mode, called multimedia translation, and dropped the narration perhaps because it is somewhat similar to voice-over. In fact, it is believed to be an extended voice-over (Luyken *et al.*, 1991, p.80). While these two AVT modes are similar in terms of the original dialogues being prepared, translated and condensed ahead of time, and the translation being recorded over the original content that is either silent or toned down, narration, however, is significantly more condensed and does not have to offer an entirely faithful rendition of the original content (Díaz-Cintas, 2001, p.40). With the boom and proliferation of audiovisual content, translation researchers continued to discover new modes such as Zoe De Linde and Neil Kay (1999) and Jorge Díaz-Cintas (2001), who in turn suggested 10 AVT modes: dubbing, subtitling, live subtitling, surtitling, voice over, consecutive interpretation, simultaneous interpretation<sup>1</sup>, narration, free commentary and multilingual broadcasting<sup>2</sup>. Three years later, Yves Gambier (2004) proposed in his research 12 modes, some of which differed from what was suggested by Díaz-Cintas, De Linde and Kay by adding half-dubbing to voice over, along with 4 new modes: sight translation<sup>3</sup>, scenario translation<sup>4</sup>, audio-description and multilingual production<sup>5</sup>, while dispensing with narration and multilingual broadcasting. As for Frederic Chaume (2013), he relied as well on 12 modes, however, due to societies' ever-evolving needs in the audiovisual field which, in its turn, has also witnessed major technological advances over the years, he dropped 3 AVT modes; sight translation, scenario translation and multilingual production, and added 4 new ones, ultimately arriving at; dubbing, subtitling,

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<sup>1</sup> When translating direct speeches and interviews during film screenings at film festivals, in case the film cannot be titled due to the delay in receiving it (Angelone, Ehrensberger-Dow & Massey, 2019, p.211).

<sup>2</sup> Common subtitling or dubbing procedure broadcasted by Teletext or DVD (Bartolomé & Cabrera, 2005, p.92).

<sup>3</sup> Sight translation "is done on the spot from a script or subtitles already prepared in a second language" (Bartolomé & Cabrera, 2005, p.97).

<sup>4</sup> Translating the dialogues of audiovisual productions, such as plays and films, in order to secure funding for the implementation of the work in the case of co-production (Gambier, 2004, p.2).

<sup>5</sup> Multilingual production can be understood in two ways: It is a double version where each actor plays in his language and then the whole thing is dubbed and post-synchronized in a single language. But it is also the remakes of films with the aim of conquering new markets, which requires adaptation and recontextualization (Gambier, 2004, p.4).

surtitling<sup>6</sup>, respeaking<sup>7</sup>, voice over<sup>8</sup>, simultaneous interpreting<sup>9</sup>, narration<sup>10</sup>, free commentary<sup>11</sup>, audio-description<sup>12</sup>, subtitling for the deaf and hard hearing<sup>13</sup>, fansubbing<sup>14</sup> and fandubbing<sup>15</sup>.

As far as screen translation is concerned, most of the modes listed above can be studied under 2 main categories: subtitling and revoicing, the former, also known as titling and timed text, involves adding written information that corresponds to the translation or transcription of the original content. Whereas the latter, involves additions to and/or replacement of the original voice track (Bolaños-García-Escribano & Díaz-Cintas, 2019). However, their usage differs among western and eastern countries depending on the translated content, the target viewer, the country's ideology and financial situation.

## FROM WEST TO EAST: SUBTITLING AND/OR DUBBING?

Some Western countries, especially major European countries such as France, Germany, Austria, Italy and Spain, adopted dubbing after this AVT mode imposed itself as the best way to translate films imported from abroad. These countries were distinguished by their desire to preserve their identity, culture and mother tongue by controlling the ideas conveyed indirectly by foreign films, as well as the emergence of cultural policies, during the thirties, that worked on strengthening nationalism and unifying the language of some European countries, especially those that had national systems such as

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<sup>6</sup> The display of subtitles, on the wall of the stage, opera and theaters, or passed on a small screen behind the seats so that the viewer in the back can easily read it (Díaz-Cintas, 2019, p.5).

<sup>7</sup> Also known as live subtitling where the interpreter hears the spoken voice or dialogue and re-reads them using his or her own words by summarizing the original content in a way that guarantees fitting the re-translation into the available caption space shown at the bottom of the screen during a live broadcast (Chaume, 2013, p.115).

<sup>8</sup> Preserving the original speaker's voice and broadcasting the translated audio while ensuring synchronization with the image (Tveit, 2005, p.92).

<sup>9</sup> Oral translation of audible speech in the source language into spoken speech in the target language (Díaz-Cintas, 2019, p.5).

<sup>10</sup> It often refers to the summary of the original content, rather than a more or less literal translation (Chaume, 2013, p.110).

<sup>11</sup> The commentator explains what he is seeing by providing the audience with more accurate details and adding information that is not already there and dropping others in order to facilitate the understanding process for young people in particular (Gambier, 2004, p.1-11).

<sup>12</sup> The translator recounts the events depicted, describing what he sees as streets, buildings, signs, the characters' clothes, their locations, facial expressions, and the weather (Bartolomé & Cabrera, 2005, p.266).

<sup>13</sup> It is an intralingual translation where the characters' dialogues are reproduced so that the captions appear on screen at the same instant as they are uttered (Chaume, 2013, p.115).

<sup>14</sup> They are home-made subtitles for films, animations and TV series that have not yet been released in the target language region (Chaume, 2013, p.114).

<sup>15</sup> They are home-made dubbings of film trailers, animation and TV series that have not yet been released in the target language region (Chaume, 2013, p.111).

Germany and Spain (Almeida & Costa, 2014, p.1236; Brown, 1987, p.74; Ferraretto, 2020, p.1; De Olano, 2018, p.1). While Britain relies heavily on subtitling its foreign programs, films and series directed at children were traditionally dubbed (Brown, 1987, p.74). It is noteworthy to point out that with the advent of digital broadcast and streaming platforms, most AVT modes were made available for the mass of audiovisual content in most markets (Campos & Azevedo, 2020, p.225). Furthermore, many have been calling out broadcasters and streamers to automatically activate the "Turn on the Subtitles" program in an attempt to promote subtitling as an enhancement tool for children's literacy skills, even if the influence of traditional divisions in AVT modes by market can still be felt (Black, 2022, p.74).

As for European countries with limited budgets, such as Croatia, Finland, Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Estonia, Iceland, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Sweden, they contented themselves with subtitling most films and programs, with the exception of those directed at children, due to their inability to afford the relatively high dubbing expenses (Media Consulting Group, 2011, p.8). As for Canada, dubbing was the best option to keep Canadian French as the official language (Lacasse *et al.*, 2013, p.22-23).

With regard to Arab countries, the high production costs of local films in Morocco and Syria prompted the dubbing of foreign films and programs (Sky News Arabia, 2012, p.1; Lakhdar, 2019, p.1). The success of the dubbing process in Egypt is often credited to the wit of the Egyptian dialect, which is loved by both young and adult viewers (Abed Al-Hady, 2018, p.1). As for Jordan, it was the only country that relied on the subtitling of animated films until the appearance of the Jordanian producer Bassam Hijawi, who purchased the rights to publish series and films, allowing for the opportunity to be dubbed (Hussein, 2019, p.1). Both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia adopted subtitling in their transmission of American programs as well as dubbing several Indian productions due to the rich history between Kuwait and India; Saudi Arabia was influenced by the abundance of Turkish programs dubbed into the Syrian dialect and the people's openness to Indian culture (Al-Rashidi, 2010, p.1). In Lebanon, some animated films and the majority of American films and series were subtitled while Mexican and Korean series were MSA-dubbed and Turkish programs were Syrian-dubbed mainly due to the audience's admiration for the storylines that usually revolve around love and betrayal or the depiction of some other social, cultural and political concepts that arouse their interest (Hawi, 2015, p.1; Turk Press, 2018, p.1; Al-Dirani, 2018, p.1).

With several western and eastern countries leaning towards rendering foreign films and TV programs, that have managed to conquer the world market, into their native language, most of them have essentially relied on two AVT modes: subtitling and dubbing (Bagheri & Nemati, 2014, p.86).

## SUBTITLING OR DUBBING: WHICH IS “BETTER”?

Before addressing the issue of subtitling or dubbing, it is essential to briefly introduce these two AVT modes. Subtitling in films means a shift from the oral to the written language that is shown alongside the visual material. It usually consists of translating the original lines heard in the soundtrack into written ones in the target language, appearing in one or two rows at the bottom of the screen, roughly at the same exact time the source content is heard on the soundtrack (Karamitroglou, 2000, p.5). It is worth mentioning that according to Luyken, subtitling consists of 9 different steps<sup>16</sup> although only 5 of them relate directly to the subtitler – verification<sup>17</sup>, working copy<sup>18</sup>, spotting<sup>19</sup>, translation/adaptation/subtitle, composition<sup>20</sup> and insertion<sup>21</sup>. Also, when resorting to subtitling, the translation must take subtitling-related technical conditions into account such as (1) maximum number of lines, (2) number of characters per line, (3) font type, (4) font color, (5) position of subtitles on the screen, (6) duration of subtitles, (7) synchronization (8) delay function between subtitles, (9) centered and left aligned subtitles (Díaz-Cintas & Ramael, 2006, p.82-94).

As for dubbing, it is defined as the replacement of the original soundtrack set in the source language with a new one in the target language (Díaz-Cintas, 2009, p.4-5). The dubbing process includes several steps that differ according to the companies that perform this process. The reason for this difference is mostly due to the financial capabilities of dubbing countries. The dubbing process is not solely limited to translating the content of the film from its original language to the intended language, but also expands to include steps that combine translation and technology. According to Luyken (1991, p.71), the professionalism of dubbing requires the assistance of three specialized people, each assigned with their own specific task. The first defines the content of the film, starting with the characters' dialogue, to all the sounds included in this cinematic production, such as music and noises. That person also works on dividing the clips by defining the beginning and end of each clip, as well as identifying the most important characters by specifying

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<sup>16</sup> (1) registration, (2) verification, (3) production of timecoded working copy, (4) spotting, (5) adaptation/translation/subtitle composition, (6) insertion, (7) review correction, (8) approval, and finally (9) transmission (Luyken *et al.*, 1991, p.49).

<sup>17</sup> The subtitler looks at the film's master tape and ensures that the presented dialog list matches that of the transcript that has been provided (Luyken *et al.*, 1991, p.50).

<sup>18</sup> The subtitler makes a copy of the film's master tape that offers a precise time code (Luyken *et al.*, 1991, p.50).

<sup>19</sup> The subtitler reviews the film's dialogue in a careful manner, and marks where the captions should appear and disappear (Luyken *et al.*, 1991, p.51).

<sup>20</sup> This step consists of three interlacing; "Adaptation which is the transposition from spoken to written language; Translation which is the conversion from one language to another; Subtitle Composition which is the creation of condensed messages from extended messages" (Luyken *et al.*, 1991, p.54).

<sup>21</sup> The subtitles are inserted into the program, in a way that respect the captions appearing and disappearing at the adequate time (Luyken *et al.*, 1991, p.57).

the number of lines of dialogue for each of them. The second translates the written content literally. The third, i.e., the adaptor, reformulates the translated content to match the visual content, especially the lip movement of the film characters. However, being that dubbing processes are not solely complex but variable as well depending on various factors, including but not limited to national traditions and postproduction market preference, Le Nouvel (2007, p.12-13), detailed this process by summarized it in 11 steps, but only 6 of them are in direct relation to the dubber: (1) receiving the film<sup>22</sup>, (2) projection<sup>23</sup>, (3) detection<sup>24</sup>, (4) translation<sup>25</sup>, (5) calligraphy<sup>26</sup> and (6) artistic direction<sup>27</sup>.

When choosing between the two most prominent AVT modes in screen translation, one should not only take into consideration the content being translated into another language, but the intended public as well. Even if it was somehow clear that a specific audience seems to opt for one mode over the other, one must always explore deeper and more detailed research before reaching a final decision.

Academic studies that investigate subtitling versus dubbing regarding which AVT mode is better received when transferring films into various languages are abundant in terms of the number of published articles. And while some researchers agree that both AVT modes are equally well-perceived and appreciated by audiences, others gravitate towards favoring one mode over the other for various reasons. Nonetheless, in the present age, it is impracticable to conduct any piece of research in the AVT field without

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<sup>22</sup> The audiovisual work is delivered in its original version so it can be dubbed from the source language to the target language. It is usually accompanied by the original dialogue, as well as the international version (Le Nouvel, 2007, p.12-13).

<sup>23</sup> The audiovisual content is presented in its original version in front of a team consisting of the translator, proofreader, editor, and sound engineer, in order to get acquainted with the film in terms of its genre, language, purpose and target audience (Le Nouvel, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> This step precedes the translation. It consists of watching the entire film and stopping at each scene separately in order to place symbols or signs on the transparent tape in order to facilitate the translator's work. These signs include:

- Recording the names of the film characters with their dialogue.
- Determine the beginning and end of each scene with the number of units and the type of shot.
- Determine the movement of the lips of the representatives (Le Nouvel, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> The translator transfers the dialogue from the source language to the target language, and it is often an initial and highly literal translation (Le Nouvel, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> It consists of writing the translated dialogue and the names of the characters on a transparent tape. This step facilitates the work of the voice actors during the recording, by reading their dialogue displayed on the tape at the bottom of the screen and watching the film at the same time. This step is accomplished with the help of a dubber or a transcriptionist (Le Nouvel, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> A number of actors or amateurs who have a good voice come forward to audition, and the Director artist chooses the right person according to several factors such as the tone of voice compared to the original actor, the voice quality, and the ability to perform the role. Sometimes the dubber's point of view is used when completing this step (Le Nouvel, 2007).

bearing in mind all various types of constraints<sup>28</sup> and translation methods and strategies along with their frequency and adequacy that ensue the rendering process that ultimately affect the quality of subtitling and dubbing (Chaume, 2018, p.44).

In an attempt to investigate the impact of the translators' choices regarding the cultural references and the interpersonal relationships among the characters, Ramière (2004) conducted a detailed analysis comparing the French-subtitling and dubbing of the original dramatic English film *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The findings show that tackling cultural transfers seems to have been mainly a problem for the dubber, who chose – probably because dubbing, by its nature, already tends to erase the foreign aspect of the original setting – to naturalize cultural references more than the subtitler. As for the presentation of the characters, it is difficult to say whether one of the AVT modes has more divergent effects than the other. Compared to the complexities of the characters in the original version, certain linguistic choices in the dubbed version, in particular the language and tone register shifts, seem to have leveled the characters, making them more confident and less fragile or ruder and more aggressive. However, not all of these changes can be explained by the argument of synchronization. On the other hand, subtitling does not seem to have the same impact when presenting the characters. The fact that elements denoting interpersonal relationships, such as terms of affection, polite phrases and reluctance markers, are often the first to be removed in captions, impacts how they are perceived by the viewer. In short, while the subtitling results mainly in losses, the dubbing mostly causes changes that are sometimes deemed radical. According to these results, the subtitled version ultimately appears closer to the original, possibly because the relatively slow pace of the dialogue and the fact that there is little action that could distract the viewer's attention allows the reader, most of the time, to easily follow the captions. Overall, the subtitled version seems better suited to this type of films, where issues of language/culture consistency, language register, character complexity and interpersonal relationships are crucial to the meaning of the story.

In another study conducted by Privrelová (2017), it was made clear that the strategies used – namely Domestication, Foreignization, Official Equivalent and Omission – in translating wordplay in the American sitcom *2 Broke Girls* into Czech are not as different when comparing the subtitling with the dubbing. Nevertheless, the dubbing ensures more changes regarding the image, when attempting to preserve puns. This might be due to the absence of the source content – since dubbing eliminates the original voices of the characters – hence the modifications made to the original script are not made clear to the target viewer, because s/he is not able to compare the original with the

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<sup>28</sup> Currently understood as “control variables” in all descriptive AVT research (Chaume, 2018, p.44).



translation. The analysis also shows that both AVT modes can compensate for lost puns and are able to maintain the humorous aspect since only 10 per cent of it was lost in translation. And while explanatory comments in the subtitled version do not hinder some cultural references from being domesticated, they might aid the viewer in a deeper comprehension of target culture and a better understanding of the jokes. Furthermore, while the prosodic features of speech, i.e., accents, are neglected in the subtitled version, the dubbed version manages to preserve them selectively. That being said, both AVT modes are able to adequately tackle the non-standard usage of grammar and slang. The findings of this study also indicate that the translators in both the subtitled and dubbed versions are successful at overcoming the obstacles and difficulties of the complex language used while offering many creative solutions, rendering the translation of the sitcom more than satisfactory.

As for the translation of idioms, Agung (2022) carried out a descriptive qualitative research set out to examine the translation strategies used in the English television series *WandaVision*, in an attempt to discover whether the Indonesian subtitling and dubbing of idiomatic expressions are source language-oriented or target language-oriented. By relying on Pedersen's taxonomy for rendering extralinguistic cultural references in subtitling, the analyzed data show that the subtitling strategies comprise of Generalization, Direct Translation, Substitution and the combination of Omission and Substitution. Also, these subtitling strategies are related to spatial and temporal constraints. On the other hand, Generalization, Direct Translation, Substitution and the combination of Specification and Substitution are applied in dubbing. These dubbing strategies are used following the assumption that the characteristics of spoken language should be featured in the dubbed version. The results also indicate, based on the translation strategies, that both the subtitling and the dubbing are target language-oriented.

While in regard to lyric translation into Indonesian, Supardi and Putri (2018) aimed to find out the different subtitling and dubbing techniques applied in the original English soundtrack *Frozen: Let it Go* based on the theories proposed by Molina and Albir. The qualitatively analyzed data conducted through reading source language and target language, selecting and comparing the translation techniques employed in the rendering process show that the subtitler mainly relies on 11 techniques; Addition, Borrowing, Calque, Compensation, Established Equivalence, Linguistic Amplification, Literal Translation, Modulation, Particularization, Reduction, and Transposition. As for the dubber, he only resorts to 9 techniques; Compensation, Established Equivalence, Linguistic Compression, Literal Translation, Modulation, Particularization, Reduction, Transposition, and Deletion. The results also indicate that Literal Translation is the most frequent in subtitling lyrics while Modulation and Reduction are the most common in dubbing.

Pivoting from soundtrack translation to purely rendering characters' dialogues, Metin Tekin (2019) conducted a contrastive analysis of all Turkish subtitles and dubbings of the English film *Frozen*, with the exception of song lyrics, within the framework of Bell's equivalent theory<sup>29</sup> and by relying on specific strategies namely, Exact Translation, Close Translation, Adaptation, Replacement, Addition and Deletion<sup>30</sup>. The statistical findings of the study show that there are no notable differences in terms of the frequencies of the strategies in both versions of the film. In fact, Exact Translation is the most common translation strategy in the subtitled and dubbed versions, indicating that meaning equivalent is in high recurrence. However, Replacement is the least used in subtitling and Deletion is the least applied in dubbing. Furthermore, unlike the subtitled version, the dubbed version, relies on Addition. These findings also suggest that meaning equivalent is achievable with the usage of simple sentence structure and vocabulary.

While the aforementioned literature review presents an overview of some of what has been published regarding the subtitling and dubbing of English audiovisual contents into French, Czech, Indonesian and Turkish, Gamal (2015, p.1) argues that the AVT field has presented but a few studies in relation to the impact of the translator's choices when rendering an English film into Arabic, despite subtitling and dubbing's long history in the Arab World.

## METHODOLOGY

The English and Arabic-subtitled film scripts were obtained by the researcher through an online website called Scripts on Screen<sup>31</sup> that provide various online TV series and film scripts. As for the dubbed version, it was written down by the researcher while watching the Arabic-dubbed film. After obtaining all 3 scripts, an analysis of 16 scenes – chosen from the beginning, middle and end of the English adventure animated film *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World* due to the diversity from the translation viewpoint – was conducted, in an attempt to find out the similarities and differences in the translation methods and strategies<sup>32</sup> used by the subtitlers and dubbbers when rendering the film from English into Arabic.

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<sup>29</sup> Equivalent. i.e., fully or partly equivalent and non-equivalent i.e., different meaning or no meaning (Metin Tekin, 2019, p.347).

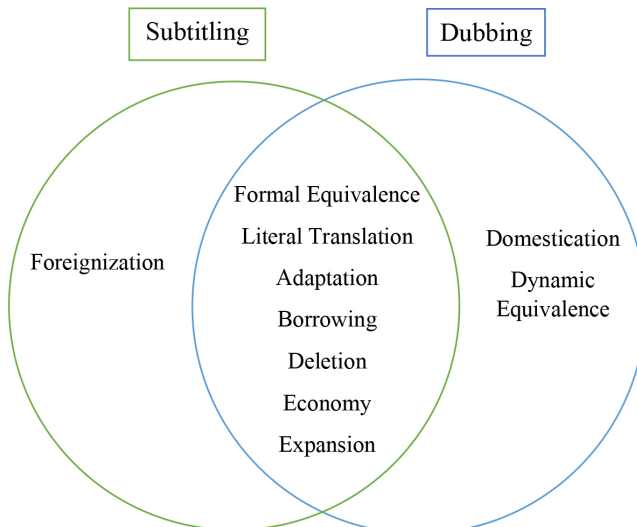
<sup>30</sup> "While the strategy of 'exact translation' is thought as fully equivalent and the strategy of 'close translation' and 'adaptation' is considered partly equivalent in this study, the strategy of 'replacement' is considered as different meaning and the strategies of 'addition' and 'deletion' are thought as no meaning" (Metin Tekin, 2019, p.347).

<sup>31</sup> Access through this link: <https://scripts-onscreen.com/movie/how-to-train-your-dragon-the-hidden-world-script-links/>

<sup>32</sup> It is necessary to point out the disparity between strategy and method when translating audiovisual contents. While the strategy applies to the larger context i.e., the entire film scenario, the method is limited to a smaller context where it deals with parts of this scenario (Abou Fadel et al., 2002, p.138).

Due to certain stylistic, linguistic, technical and cultural constraints that translators often encounter in AVT, the analysis of the 2 versions of the film sheds light on Venuti's (1995) Domestication and Foreignization strategies, where the former eliminates all foreign identity of the source content and adapts it to the target audience's values, while the latter underlines the foreign characteristics of the source text. In addition to Nida's (1964) Formal Equivalence method where its goal lies in staying as close to the original text as possible, and Dynamic Equivalence method that strives to produce similar response between the source audience and the target audience by trying to achieve a translation that is deemed to be, more or less, a natural equivalent to the original content. Also, Tomaszkiwicz's (1993) Adaptation method that seeks to alter the cultural reference of the source text due to socio-cultural differences between the source language and the target language and Borrowing method used to render some source culture-related words using the target language's alphabet. Not to mention Gottlieb's (1992) Deletion method that eliminates nonessential wordings without effecting the meaning of the original text and Expansion method that elucidate the meaning of unclear sentences, causing the translation to be longer than the original. As well as Literal Translation method that grammatically and idiomatically renders a text from one language to another one word at a time (Abou Fadel *et al.*, 2002, p.51) and Economy method which works to re-express the content of the target text using fewer words than those used in the source text (Abou Fadel *et al.*, 2002, p.68).

## Findings



Diagram#1: Similarities and Differences Between the Translation Methods and Strategies Used in Subtitling and Dubbing

It is noted through Diagram#1 the similarities and differences between the methods and strategies that the researcher relied on when comparing the subtitled and dubbed versions. Among the similarities, we found that both the subtitler and dubber resorted to the same 7 methods; 2 of which were to reach same goal, another 2 were applied for various reasons, homogeneous at times, while the remaining 3 were used for completely different purposes.

The first 2 methods included Formal Equivalence adopted to introduce new expressions pertaining to the source culture using MSA. For example, in the subtitled version, the translator relied on this method when translating the idiomatic expression “I had him right where I wanted him” (OS)<sup>33</sup> with “كان حيث أردته تمامًا” (*Kāna ḥaysu aradtuhu tamāman*) (ASS)<sup>34</sup>, introducing a new expression into the target language. It is well known that the meaning of the idiomatic expression cannot be understood from the meanings of the words that form it, because the meaning of the words combined is different from those individually. This English expression is usually used to describe a person’s happiness in the situation in which another person is present because it gives him power over that individual or helps him get what he wants from him. We surmise that this method was unsuccessful in conveying the meaning of the source message, and it would have been better if the subtitler resorted to Adaptation and used familiar phrases in MSA such as “كنتُ سأتغلب عليه” (*kuntu sa-ataghallabu ‘alayhi*), which literally means in English *I was going to beat him*. The same applies to the dubber who translated the caption “That ship has sailed” (OS) with “السفينة أبحرت بالفعل” (*Al-safinah abḥarat bi-al-fi’il*) (ADS)<sup>35</sup>, by introducing a new expression into MSA that did not succeed in conveying the idea of a missed opportunity. He should have resorted to Adaptation as well and translated it with “لقد فوّت الفرصة” (*Laqad fawwata al-fursah*), which literally means in English *You missed your chance*.

The subtitler and dubber also depended on Literal Translation in captions that did not include any cultural references. For example, the subtitler translated the caption “Good news” (OS) with “خبر سار” (*Khabarun sārūn*) (ASS) while the dubber translated the caption “You might” (OS) with “ربما أنت” (*Rubbamā anta*) (ADS). However, while the translation was sound in the subtitled version, the dubbed version did not provide a clear meaning.

They also relied on two other methods to tackle the same issues at times while relying on them as well when dealing with different constraints. Starting with Adaptation, this method was used in order to respect the culture of the target audience, especially since the film is oriented towards children. For example,

<sup>33</sup> OS: refers to the original script of the English film *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*.

<sup>34</sup> ASS: refers to the Arabic-subtitled script of the English film *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*.

<sup>35</sup> ADS: refers to the Arabic-dubbed script of the English film *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*.

the term "Devil" (OS) was subtitled into "شَرِير" (*Shirryr*) (ASS), which literally means *Evil* in English and was dubbed into "شبح" (*Shabah*) (ADS), which literally means *Ghost* in English, because the use of the Arabic equivalent for that term, i.e., "الشيطان" (*Al-Shaytān*), which literally means *The Devil* or *Satan* in English, is inappropriate in conservative and religious Arab societies. Also, this film is aimed at sensitive children, who are susceptible to being easily influenced. Therefore, it is not desirable to show them what they might think is the embodiment of The Devil in a cartoon image. It is noteworthy that the adaptation method in the dubbed version was not successful from our point of view, because the word "شبح" (*Shabah*) means the soul of a dead person embodied in a semi-transparent form that appears to the living at times, but cannot be engulfed in flames. Consequently, this translation did not succeed in conveying the intended meaning from a linguistic and semantic point of view. As for the word "شَرِير" (*Shirryr*) mentioned in the subtitled version, it was able to convey the message of the source text because this word has long been associated with The Devil.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the subtitled version resorted to Adaptation when translating onomatopoeic words such as "Yee-ha" (OS), typically used to express exuberant delight or excitement, into "مرحى" (*Marḥá*) (ASS) which literally means *Hurrah* in English, in an attempt to find the closest equivalent in MSA. As for the dubber, he relied on this method to translate nicknames, such as "Hiccy" (OS) into "حازوقتي" (*Hāzūqaty*) (ADS), derived from the proper name "حازوقة" (*Hāzūqah*) (ADS) which literally means *Hiccup* in English, along with words that include letter repetition at the beginning such as "R-Really?" (OS) which was translated into "أحَقًا؟" (*Aḥaqqan*) (ADS) by adding the letter "أ" (*A*) to the word "حَقًا" (*Ḥaqqan*), which literally means *Really* in English.

As for Borrowing, it was adopted in the subtitled and the dubbed versions by directly taking words from the original script and rendering them using the Arabic alphabet. For example, the nickname "Hiccy" (OS) was subtitled into "هيكي" (*Hyky*) (ASS) and the word "Alpha" (OS) was dubbed into "ألفا" (*Alfā*) (ADS). Also, this method was used in the dubbed version when rendering the English onomatopoeia "Whoa" (OS), used to express surprise, into "واو" (*Wāw*) (ADS).

They also both relied on 3 other translation methods but for distinct reasons. The first is Deletion, where both the subtitler and dubber dropped repetitive words such as "Hot!" (OS), onomatopoeia such as "Oh" (OS), and some non-essential pronouns and words like "them" (OS) and "All" (OS). And while the subtitler's choice for this method is related to being presented with a short amount of display-time, usually lasting less than 1 second, this method ensures that the young audience can enjoy the picture displayed in front of them rather than wasting a few seconds reading words that can easily be eliminated because of their nonexistent effect on the meaning. As for the

dubber, his goal was to ensure the synchronization of the dubbed voice with the character's lip movement.

As for Economy, it was used by the subtitler and dubber when rendering the caption "But none as high profile as this one" (OS) with "ولكن لم يكن أيًا منهما بهذا المستوى" (*Wa-lākin lam yakun ayyan minhumā bi-hadhā al-mustawá*) (ASS), which literally means in English *But neither of them was at this level* and "لكن لم يكونا بهذا القدر من الأهمية" (*Lakin lam yakunā bi-hadhā al-qadir min al-ahamiyyah*) (ADS), which literally means in English *But they weren't that important*, respectively, by reducing the word count from eight words to seven. While the subtitler's intention was to arrive at the shortest sentence possible to fit in captions, the dubber wanted to ensure that the dubbed voice was synched with the character's lip movement. It is noteworthy that the Arabic-subtitled caption consisting of 39 characters exceeded the typical 36 characters recommended in a single caption (Malenova, 2017, p.528). Also, the display time of this scene did not surpass 0.4 seconds even though reading a 36-character per line usually requires 6 seconds (Pedersen, 2011, p.20).

The subtitled and dubbed versions also turned to Expansion by adding some words and verbs to translated captions. The subtitler resorted to this method in an attempt to elucidate the meaning of vague sentences, similar to when he translated the English phrase "At least I don't" (OS) into "أنا لا أهرب على الأقل" (*Ana lā ahrubu 'alá al-aqal*) (ASS), which literally means in English *At least I don't run*, by adding the verb "أهرب" (*Ahrubu*), which literally means *Run* in English. As for the dubber, he used it to ensure the synchronization between the dubbed voices and the characters' lip movements. For example, he translated the sentence "You think you and I should..." (OS) into "ترين أنّ علينا أن نتزوج؟" (*Tarayna anna 'alaynā an natazawwaj?*) (ADS), which literally means in English *You think you and I should get married*, by adding the verb "نتزوج" (*Natazawwaj*), which literally means *Get married* in English, clearly not mentioned in the original caption.

The dubbed version also featured Dynamic Equivalence by rendering the meaning of some of the original script's idioms and proverbs using MSA, while taking children's response into account. For example, the dubber translated the idiomatic expression "a chip off the old block!" (OS), which alludes to resembling one's parents in character or physical appearance into "هذا الشبل من ذاك الأسد" (*Hadhā al-shiblu min dhāka al-asad*) (ADS), which literally means in English *This cub is from that lion*.

As for Foreignization, the subtitler adopted this strategy to introduce elements that are unfamiliar to the Arab audience by retaining information from the original text. For example, the names of cartoon characters such as "Crimson Goregutter" (OS) and the names of the Norse mythology deities such as "Thor" (OS) remained "كريمسون غورغاتر" (*Krymsūn Ghūrghātir*) (ASS) and "روث"

(*Thūr*) (ASS), respectively, in an attempt to attract the young viewer. As for the dubbed version, Domestication was preferred when translating proper names where "Crimson Goregutter" (OS) became "مجارير الدم القرمزي" (*Majāryr Al-damm Al-qurmuzī*) (ADS), which literally means in English *Gutter of Crimson Gore*, thus eliminating unfamiliar elements and finding the equivalent of the foreign concept in the Arabic language, bringing the meaning closer to the target audience's culture.

## DISCUSSION

Based on data analysis covering all 16 scenes of the film, it was made clear that the subtitling relies on 8 techniques; Formal Equivalence (1), Literal Translation (3), Adaptation (8), Borrowing (1), Deletion (8), Economy (5), Expansion (1) and Foreignization (3), while the dubbing includes 9 techniques; Formal Equivalence (1), Literal Translation (1), Adaptation (4), Borrowing (3), Deletion (8), Economy (7), Expansion (5), Dynamic Equivalence (1) and Domestication (2). Among the similar methods applied in the subtitling and dubbing of the film, 2 methods; Formal Equivalence and Literal Translation are used when tackling cultural references. Furthermore, 2 other methods; Adaptation and Borrowing are applied when dealing with culture-specific content, but are also used to address other stylistic issues. As for Deletion, Economy and Expansion, these 3 methods are present in both versions as well. While Deletion and Economy are applied in subtitling due to temporal and special constraints, they are used in dubbing along with Expansion to ensure synchronization. Also, Expansion is featured in subtitling to elucidate the meaning of vague sentences. On the other hand, the subtitled version solely relies on Foreignization, while the dubbed version resorts to Domestication and Dynamic Equivalence. The findings also show that Adaptation and Deletion are the most frequent in subtitling, while Formal Equivalence and Expansion are the least applied. On the contrary, Deletion and Economy are the most common in dubbing, whereas Formal Equivalence, Literal Translation and Dynamic Equivalence are the least frequent.

The results of the present work do not support those of Supardi and Putri's (2018) work on the subtitling and dubbing of the original soundtrack *Frozen: Let It Go*. While their research shows that Subtitling relies on 11 techniques exceeding the 9 techniques used in dubbing, this study concludes that the translator only resorts to 8 techniques in subtitling which are fewer than the 9 techniques used in dubbing. Furthermore, Supardi and Putri's results reveal that Literal Translation is the most frequent in lyric-subtitling while Modulation and Reduction are most common in lyric-dubbing. Whereas our findings show that the most dominant methods in subtitling are Adaptation and Deletion while the dubbed version's most frequent methods are Deletion and Economy.

## **CONCLUSION**

These aforementioned methods and strategies are not solely used in an attempt to adhere to the technical considerations in AVT, – whether being the number of characters allowed in one or two captions, or dubbed audio synchronization with lip movement – but also to bring the translated animated film closer to the audience, particularly children, in terms of their ability to comprehend the written or spoken dialogue in all scenes and ensuring their film appreciation and satisfaction by simplifying cultural elements that might be challenging for them, or eliminating some unnecessary words to rejoice in the visuals, or providing them with easily-read captions shown at the bottom of the screen, or even delivering both a visually and audibly appealing content. In other words, aside from being used to overcome the technical, linguistic, stylistic and cultural constraints necessary to achieve an adequate child-oriented translation, these methods and strategies also unequivocally affect the level of cognitive reception with regards to film comprehension in general and evaluative reception as to the level of film enjoyment.



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