Achieving Optimal Relevance in Reducing Efforts in English-Arabic Film Subtitles

Asst.Lect. Salah Mehdi Hashim
Prof. Mehdi F. Al-Ghazalli (Ph.D.)
(PhD. Candidate/ Mustansiriyah University
(Mustansiriyah University/College of Arts/ College of Arts/Dept. of Translation)
Dept. of Translation)
salahhashim43@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq
Prof.ghazalli2016@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq

أحراز الصلة المثلى في تقليل الجهود في سطرجة الافلام من الانجليزية الى العربية

م.م : صلاح مهدي هاشم (طالب دكتوراه)

الأستاذ الدكتور مهدي فالح الغزالي المشرف:

(طالب دكتوراه/الجامعة المستنصرية/كلية الآداب/قسم الترجمة)   ) (الجامعة المستنصرية–كلية الآداب–قسم الترجمة

Abstract

   The current study examines the achievement of optimal relevance in reducing cognitive effort in English-Arabic film subtitles. Optimal relevance shows a valuable theoretical framework, presenting insights into how audiences derive high contextual meaning while achieving minimal mental effort. However, the task of subtitling English-Arabic film shows challenges, specifically regarding cultural respects and context-dependent meanings that often lack direct equivalence in the target language. The present study aims to reveal the significant potential of optimal relevance in reducing the cognitive effort required for processing English-Arabic film subtitles. It is hypothesized that optimal relevance offers essential principles for producing high-quality subtitles, primarily by stimulating cultural and contextual accuracy, which enriches audience comprehension. The results of the current study indicate that the audience faced notable difficulty in comprehending the English-Arabic film subtitles analyzed in this study. The subtitler failed to maintain optimal relevance through the English-Arabic film subtitles analyzed. This failure increased the cognitive effort required by the audience and contributed to their difficulty in comprehending the subtitles.**Keywords: (Audiovisual Translation (AVT) , Subtitling , Relevance theory (RT), Optimal Relevance)**

المستخلص

تتحرى هذه الدراسة احراز نظرية الصلة المثلى في تقليل الجهد الذهني المطلوب لفهم و ادراك ترجمات الأفلام من اللغة الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية. وتعد هذه النظرية إطارًا نظريًا مهمًا يساعد في فهم الطريقة التي يستخلص بها الجمهور المعنى بأكبر فائدة ممكنة وبأقل جهد ذهني. ومع ذلك، فإن ترجمة الأفلام من الإنجليزية إلى العربية تواجه تحديات كبيرة، خاصة عند التعامل مع الجوانب الثقافية والمعاني التي تعتمد على السياق والتي غالبًا ما لا يكون لها مقابل مباشر في اللغة العربية. تهدف الدراسة إلى توضيح الدور الكبير الذي يمكن أن تلعبه نظرية الصلة المثلى في تقليل الجهد المعرفي الذي يبذله المشاهد لفهم ترجمات الأفلام. و تفترض هذه الدراسة أن نظرية الصلة المثلى تقدم مبادئ أساسية تساعد المترجمين في إنتاج ترجمات عالية الجودة من خلال التركيز على الدقة الثقافية والسياقية، الأمر الذي يسهم في زيادة فهم الجمهور. وتبين نتائج الدراسة أن

الجمهور واجه صعوبة كبيرة في فهم ترجمات الأفلام التي تم تحليلها. فقد أخفق المترجم في تحقيق الصلة المطلوبة، وهو ما زاد من الجهد الذهني الذي بذله المشاهد، وأدى إلى ضعف قدرته على فهم الترجمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية:(الترجمة السمعية البصرية ,السطرجة, نظرية الصلة ,نظرية الصلة المثلى ,الترجمة كنشاط ذهني)

1.1 Introduction

First of all, conveying meaning through the use of specific codes that are mutually intelligible is known as communication. *Communication* is a critical term that brings disciplines together to transfer messages. Translation from language A to language B is an act of communication that includes languages and cultures. It is taken for granted that comprehending communication, whether in real life or movies, necessitates acquiring what helps obtain both explicit and implicit meaning (Dessilla, 2012; Youssef, 2024). Therefore, to help the target audience comprehend the audiovisual work, the subtitler must ensure that the subtitled utterances are explicit and acceptable for interpretation by the audience. (Erguvana, 2015, pp. 41-44). To achieve this, translators and subtitlers need to employ pragmatic processes to explicate and enrich the meaning, resulting in the rendition of 'explication' (Murtisari, 2013; Jarrah & Al-Jarrah, 2023). Consequently, subtitles often try to make subtitles explicit to reduce subtitling deficiencies or failures and help target viewers overcome any comprehension limitations (Erguvana, 2015). In this context, according to Baker (1993, 2019), explicitation pertains to the lexico-grammatical representation of an element that is deemed implicit (or relatively less explicit) in the source text (ST) but can generally be inferred from the context in the target text (TT). This process can be achieved by adding the contextual information required to render an explicit subtitle (Perego, 2004, p. 160) In the realm of subtitling, these developments involve adding contextual information to what actors say to ensure it is clear enough for the audience to understand. However, the additional contextual information does not make clear what was meant to be inferred by the source audience, but it provides the audience with the necessary details to comprehend the utterance and draw inferences when required (Carston, 2004, p. 2)

1.2 Literature Review

There are numerous ways to analyze the translation process. For example, Gutt (2002) employs the relevance theory (henceforth RT) to guide the translation process. He applies RT in translation by emphasizing that the audience is a crucial factor, as translators should focus on conveying information that is most relevant to their comprehension. RT was first developed by American scholars Sperber and Wilson (1986) to explain the relationship between language and communication.According to RT, linguistic communication is a cognitive activity in which the speaker indicates his intentions to the listener through words, and the listener infers the speaker's true intentions about the context, thus achieving successful communication (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). The simplest accurate definition of relevance is "a trade-off between effort and effects." This means that communication (or translation) is considered relevant when it balances the cognitive effort required to process information with the expected beneficial effects or outcomes of understanding it (Allott, 2013, p. 57). Relevant communication permits the achievement of intended effects without expending unnecessary effort. In other words, "an input [to a cognitive system] is more relevant the more cognitive effects it yields, and less relevant the more mental effort it takes to process" (Allott, 2013, p. 59)The importance of considering translation as an instance of verbal communication has been highlighted on several occasions (Hatim & Mason, 1997; Gutt, 2000; Rosales Sequeiros, 2005). Hatim and Mason (1997) state that "translating is looked upon as an act of communication which attempts to relay, across cultural and linguistic boundaries, another act of communication" (Hatim & Mason, 1997,p.1). In this respect, as Rosales Sequeiros suggests (2005,p.17), inter- and intralinguistic uses of language can be studied as applications of the same theory of communication. RT, in this sense, offers a unified theory of verbal communication, which allows the study of both intra- and interlinguistic instances of verbal communication as manifestations of the same underlying concepts and, therefore, can be successfully applied to translation, as pointed out more than once (Gutt, 1998; 2000; Rosales Sequeiros, 2005; He 2010)Gutt (2000, p. 127) defined translation as "interlingual interpretive use. "Hence ,he argues that from the RT point of view, translation falls naturally under the interpretive use of language; the translation is intended to restate in one language what someone else said or wrote in another language. In principle, it is, therefore, comparable to quoting or speech-reporting in intra-linguistic use. One of its primary distinctions, setting it off from intra-lingual quoting or reporting, is that the original text and translation belong to different languages. (Gutt 1998,p 46)

1.3 Audiovisual Translation (AVT): An Overview

According to Díaz (2019, p. 1), AVT is an academic discipline and professional activity that involves localizing audiovisual media content through different translation practices. Furthermore, this type of translation requires

awareness of the coexistence of the acoustic and visual communication channels through which verbal and nonverbal information are concurrently conveyedMoreover, in recent decades, the complex semiotic texture of audiovisual productions has been of great interest to scholars in translation studies (henceforth TS), and the profession has undergone dramatic growth and diversification since the advent of digital technology in the latter half of the 20th century. Additionally, for some, the audiovisual format has become the quintessential means of communication in the 21st century. Similarly, this type of translation is also known as screen translation, film translation, multimodal translation, and multimedia translation, among other nomenclatures. The term audiovisual translation has gained wider currency in academic exchanges due to its transparency. As a result, the texts involved in this type of specialized translation combine two complementary channels (audio and visual) and a series of meaning-making codes (language, gestures, paralinguistic, cinematic syntax), whose signs interact and build a semantic composite of a complex nature (Díaz, 2019, p. 1) Additionally, AVT is a translation approach that considers various restrictions, as if the translator needs to overcome more challenges when translating from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). It is commonly known that translation requires from the translator linguistic and cognitive skills and the translator needs to analyze the ST linguistically before attempting to translate, and also cognitively should have the processing capacity to comprehend the ST and produce the target text (TT), by mastering two languages at least, and not just as a lay translator as in the case of bilingual children who attempt to translate for their families, but rather be a professional translator who mediates only when the ST signals a lack of understanding, as it were, in the TT. This mediation technique is sometimes employed in memes of simultaneous interpreting (Dries, 1995) In the 1980s, a significant movement occurred to improve TS, moving the focus from the ST to the TT and its receptor function. Aside from its cultural significance, translation is undeniably considered a linguistic activity. This indicates that the text's function changes due to linguistic activity during translation. A notable change is the AVT, which is closely tied to the method of subtitling films and television shows from one language to another. (Cintas & Remael,2010, p. 145) The AVT has been considered a controversial practice since the 1990s. Cintas (2008, p. 1) states that AVT implied, in 2003, various modes, including audio description for the blind (AD), subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH), opera subtitling, live subtitling, audio subtitling, interpreting, and sign language. SDH and AD have recently been included within the umbrella of media accessibility. He adds that some researchers, such as Gottlieb (1992), have conducted comparative studies between AVT and its elder siblings, including linguistics and translation surveys (ibid., p. 10). Some scholars mentioned that AVT was established at the beginning of cinema's birth. In contrast, others argue that its appearance was influenced by the conference held in 1995, which implied the communication of AVT and the transfer of language in Strasbourg (ibid., p. 10).

1.4 The Concept of Subtitling: An Overview This term is considered one of the most extensively researched modes of AVT. Subtitling is the linguistic written performance of displaying written texts on the lower end of the screen that conveys a target language interpretation of the source speech (Isabel et al., 2005, p. 24). The process of shifting the verbal messages of various languages in film media has also been defined as the formation of a written text with one or more lines appearing at the lower end of the screen that is harmonized with the same intention of the source verbal message (Gottlieb, cited in Delia, 2009,p. 14) According to Baker (2001), this type of AVT involves simultaneously putting together a written version of what is being said. These written versions are "transcriptions of film or TV dialogue, presented simultaneously on the screen." Most of the time, subtitles are shown at the bottom of the screen. Interlingual subtitles change the mode and language of a written translation, going "from one language into another language and from spoken dialogue into a written one." Subtitles are "condensed translation that appears on the screen" (Dries, 1995, p. 26) Subtitles can also be a translation of the original speech. They are used by people who are deaf or hard of hearing (intralingual subtitling) or are learning a language. In Baker (2001, p. 247), Gottlieb states that it is vertical because it involves writing down speech and changing modes, but not the language itself. Gottlieb (1992, p. 162) says that the term itself refers to a type of translation that is (1) written, (2) additive (new words are added in the form of subtitles), (3) instant, (4) synchronous, and (5) polymedial (at least two channels are used). He makes the same distinctions between types of subtitling as Jakobson (1966) mentioned that there are two types of translation: intralingual translation (within one language) and interlingual translation (between two languages). Technically speaking, subtitles can be either open (not optional, i.e., shown with the picture) or closed (optional, i.e., shown via Teletext) (ibid., p. 163) *Subtitling* is a process that facilitates the understanding of music and performance, thereby enabling the audience to comprehend the musical dramaturgy more effectively. Heninger (1994, p. 23) refers to music as a subtext, as it is inserted between the interstices of dialogue, and the verbal text is slightly degraded through its

presentation without being reflected in itself (Lindenberger, 1985, p. 125)*Subtitling* is considered a diasemiotic translation method that involves diagonally presenting one or two words on the screen's lower end in polysemiotic media, such as television, movies, and videos. This process shifts the interpretation of the S.L. speech to the T.L. writing (Gottlieb, 2001, p. 244). Subtitling is regarded as a critical requirement that arises from the linguistic analysis of the S.L. discourse prior to the composition of the T.L., i.e., the development of a comprehensive T.L. product from the original component of the film (Sinha, 2004, p. 174)Antar (2008, p. 3) defines subtitles as written representations of dialogue in films or television programs, typically displayed at the bottom of the screen. Subtitles may manifest in one of two forms: as a written transcription of the spoken text or as a written translation of the same dialogue in the same language, facilitating comprehension for individuals with hearing impairments. O'Connell (2007,p 169) describes subtitling as "supplementing the original voice soundtrack by incorporating written text on the screen in a different language." Delia (2009,p.47) highlights the brevity of subtitles compared to the dialogue, noting that viewers often engage in rapid reading, which compromises their comprehension of the text (Munday, 2009,p.148)*Subtitling* denotes the translation of the source language, specifically the spoken dialogue, displayed at the bottom of the screen in television programs, films, and similar media. Subtitles may occasionally appear in locations other than the lower portion of the screen, where Gottlieb noted that "subtitles are sometimes placed vertically on the side of the screen" (Pedersen, 2010, p. 10)The subject of *subtitling* was examined and delineated by another scholar, Cintas (2010,p. 274), who characterizes subtitling as the written translation practice that involves converting S.L into T.L by transcribing spoken content into written form, in addition to conveying other textual elements displayed at the bottom of the screen, such as inserts, banners, and letters, by translators or technicians knowledgeable about the subtitling process.

1.5 Cultural Constraints of Subtitling

Cultural constraints are represented in cultural references "either exclusively or predominantly visual (an image of a local or national figure, a local dance, pet funerals, baby showers), exclusively verbal or else both visual and verbal in nature." (Chiaro, 2009, p. 156). Sometimes referred to as Culture-Bound expressions (Baker, 2018), these represent the most critical issues that hinder translators in the subtitling process. Most audiovisual products (Movies, TV shows, documentary programs, and animation) embrace the immanence of cultural references that constitute a problematic issue for Arab translators due to the lack of the proper equivalents in the target culture and the existence of distinct positions in the context of some cultural norms and beliefs in the audience target language. The cultural gap exists between languages, making it complicated to handle the otherness. The proper assimilation of Western culture remains a distant possibility for translators However, the flourishing of media has somehow increased cultural awareness in the Arab world. Tackling cultural issues in a movie, for instance, requires more than familiarity with the cultural reference and its potential equivalents in the target language. Dealing with the inappropriateness of cultural contexts for Arab audiences represents a double whammy in the subtitling process, as some terms may be offensive and evoke undesired attitudes among them due to significant ideological differences. (Chung-ling, 2010) Hence, the translator's job seems to be "a cultural mediator" (Katan, 2003, p. 16), mediating between the source and target languages rather than seeking equivalents. Hatim and Mason (2000, p. 223) have emphasized the role of translators in addressing cultural issues in translation. They contributed, "it is certainly true that in recent years the translator has increasingly come to be seen as a cultural mediator rather than a mere linguistic broker.". Accordingly, mediating between distinct cultures requires a profound understanding of the contexts of both cultures Pedersen (2011, p. 48) states that makes rendering meaning from cultural references an overwhelming task for translators is based on the idea that most of them accommodate "interlinguistic culture value systems, text selection, belief systems, paralinguistics and so much more" and extralinguistic features "references to people, places, customs, institutions, food, etc. that are specific to a certain culture, and which you may not know even if you know the language in question" that have peculiar meanings in various contexts. This peculiarity of concepts and conceptions contributes to widening the gap between cultures' assimilation and adaptation. These features can be observed in pop culture, idioms, contemporary culture, proverbs, phrasal verbs, connotations, and other cultural aspects that transcend the realm of language and cannot be reduced to mere linguistic definitions. (ibid., pp. 2-3)Limon (2010) has explained the idea that translation should not be treated as a linguistic phenomenon, and translators should not neglect the impact of culture in shaping the understanding of texts. Therefore, translators must shift their focus from examining the linguistic elements of multimodal texts to conveying the underlying meaning and concepts associated with social and cultural parameters.

1.6 Technical Constraints of Subtitling Nurain (2023, p. 3) states that subtitlers are confronted with another type of constraint that falls within the realm of technical issues, which significantly contributes to the complexity of subtitling. These technical constraints overlapped with how Arab translators tackle cultural and linguistic issues accommodated in audiovisual translation. Therefore, she states that the nature of these technical constraints as a significant issue, alongside cultural and linguistic issues. Georgakopoulou (2009, pp. 30-31) reflects on the necessity of considering the temporal dimension: The subtitling process has been split into two distinct tasks. The timing of a film or audiovisual program is created by native English speakers who produce a unique, timed subtitle file in English, specifically one where all in and out times have been precisely determined. In the same context, Leppihalme (1994) and Cintas and Remael (2010, p.19-21) have contributed to the identification of the nature of the technical parameters in the following points:

1) The space: Translators are restricted with a limited number of characters through the subtitling process which is about (37 +, -) characters per line with a maximum of two lines for one image. The number of characters may differ from one language to another. The used syllables affect this number such as using (MW) takes more space than using syllables like (li).

2) Time: Another technical limit is that the allowed time for subtitles is no longer than six seconds on the screen, i.e., the content has to be cut down to fit the limits of characters as well as the time has shown the subtitle on screen. This may affect how viewers can catch the subtitles and understand the content. Therefore, selecting the correct word choice to present the content concisely may help address this issue.

3) Spotting: The subtitle on the screen must be carefully matched with the dialogue. However, subtitling may not include the dialogue of the characters or narrators only. However, it may include other meaningful signs, letters, or any other written words (Cintas & Remael, 2010).

4) Position on screen: Pictures on the screen made 720 pixels wide by 576 pixels high, and the subtitle must be positioned between 10% from each frame edge to be in the central and at the bottom of the screen.

5) Font: The standard font type, size, and color have effects on the subtitles whether the character will be with or without shadowed background.

1.7 Gottlieb's Strategies of Subtitling

Gottlieb (1992,p.72) illustrates that elaborate subtitling strategies were employed on a micro level, including:

1. Expansion: This is considered the initial strategy employed when additional clarification is necessary regarding the original text due to the diverse cultural nuances absent in the translation, as they are present in the original language, while maintaining the pragmatic meaning features.

2. Decimation: This strategy emphasizes omitting some of the most important items because discourse is speedy.

3. Deletion: This strategy involves omitting a whole paragraph or part based on its value. Deleting the unimportant part of the discourse is favored in this type

4. Resignation: This is adopted if we cannot find a translation. Translating here might affect the intended meaning. It is evident from Gottlieb's(1992,p.79) strategy that the items from one to seven accurately translate the segments. The seven-item scale reflects the subtitling prototype, whereas the last three items could be used when noticing the inconvenience of semantic or stylistic contents to the subtitling process. The resignation typically appears in all types of verbal transmissions. These strategies simplify the concept behind the question of why the translator chooses this method during the translation process.

5. Paraphrase: This is applied when rendering text phrases to avoid the obstacles of the original language.

6. Transfer: This is adopted when translating the S.T. without making mistakes, i.e., accurately, to achieve this strategy.

7. Imitation: Here, the translator employs this strategy by maintaining the original language's forms throughout the translation, such as the names of people, places, and things.

8. Transcription: This is adopted because of the term's unusualness and is considered a third or nonsense language.

9. Dislocation: This is applied at the moment of noticing the effectiveness of the original language as an idyll in an animation film, where translation will be more appropriate and essential if it focuses on the effect of that content

10. Condensation: This type has been used to shorten long, unnecessary utterances by transferring the entire message as it is in the original language without losing its pragmatic meaning features.

11. Decimation: This strategy emphasizes omitting some essential items because discourse is speedy.

12. Deletion: This strategy involves omitting a whole paragraph or part based on its value. Deleting the unimportant part of the discourse is favored in this type

13. Resignation: This is adopted if we cannot find a translation. Therefore, translating here might affect the intended meaning, as evident from Gottlieb's (1992, p. 79) strategy, which indicates that items 1 to 7 accurately translate the segments. The seven-item scale reflects the subtitling prototype, whereas the last three items could be used when noticing the inconvenience of semantic or stylistic contents to the subtitling process. The resignation typically appears in all types of verbal transmission. These strategies simplify the concept behind the question of why the translator chooses this method during the translation process.

1.8 Relevance Theory (RT): An Overview RT was first developed by American scholars Sperber and Wilson (1986) to explain the relationship between language and communication. According to RT, linguistic communication is a cognitive activity in which the speaker indicates their intentions to the listener through words, and the listener infers the speaker's true intentions within the context, thus achieving successful communication (Sperber & Wilson, 1986 According to Yus (2010, p. 1), RT is a cognition-centered pragmatic approach to human communication. It is based on the notion that humans have evolved to search for the most relevant information from incoming stimuli. This search for relevance is not a passive process but an active one in which the human mind uses a cost/benefit mechanism to choose the potentially intended interpretation from a variety of different interpretations of the same input in a particular context. This active role of the human mind is crucial in reaching an optimal level of relevance. Relevance, therefore, is a feature of stimuli that results from a positive balance between the stimulus's potential for interest and the mental effort necessary to process it Sperber and Wilson (2002) developed a new theory within pragmatism, building on Grice's theory of communication and its four key concepts. They took the main idea of it and developed it, which will be explained in detail later. Simply put, Sperber and Wilson (1995, pp. 260–66) state that RT is based on two generic assumptions about the function of relevance: *communication and cognition.* Arguably, the simplest and most accurate definition of *relevance* is "a trade-off between effort and effects" (Allott, 2013, p. 57). Relevant communication permits the achievement of intended effects without expending unnecessary effort. In other words, "an input [to a cognitive system] is more relevant the more cognitive effects it yields, and less relevant the more mental effort it takes to process" (Allott, 2013, p. 59)

1.9 Optimal Relevance
Wilson describes the phenomenon of optimal relevance as follows: "An utterance, or a given interpretation, is consistent with the principle of relevance if and only if the speaker might rationally have expected it to be optimally relevant to the hearer on that interpretation" (Quoted in Yan-fang, 2006,p. 67). Accordingly, a given statement may be considered optimally relevant only when it is entirely understandable without requiring unnecessary effort. This amounts to stating that if a communicator wants to be fully comprehended, they ought to assume that no other statement may produce more contextual effects worthy of the hearer's attention than the suggested one. When a writer or a speaker sends a message to a hearer or a reader, the latter embarks on an interpretive task in which they strive to select the proper interpretation from the span of interpretations that the stimulus has in the present context. Sperber and Wilson (1986,p.158) state: "every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance." They also state that a stimulus is optimally relevant to an audience only if:It is relevant enough to warrant the audience's processing effort. -It is the most relevant one compatible with a communicator's abilities and preferences. (Sperber and Wilson, 2002,p.256) Accordingly, when interpreting an utterance or a text, the hearer or the reader will expend less processing effort in constructing an interpretation of an utterance or a text. Once his expectations are fulfilled, he stops the process of interpretation and selects the interpretation that best satisfies the expectation of relevance. The selected interpretation depends on two conditions:-An assumption is relevant to an individual to the extent that the positive cognitive effects achieved when it is optimally processed are large.- An assumption is relevant to an individual to the extent that the effort required to achieve these positive effects is small. (Francisco Yus, 2009,p 756).

1.10 RT and Translation RT sprouted from cognitive science, and its initial research intention has nothing to do with translation. However, through continuous exploration and development, it gradually came to have strong explanatory power for translation, "the most complex phenomenon in the evolutionary history of the universe" (Richards, 1953). This sparked Gutt's research interest, and ultimately, in 1991, his doctoral dissertation, *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context,* which integrated his findings, was published. The translation theory based on RT emerged from this work. Gutt thus became the first person to apply the theory of RT to

translation, providing a complete and coherent theoretical framework for the ontological and methodological exploration of translation, which has aroused extensive discussions in the translation community (Yanchun Zhao,1999,p.278) Gutt (2000) advocates applying the RT to study translation because "RT views communication in terms of competence rather than behavior, attempting to show in concrete terms the role that information processing mechanisms in people's brains play in interpersonal communication. Thus, the scope of the study is the brain mechanism rather than the segment itself or the process of its production". Given the differences in region, culture, and thinking models between Chinese and foreign readers, it is sometimes not easy to agree on contextual cognition. Translators can adopt specific translation strategies and methods to achieve optimal relevance of information. In the practice of English-Chinese news translation, translators can employ various translation methods, including amplification and omission, conversion and semantic extension, to achieve optimal relevance. All these translation methods can be strongly explained within the framework of Relevance Theory. (ibid)The importance of considering translation as an instance of verbal communication has been highlighted on several occasions (Hatim & Mason, 1997; Gutt, 2000; Rosales Sequeiros, 2005). Hatim and Mason (1997) state that "translating is looked upon as an act of communication which attempts to relay, across cultural and linguistic boundaries, another act of communication" (Hatim & Mason, 1997,p.1). In this respect, as Rosales Sequeiros suggests (2005,p.17), inter- and intralinguistic uses of language can be studied as applications of the same theory of communication. RT, in this sense, offers a unified theory of verbal communication, which allows the study of both intra- and interlinguistic instances of verbal communication as manifestations of the same underlying concepts and, therefore, can be successfully applied to translation, as pointed out more than once (Gutt, 1998; 2000; Rosales Sequeiros, 2005; He 2010)Gutt (2000, p. 127) defined translation as "interlingual interpretive use. "Hence ,he argues that from the RT point of view, translation falls naturally under the interpretive use of language; the translation is intended to restate in one language what someone else said or wrote in another language. In principle, it is, therefore, comparable to quoting or speech-reporting in intra-linguistic use. One of its primary distinctions, setting it off from intra-lingual quoting or reporting, is that the original text and translation belong to different languages. (Gutt 1998,p 46)The process of translation is an act of communication at an interlingual level. It includes two diverse linguistic systems and, most importantly, two different cultures. Thus, the translator may require assistance with linguistic and cultural issues during the translation process. Regarding the cultural background, the translator must acquaint themselves with the target culture. Given that translation is not merely a simple substitution of a collection of linguistic items from one linguistic system to another, the translator should be mindful of the difference between what is linguistically encoded and what is communicated. Accordingly, depending on the relevance framework, the translator should first begin decoding the ST. Taking into consideration the context, s/he should then make inferences to grab the communicated meaning of the ST, and at a final stage, s/he has to share the communicated meaning of the source text in a form that should be compatible with the rules and conventions of the TL.(Kouider,2018,p.12)Thus, according to this relevance-theoretic view of translation, many of the problems that the translator could encounter are not peculiar to translation. Any text that is transferred from its original context to a different one can have its meaning affected by that change, even if the language is the same in both contexts. Conversely, a problem generated by linguistic or lexical differences arising when linguistic barriers are crossed would be peculiar to translation. Because of these cross-linguistic differences, the translator often has to make a choice about which properties of the ST to preserve the TT. (ibid)

1.11 RT and Film Subtitle

Gutt (1991), a cognitive pragmatist, proposes that RT is an explicit, general theory of translation, which has significant implications for translation. What Gutt intends to do is build a new translation theory based on RT; however, to his surprise, he finds that Relevance Theory itself already provides a strong explanation for translation. As one type of translation, subtitle translation can also be explained by RT, which provides a strong explanation for subtitle translation. RT, as an explicit general theory of translation, is also suitable for subtitle translation. RT states that humans employ inference to communicate, and the audience is supposed to infer the speaker's intended information from the stimuli. Translation is under the interpretive use of language. It means that translation is required to rearrange the source language using the target language Subtitle translation refers to using one language to convey the meaning of another language, striving to make it resemble the original utterance, so that the target language audience can understand the original as quickly as possible. It proves that subtitle translation can also be considered as an interlingual interpretive use. Subtitles translation is also a cross-cultural communicative activity, that is, it is a two-stage process of communicationOne refers to the communication between the original author and the translator, and the other refers to the communication between

the translator and the target viewer. RT guides both communications. The subtitler should convey the idea that is most relevant to explain the original text. Therefore, the target language audience can reproduce the ideas quickly based on the relevance principle. Subtitles translation, as a form of communication, should ensure the success of the communication. Subtitles translation ensures that intentions and expectations align. To ensure successful communication, the subtitler must ensure that their intentions align with the audience's expectations. (ibid) The process of movie subtitle translation is not merely a conversion between two languages, but a process of transmission and translation in which cultural exchange is also involved. The translator is, therefore, required not only to interpret the original intention of the source text as accurately as possible, but also to convey the cultural information as well. It should be ensured that the effort of acquiring information from the audience is minimized, while the understanding is maximized. Meanwhile, the result of information transmission should be noted to achieve optimal relevance. Here, only three contextual factors are concerned during the translator's transmitting and understanding process of the original intention, i.e., contextual relevance, cultural relevance, and recipient relevance (Han et al,2015,p.28)According to Hatim and Mason (1997, p 1), translation is considered an "act of communication which attempts to relay, across cultural and linguistic boundaries, another act of communication," which means that translation is a kind of ostensive communication act. RT can therefore provide a suitable approach to investigate it. Subtitling, as a specialized kind of translation, falls entirely within this definition, and RT appears to be a fruitful theoretical paradigm under which the operation of selecting appropriate subtitling strategies can be fully explored and investigated.

1.12 Methodology

1.12.1 Data Collection The data of the current study comprise three English filmstrips with their certified Arabic subtitles. The English filmstrips are downloaded after subscribing to these large cinema websites or applications that offer to display English-speaking movies with Arabic subtitles. The English filmstrips are taken from three English films, namely (Gold ,Fury ,New Action). These films are exciting because they mix three genres: thriller, action, and romance.

1.12.2 Data Analysis

The current study adopted qualitative analysis of three English filmstrips from three English films. The English-Arabic film subtitles are analyzed within the framework of RT, based on two cognitive dichotomies: explicit and implicit content and cognitive effort and communicative effect. From the RT perspective, a text is rendered with minimal cognitive effort during subtitling.

Sample No.(1)

ST: Keith: I'll take what they say **with the grain of salt**. I don't mean to ruin your prey for nothing but… **(00:36:09)**

TT:

كيث: سأقرأ **ما يكتبونه بحبوب الملح** اعني لا اقصد افساد استعراضك او اي شيء لكن...

Minute Details in this screen

https://youtu.be/Hj5tTJhBkMQ?si=0Bvg_uVbLs8Ezzg1

Interpretation

Gold (2022) is an Australian survival thriller directed by Anthony Hayes. It features (stars) Zac Efron, Susie Porter, and Hayes.

Analysis of Film Subtitles and Discussion

In the aspect of AVT, the Arabic subtitle "بحبوب الملح" employs a direct transfer strategy, which involves a literal rendering without accounting for cultural and contextual situations. This strategy fails to convey the idiomatic meaning of ST, which signifies suspicion. The difference between the literal rendering and the idiomatic meaning of "بحبوب الملح" is evident, requiring the intended audience to exert additional cognitive effort to derive the intended interpretationMoreover, the Arabic subtitle "لا أقصد إفساد استعراضك أو أي شيء" substitutes the metaphor "prey" with "إستعراضك", altering the statement's emotional resonance. This alteration highlights the importance of preserving metaphorical imagery in translations to maintain the original intention and ensure more transparent audience comprehension.

From the RT perspective, effective subtitles should strike a balance between cognitive effects and processing effort. However, audiences must process the literal meaning before reconstructing the idiomatic connotation. This highlights the pressing need for subtitles that reduce cognitive load and facilitate comprehension, ultimately enhancing the viewing experience. The Arabic subtitle "بحبوب الملح" provides a literal translation of the English expression "with a grain of salt." However, it does not convey the intended meaning of "with a grain of salt" implicitly. Since "بحبوب الملح" is not an established idiom in Arabic, it fails to initiate any recognizable association with doubt or caution. As a result, the audience does not receive an implicit meaning to interpret the expression. Instead, viewers must depend entirely on contextual inference to capture the intended meaning, significantly increasing their cognitive effort and making understanding more difficult.

Proposed Arabic subtitle:

"سأنظر إلى حديثهم **بعين الشك**، فلا يأخذني اليقين بكل ما يقال"

Sample No.(2)

ST: I thought you were dead.

Devil watches over his own good ,Kowski you could see.   **(009:21)**

TT:

ظننت قد مت

عمر الشقي بقي.

سررت برؤيتك (بنكاوسكي)

Minute Details in this screen

https://youtu.be/65RtU58lXZk?si=BfEi2ovGelRf_MCr

Interpretation

Fury (2014) is a World War II film that chronicles the heroic journey of a group of American soldiers.

Analysis of Film Subtitles and Discussion

Within the scope of AVT, the Arabic subtitle "عمر الشقي بقي" exemplifies an unsuccessful attempt to paraphrase. Although the phrase is idiomatic and culturally familiar, it does not effectively convey the core meaning of the original English idiom. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the idiom "*The devil watches over his own"* suggests that individuals with immoral tendencies often experience good fortune or protection. However, the Arabic subtitle "عمر الشقي بقي" does not accurately convey this meaning, resulting in a misrepresentation of the original expression. In this aspect, effective subtitles should strike a balance between cognitive effects and processing effort, ensuring the audience can grasp the intended meaning without undue cognitive strain. In this instance, the Arabic subtitle falls short of providing an optimal level of explicitness, resulting in increased cognitive effort among viewers.

Proposed Arabic Subtitle:

ظننت قد مت

النجاح والحظ لا يبتسم لأولئك الذين لا يستحقونه

سررت بنظرتك بنكاوسكي

Sample No.(3)

ST: Where were we with **the lockdown?**   **(00:17:36)**

TT:

لذا, أين وصلنا **بحالة الأغلاق؟**

Minute Details in this screen

Interpretation

It refers to a film titled "New Action Movie 2023, the Grand Heist, translated in HD Quality."

Analysis of Film Subtitles and Discussion

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term "lockdown" is *defined as "a state of isolation or restricted access instituted as a security measure."* However, in this context, the term is used idiomatically, not to describe the lockdown condition itself but to pick up a prior discussion thread. The Arabic subtitle *"أين وصلنا بحالة الإغلاق؟"* employs the strategy of Transfer, preserving the surface structure of the source text without adapting it to the target language's cultural and communicative context. As a result, it increases cognitive effort, especially for less experienced viewers, by requiring them to infer discourse-level meaning from literal phrasing.From the RT perspective, this shift from an implicit to an explicit formulation distorts the pragmatic function of the original expression. The subtitle requires a higher processing effort and yields a weaker contextual effect, as it fails to guide the viewer to the intended conversational implication.

Proposed Arabic Subtitle:

الى اين وصلنا مع حضر التجوال؟

ConclusionIt can be concluded that cultural specific expressions offer a significant challenge in English-Arabic film subtitles. Moreover, texts with many cultural aspects are more challenging for subtitlers to translate accurately. The above-mentioned samples included cultural loaded content that was either mistranslated or oversimplified, leading to confusion among the viewers. These difficulties often derive from subtitlers' limited cultural awareness and their failure to apply relevant, context-based strategies.

References

Al-Jarrah. (2023). '*Translating explicatures between Arabic and English: completing logical forms and calculating pragmatic competence and metalinguistic knowledge*'. Babel, 69 (2): 188-215.

Allott, Nicholas. (2013). *relevance theory. in perspectives on linguistic pragmatics, ed. alessandro capone, franco lo piparo, and marco carapezza*, 57–98. Heidelberg: Springer

Antar, S. A., (2008).*can intra-lingual subtitling enhance English majors' listening comprehension of literary texts?":* Journal of Qena Faculty of Education. Vol 11, No 1. 2008 [Egypt].

Baker, M. (2018). In other words: A coursebook on translation: Routledge.

--------------(2001). *Linguistic Perspectives on Translation* .The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation. New York: Oxford University Press.

-------------(1993). '*corpus linguistics and translation studies implications and applications*'. In Mona Baker, Gill Francis and Elena Tognini-Bonelli (eds.), Text and Technology: In Honour of John Sinclair, 233-252. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

-------------(2019). '*corpus-based translation studies: The challenges that lie ahead*'. In Harold Somers (ed.), Researching Translation in 478 International Journal of Arabic-English Studies (IJAES) Vol. 24, No.2, 2024 the Age of Technology and Global Conflict, 44-54. New York: Routledge.

Carston, Robyn. (2004). '*relevance theory and the saying /implicating distinction*'. In Laurence Horn and Gergory Ward (eds.), Handbook of Pragmatics,633-656. Oxford: Blackwell.

Chiaro, D. (2009). *issues in audiovisual translation.* In J. Munday (Ed.), The Routledge Companion to translation studies (pp. 141-163). Oxon, Routledge.

Cintas, D and Remael, A. (2010). *Audiovisual translation: Subtitling. Manchester*: Jerome Publishing.

Cintas, Jorge Díaz, and Pilar Orero. (2010)."*voiceover and dubbing.*" Handbook of Translation Studies, edited by Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer, Amsterdam & Philadelphia, John Benjamins, p. 441, www.academia.edu/22547451/2010_Voiceover_and_Dubbing.

Delia, C. (2009). *issues in audiovisual translation*. In Munday, Jeremy. (Ed.) The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies. London, Routledge.

Desilla, Louisa. (2012). 'implicatures in film: construal and functions in bridget Jones romantic comedies'. Journal of Pragmatics, 44(1): 30–53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2011.10.002

Díaz-Cintas, J. and A. Remael (2019). audiovisual translation: subtitling. Manchester: St. Jerome.

Dries, J. (1995). "dubbing and subtitling: guidelines for production and distribution". Dü-sseldorf,. European Institute for the Media.

Erguvana, Mehmet. (2015). relevance theoretic-approach to the Turkish translation of humorous culture-specific items in Family Guy. MA thesis, Ankara.

GEORGAKOPOULOU, Panayota (2009). subtitling for the DVD industry. In DIAZ-CINTAS, J. & GUNILLA, A. Audiovisual translation: language transfer on-screen, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 21-36.

Gottlieb, H. (1992). subtitling – a new university discipline. In: Dollerup, Cay et al. (eds.). Teaching Translation and Interpreting. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 161-170.

----------------(2001). Subtitling. In Baker, M. (Ed.), Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies (pp. 244-248). London: Routledge.

Gutt-A. (1998). pragmatic aspects of translation: Some relevance-theory observations. In: Leo Hickey, ed. The Pragmatics of Translation. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 41-53.

------------(2000). translation and relevance: cognition and context. St. Jerome Pub

-----------.(1991). translation and relevance: cognition and context. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Hatim, B. (1997) communication across cultures: translation theory and contrastive text linguistics. Read Hall: University of Exeter Press.

Isabel, et al (2005). "new trends in audiovisual translation: The Latest Challenging Modes". A journal of English and American Studies. 31: 89–104` ISBN 0631211322.

Kouider, Y.(2012). exploiting relevance theory findings in translation. Revue de Traduction et Langues Volume 17 Numéro 02/2018, pp. 8-17 Journal of Translation and Languages

Leppihalme, Ritva (1994). culture Bumps: on the translation of allusions. Helsinki: University of Helsinki Publishing.

Limon,D.(2010). translation as cultural mediator wish or reality? a question for translation studies.USA: John Benjamins publishing company. (pp.29-40).

Lindenberger, H. (1985). opera. the extravagant art. Ithaca & London, Cornell University Press.

Murtisari, Elisabet. (2013). 'A relevance-based framework for explicitation and implicitation in translation: An alternative typology'. Trans-kom, 6 (2): 315-344. http://www.trans-kom.eu/bd06nr02/trans kom_06_02_03_Murtisari_Explicitation.20131212.pdf

Nurain et al .(2023) .challenges and constraints of subtitling audiovisual products and multimodality of texts from English into Arabic through Arab translators' perspectives''. Arab Journal for Scientific Publishing (AJSP).

O'Connell, E. (2007). screen translation. In P. Kuhiwczak & K. Littau (eds.), A companion to translation studies (pp.120-133). Toronto: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Pedersen, J. (2010). audiovisual translation in general and in Scandinavia. Article in Perspectives Studies Translatology,15(1), 1-22. Stockholm: Stockholm University.

Perego, Elisa. (2004). 'subtitling 'culture' by means of explicitation: different ways of facing otherness. Choice and difference in translation: The specifics of transfer'. Athens: The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 145-168.

Rosales Sequeiros, Xosé (2005). effects of pragmatic interpretation on translation. Communicative Gaps and Textual Discrepancies. Munich: Lincom Europa.

Sinha, A. (2004). "the use and abuse of subtitles." Atom Egoyan and Ian Balfour (eds) (2004). Subtitles On the Foreignness of Film. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 172–190 .

Sperber, & D. Wilson (2002). truthfulness and relevance, cognition. Mind and Language.

----------------------------(1986). relevance: communication and cognition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd

Yanchun Zhao, (1999). the explanatory power of relevance theory to translation. modern foreign languages, (03), 276-29

Youssef, S. Salah. (2024). 'feasibility of using house' TQA model in self-revision in English-Arabic non-literary translation: an empirical study'. https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes.v24i1.546

Yus, F. (2011). Cyberpragmatics and internet -mediated communication in context. University of Alicante. Amsterdam\ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. (1st ed.).

Website References

https://youtu.be/65RtU58lXZk?si=BfEi2ovGelRf_MCr

https://youtu.be/Hj5tTJhBkMQ?si=0Bvg_uVbLs8Ezzg1

https://youtu.be/jJDih4-YoXg?si=0ea5iETZzJrR8Laa