

An Overview of Norms, Policies and Audience Perception in Audiovisual Translation with Reference to the Arab World

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the three concepts of Audiovisual Translation: norms, policies and audience perception that are related to the three pillars of the industry at large: producers, stake holders and consumers consecutively with a focus on the situation in the Arab world, but in a global context. It relies in its investigation on previous research and works executed mainly in dubbing and subtitling. Findings reached from the study in this context show that a substantial effort has been exerted in the area with regard to screen translating from English into Arabic, though much less vice versa, but a lot of work still has to be done. With regard to norms, apart from the global agreed norms, there is inconsistency between producers' companies, agencies and so on. Moreover, policies seem to be governed by ideologies rather than by norms. In terms of Audience perception, little has been done and more research using advanced techniques has to be carried out.

1. INTRODUCTION

With audiovisual culture sweeping the Arab world following the trend worldwide, "we are now in a fast shifting technical audiovisual society", as emphasized by Orero (2004, p. XI), the amount of work for on-screen translation is overwhelming. Screen translation is another name for audiovisual translation (AVT). Results from surveying a number of works show that despite the "tremendous volume of translated audiovisual texts" (Bartrina, 2004, p.164) and the enormous social impact of audiovisual translated products (Díaz Cintas, 2003, p 289 quoted in Espasa, 2004, p. 183), research in AVT, however, is still in its infancy "with a boom in audiovisual translation publishing at the turn of the millennium" Espasa (2004, p. 184). Research on documentaries in particular according to Renov (1993: 1-2 quoted in Espasa, 2004, p. 183) has witnessed a rise. Having said that, Orero (2004, p. v) emphasizes that little is known and much is to be done "to put Screen Translation, Multimedia Translation or the wider field of Audiovisual Translation on par with other fields within Translation Studies". Furthermore, as stated by Bartrina (2004, p. 158), "research in audiovisual translation is faced with specific empiric difficulties. The first is the inaccessibility of the original screenplay, the translated screenplay, the adapted screenplay, the postproduction script".

After more than a decade since Orero, Bartrina, Díaz Cintas and Espasa expressed their early views, a lot has been done in audiovisual translation and more is recently known in the field. In Díaz Cintas's and Neves's (2015, p. 2) words "it is clear that AVT has come a very long way since it started gaining academic acknowledgement in the mid-1990s" despite the fact that "it may well be that AVT is still a long way away from becoming a separate discipline" (ibid.). For an overview of the turns (the descriptive, the cultural, the sociological and the cognitive turns) audiovisual translation has so far taken, see Chaume (2018).

Recently, in the Arab world, following the rest of the world, AVT has been thriving although Gamal, as recent as 2014, still refers to it as only an "emerging field" in the Arab world. Nonetheless, he emphasizes that in recent years the industry started to take shape and witnessed a boom in dubbed and subtitled productions, mainly into Arabic rather than from Arabic into other languages. What remains to be investigated is whether such productions are following certain norms and governed by agreed upon policies that take into consideration audience perception. This will be discussed in detail later after the two main forms of AVT are introduced. The study adopts a descriptive approach while reviewing works done in

the area of AVT in the Arab world. Measuring by areas of success in the field of translation into and from Arabic in different disciplines, the study is also prescriptive.

2. SCREEN TRANSLATION: SUBTITLING VS. DUBBING

The terms 'Audiovisual translation' and 'screen translation' are used interchangeably to refer mainly to subtitling and voiceing (dubbing and voice-over) of films, soaps, plays, etc. Gambier (1994) lists the following most common audiovisual language transfer methods: "a) subtitling, b) simultaneous, c) dubbing, d) interpreting (pre-recorded and consecutive), e) voice-over, f) narration, g) commentary, h) multilingual broadcast, i) surtitles and superatitles, and j) simultaneous translation" (p. 277). Delabastita (1989) considers 'audiovisual translation' as 'adaptation' rather than translation (as cited in Karamitroglou 1998, P. 11). According to Bartrina (2004: 57) with reference to an audiovisual text: "we receive via two channels, the visual and the acoustic. Essential to understanding is the synchrony between verbal and non-verbal messages". Historically, both forms of audiovisual translation originated in Europe and can be traced back to the first talking films in the 1930s (Luyken, 1991, p. 29). They were introduced to overcome the language barrier by reproducing the same production in the target language.

The first subtitled film in the UK, and probably in the world, was the German feature film "Der Student von Prag" ["The Student from Prague"] broadcast by the BBC in 1938 (Minchinton, 1993, p. 14; Giles, 1997, p. 47, as cited in Karamitroglou, 1998, p. 9) though Luyken et al. (1991) trace subtitling back to 1933 when chemical subtitling was invented in Sweden and Hungary (p. 31). As for lip-sync in dubbing, according to Luyken et al. (ibid.), it "appears to have originated in the United States and came to Europe in 1936". The first fully dubbed film was the US production "All Quiet on the Western Front", dubbed into German in 1938 (Karamitroglou, 1998, p. 9).

In terms of preference, some stress that "long narrative or action scenes work well with a dubbed track" whereas "long personal exchanges are difficult to communicate with dubbing" (TV world X/5, 1987, p. 38, cf. Adler, 1995, p. 24 as cited in Karamitroglou, 1998, p. 149). In other words, as stated by Luyken et al. (1991, p. 130), when:

A play, film or series attempts to portray life in a particular country, the language of the country is an essential part of that cultural experience and it should be preserved: in such cases subtitling might

be the more appropriate form of language transfer.

On the other hand, as emphasized by Gottlieb (1994a, p. 103) "whenever the soundtrack contains discourse of an *informative* nature, *revoicing* should be considered". With regard to authenticity, subtitling is preferable:

When we talk about human interest stories, TV fiction and feature films, that is expressive genres focusing on people, as opposed to objects or abstract phenomena, only subtitling will provide the authenticity needed (ibid).

In 'audiovisual translation', the term 'language transfer' according to Luyken et al. (1991) is used to describe:

The means by which a film or television programme is made understandable to target audiences who are unfamiliar with the source language in which the original was produced. Language transfer can be either visual, in which case text is superimposed onto the picture in a process known as subtitling, or aural, in which case the original voice track of the film or programme is actually replaced by a new one (p. 11).

In this paper, the focus is on videotape subtitling and video dubbing in which translation adheres to the medium of video (video subtitling and dubbing means here TV subtitling and dubbing too). For the difference between videotape subtitling and cinema film subtitling, see Luyken et al (1991, pp. 60-61). In both areas of AVT, major advances have been achieved. For example, "optical and chemical processes for creating subtitles on film are now outdated and are being replaced by electronic methods of subtitle creation", Luyken et al (1991, p. 90) and "multi-track recording and digitalized electronic and communication equipment is becoming standard in dubbing", (ibid. 96).

2.1 Subtitling

Subtitling is defined by Delabastita (1989, p. 200), Gottlieb (1994a, p. 104) and Gottlieb (1998, p. 247) as "the translation of the spoken or written source text of an audiovisual product into a written target text which is added onto the images of the original product, usually at the bottom of the screen". Gottlieb (2004) refines his definition of subtitling as follows:

The rendering in a different language of verbal messages in filmic media, in the shape of one or more lines of written

text, presented on screen in synch with the original verbal message (p. 86).

'Subtitle' is different to 'caption' in that the latter "is used to describe on-screen textual information usually inserted by the programme maker to identify names, places or dates relevant to the story line", (Luyken et al., 1991, p. 31). However, in America the two terms are used interchangeably (ibid. footnote). Historically, "subtitling grew out of the 'intertitles' used to express dialogue in the silent movies" (ibid.). 'Interlingual' subtitling translating within the same language as translating from old English to today's English, for example, whereas 'intralingual' subtitling is translating from one language into another. For different types of subtitling, see Gottlieb (1994a, 1998).

2.2 Dubbing

Dubbing is given different definitions which do not differ in essence. For Dries (1995, p. 9) "dubbing can be best described as the technique of covering the original voice in an audiovisual production by another voice". Luyken et al. (1991) offer a more elaborate definition to dubbing as "the replacement of the original speech by a voice track which attempts to follow as closely as possible the timing, phrasing and lip movement of the original dialogue" (p. 31). They add "the aim is to create the illusion that the on-screen characters are speaking in the target language i.e., the language of the audience" (ibid. p. 73).

In 'lip-sync, unlike 'revoicing' such as 'narration', 'voice-over' or 'free commentary', dubbing', the spoken source text ST is entirely covered with the target text TT which is adjusted to fit the visible lip movement of the original utterances (Fodor, 1976, p. 9; Luyken et al., 1991, p. 31; Dries, 1995a, p. 9). For different methods of revoicing, see Dries (1995) and for voice over, see Pagon (2007).

3.CONSTRAINTS OF AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION (SUBTITLING AND DUBBING)

Translation in its broader socio-cultural dimension, according to Karamitroglou (1998), is "inevitably and constantly subjected to various constraints of several types and degrees of intensity" (p. 15). In audiovisual translation, aural and visual backgrounds add more constraints which determine the choice of vocabulary and length of utterances in the translation. According to Toury (1995):

These constraints often extend beyond the texts and the languages involved in the act

of translation, and even beyond the possibilities and limitations of cognitive apparatus of the translator as a mediator; cognition itself is modified by sociocultural factors (54).

According to O'Shea (1996), top chief among these constraints are: "a) temporal constraints in revoicing, b) spatiotemporal constraints in subtitling, c) the accompanying visual source-culture elements in both revoicing and subtitling, d) the accompanying aural source-language elements in subtitling, e) the lip-sync imperative in dubbing, f) the cross-semiotic nature of subtitling, and g) the inability of backtracking (with the exception of video) in both subtitling and revoicing" (as cited in Karamitroglou, 1998, p. 10). Fortunately, the burden of many of the inherited technical problems related to audiovisual translation have been reduced by the advance of technology.

Apart from the fact that any language transfer will inevitably interfere with the original film, the way to minimize the degree of such interference in subtitling is different from that in dubbing. In other words, subtitling needs editorial skills different from those needed in lip-sync dubbing which involves a performance element. Moreover, while revoicing has the extra advantage of the performance element represented in the visual style and skill of the actors (revoicers) which add more emphasis on the message to be conveyed, dubbing requires more adaptation of the translation to synchronize with actors lip movement. In subtitling the volume of speech and density of wording has to be taken into consideration. In the production of both types of audiovisual translation (subtitling or revoicing), besides the translators, however, a number of people are involved: spotters, time-coders, adapters, dubbing directors, dubbing actors, sound technicians, video experts, proof-reading post-editors, translation commissioners and film distributors (Luyken et al., 199, pp. 92 and 97; Dries, 1995a, pp. 12 and 27; Pagon, 2007, pp. 60-69).

4.AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION IN THE ARAB WORLD

The cliché that "the world is a small village" cannot be more exact than in the context of today's globalization phenomenon. This leads to questioning the validity of the often-quoted statement: "while screen translation, have been well established in many countries worldwide, it is not given the same attention in the Arab world", since the industry is not restricted by

geographical boundaries. One needs no more than a click on Google to search for companies that offer audiovisual translation in Arabic in the world big cities only to find out that the number is overwhelming. What is still lacking, however, is extensive research that surveys within what norms such companies work, studies on audience perception and reviews of policies' guidelines that govern AVT practices in translating between Arabic and other languages. A noticeable remark on studies carried out on audiovisual translation in the Arab world is that they focus on semantic, cultural and linguistic issues and hardly on technical matters at an era of technology oriented thinking and digital-focused global mindset. Even those who addressed technical issues such as Thawabteh (2011) and Hussain and Khuddro (2016), they addressed them among linguistic and cultural problems. In the world of digital technology today, "the future of translation studies in Arabic", as emphasized by (Gamal, 2014: 1), "is in screen and not print translation". Issues such as euphemism as a potential strategy of politeness in subtitling to save face is investigated by Al-Adwan (2009 and 2015) and Thawabteh (2012). Alabbasi (2009) studies and investigates the significance of audiovisual translation in promoting cultural understanding among nations. Al-Dabbagh (2017) studies the advantage of teaching subtitling in the curriculum of teaching language in the Jordanian universities, for example. For studies on dubbing, see Athamneh and Zitawi (1999); Zitawi (2003) and (2008) and on subtitling, see Khuddro (2000); Mazid (2006); Gamal (2009); and Thawabteh (2010, 2011a, 2011b). Gamal (2005, 2007 and 2014) extensively addresses the situation of AVT in the Arab world as a whole and Gamal (2008) addresses individual Arab countries separately. Gamal (2014) emphasizes that such type of research "is linguistically-based, focusing on translation proper to the exclusion of other relevant issues in audiovisual translation" (p. 6). He draws the attention to the fact that the basics of audiovisual translation in the Arab world lack "a clear, concise and comprehensive definition" (ibid. p. 2). Gamal (2007) also points at the problem of non-standardization of AVT terminology in the Arab world. From another perspective, he reports that while documentaries were narrated in Arabic, the voice-over was not widely used and there was no teletext on most Arab televisions (ibid. p. 81).

When surveying the situation and looking at the landscape of audiovisual translation in the Arab world, what seems to be the case is that the situation can neither be addressed individually by country nor as a whole but rather by bloc divisions: Levantine region, Gulf countries, the Magrib States and Egypt. Such a division is based on the trend of product selection and language orientation. What might be useful, however,

is carrying out studies similar to those carried out elsewhere in the world such as Sokoli (2009): "Subtitling Norms in Greece and Spain", Mukherjee (2003): "Audio-visual Policies and International Trade: The Case of India" to compare between norms adopted between pairs of countries or even blocs to find out the tendency whether they follow similar or distinct norms.

On a wider scale, Hasuria Che Omar (2009) and Gamal (2014) address the issue of audiovisual translation in the whole of the Muslim world and both agree that subtitling and dubbing have not been given adequate attention in the Muslim world. In the context of benefits of audiovisual translation in the whole of the Muslim world, Gamal states that "audiovisual translation must develop its own theoretical framework, research priorities and mechanisms and not copy or import them en masse from the west", (https://www.academia.edu/13202340/Audiovisual_Translation_in_the_Muslim_world)

Before Gamal, Maluf (2006) draws a picture of the situation and notes that in the Arab world, apart from cinema production in Egypt, which, according to Gamal (2008, p. 2), started as early as 1930s, there is no what we might call 'cinematic traditions'; hence no significant dubbing and subtitling industries are established Maluf (2006, p. 207). From a historical viewpoint in the context of AVT, he notes that:

In the Arab world, possibly the first, production houses to dub media programs into Arabic was the Beirut-based independent Al Ittihad al Fanni, originally developed as a radio production house by the late Ghanem Dajjani, Sobhi Abou Loghd and Abed El Majid Abou Laban in 1963, (ibid.).

For a survey of the introduction and development of AVT in the Arab world, see (Altahri, 2013).

More recently, with the advent of television and the multiplication of channels broadcasting via satellites and in the framework of globalization, audiovisual translation became quite different and many are becoming aware of the scale of shortage of scholarly work in both methods of screen translation, namely subtitling, and dubbing. One of many outcries regarding the state of screen translation in the Arab world concerning subtitling is expressed by Al-Adwan (2009). With dubbing, similar remarks are made by Maluf (2006).

To verify the above claim by Maluf, one only needs to check the variant productions dubbed and subtitled

into Arabic to find out that such a claim is no longer valid. Internationally recognized productions such as Harry Potter movies, Friends series, Disney animated cartoons, talk shows, and many others have been translated into Arabic and transmitted in different Arabic speaking channels. Even productions in Indian, Korean and Japanese have been dubbed and subtitled into Arabic. With regard to directionality, there is an agreement that is only a few audiovisual productions are translated from Arabic into English but most of the audiovisual translations are made from English into Arabic (Hasuria Che Omar, 2009, Alabbasi 2009 and Gamal 2014). In the context of subtitling from Arabic into other languages, Gamal (2014) states that “no known studies have examined the activity of subtitling Arabic language films into foreign languages” (p. 6) despite the fact, according to him, that “this is a significant issue as it pertains to two big industries; cinema and tourism” (ibid.). Among the few studies on subtitling films from Arabic into English, however, is Thawabteh (2010): “The Translatability of Interjections: A Case Study of Arabic-English Subtitling”, Al-Kharabsheh and Yassin (2017): handling of issues related to translating colloquialism in the Arabic-into-English subtitled film, The Dupes and Gamal himself (2015) studied the subtitling of eleven Egyptian classic films starred by the legend Omar Sharif: “Omar’s Eleven: Challenges in Subtitling Classic Egyptian Films”. Also, on translating from Arabic into English is the prize winning research, Moll (2017): “Subtitling Islam: Translation, Mediation, Critique”.

With regard to preference, as far as dubbing or subtitling is concerned, there are no available studies or statistics similar to those available in West Europe. In other words, Language transfer methods used within each type of audiovisual translation, which show whether Arabs prefer using their hearing sense (dubbing) or their vision (subtitling) do not exist. With the high rate of illiteracy among several segments of the population in the Arab world, however, dubbing would probably be the most favored option but the dilemma remains as the cost of dubbing is much higher than the cost of subtitling due to the fact, as stated by Luyken et al. (1991), that “lip-sync dubbing added greatly to costs” (p. 32). There is, however, something to be learnt from Europe as in the case of Spain and Portugal: “to subtitle films of minority appeal and dub those expected to be box office successes” (ibid.). For Ivarsson (1992), what determines the choice of the type of audiovisual translation is “what the audience is used to rather than rational arguments” (p. 20).

With regard to strategies, measuring on translating film titles in Egypt (Gamal, 2014), for example, the

tendency would almost certainly be to “domesticate” rather than to “foreignize”. Gamal notes that Egyptian film titles translated into English are translated literally while in contrast Hollywood film titles are translated liberally into Arabic (ibid. p. 8). Gamal’s explanation is that “the subtitler feels authorized or empowered to domesticate the foreign title into Arabic” (ibid.), see also (Gamal 2018). This leads us to discuss the issues of ‘norms’ and ‘policies’ of subtitling and dubbing in the Arab world.

5. NORMS AND POLICIES OF SUBTITLING AND DUBBING IN THE ARAB WORLD

In addition to the commonly acknowledged technical constraints of audiovisual translation, which are influenced by factors such as time, space on the screen and speed of dialogue among others, audiovisual translation from English into Arabic is further constrained by other impediments such as socio-cultural factors. Socio-cultural constraints are more apparent in translating foreign films whose ideas and settings are distant from those of the recipient culture (Deeb, 2018). In this context, Agost (2004) raises the question: “what happens when a television or cinematographic product in which the cultural references are very different from those of the target culture is to be translated?” (pp. 69-70). One apparent example to answer this question in translating from English into Arabic is the subtitling of Harry Potter. For translation strategies to subtitle cultural references in Harry Potter into Arabic, see Altahri (2013). Agost notes that “this subject has been explored innumerable times in studies carried out on translation for dubbing, yet it is rather difficult to come to a conclusion” (ibid. p. 70). As agreed by many, the reason seems to be very much related to the difficulty of identifying the norms that govern perception of certain concepts in the target culture.

Translation norms as defined by Toury (1995) are:

The translation of general values or ideas shared by a certain community—as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate into specific performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to specifying what is proscribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in certain behavioral dimension (p. 55).

With the above definition of ‘norms’, Toury (1978) puts the condition of “providing they are not (yet) formulated as laws” (pp. 83-84) to call them ‘norms’. For a more elaborate definition of ‘norms’, see Hermans (1999, p. 80). For a detailed discussion on

norms and other related terms, see Hermans (1996). In Translation Studies TS, Pedersen (2018) refers to two types of translation norms: prescriptive and descriptive:

Prescriptive norms are based on an authority who decrees or offers advice on how to translate; in other words, such norms prescribe what translation should be like. Descriptive norms describe actual practices, based on observation of translations and translators; in other words, such norms describe what translation is like (p. 82).

In practical terms, Chesterman (1993) differentiates between three types of norms: social, ethical and technical. In AVT, technical norms are more or less global regardless of the occasional localization factors to respect local norms. National norms, however, are inevitably affected by socio-cultural factors. For technical norms in subtitling, for example, see Pedersen (2018). In subtitling, Zabalbeascoa (2005) refers to “an explicit and implicit norm in subtitling” (p. 36). In AVT in general, in addition to the above mentioned types of norms, there are also institutional and state norms. Having said that, all decisions in the translation process, as noted by Schäffner (1999), “are thus primarily governed by such norms, and not by the two language systems involved” (p. 5).

The above discussion leads to the fact that norms are set or exist to manipulate ST so that TT meets the requirements dictated by such norms. Hermans (1985) claims that translation in the first place implies “a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose” (p. 11). Despite the fact that some, as Moll (2017), for example, look at the term “manipulation” in the context of AVT as “a euphemism for lying” (p. 334) and suggest other alternatives such as ‘adapting’ and modifying, such a purpose would be served within the set norms that entail resorting to specific strategies to achieve the purpose (ibid.). In this context, Hermans (1985) uses the concept of norms to inquire into the translator’s choices. With regard to strategies, the choice would differ in accordance to the purpose whether to amuse, to inform or to persuade, for instance. According to O’sullivan (2013), areas that fall under adaptation according to local norms are such as “suspension dots; treatment of dialect; treatment of swearing; treatment of pragmatic elements”, <https://artisinitiative.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/carol-osullivan-2-methods-in-avt-research.pdf>

According to the above, norms have to be backed by policies that set guidelines to implement them. For example, see Netflix (the worldwide influential

subtitling company) Timed Text Style Guide: General Requirements at, <https://partnerhelp.netflixstudios.com/hc/en-us/articles/215758617-Timed-Text-Style-Guide-General-Requirements>.

Theoretically, the difference between ‘norms’ and ‘policies’ is that the latter is official while the former is based on values and traditions. Policies are to guide decision makers in their practice within a framework. Chief of the most common aims of ‘policies’ is to safeguard the agreed upon set norms. With reference to Netflix Timed Text Style Guide, Pedersen (2018) states that:

Regardless of which path the commissioning takes, all subtitlers are required to use their guidelines, which they call Timed Text Style Guides (TTSGs), whether they work for Netflix directly or for an intermediary. It can therefore be argued that the Netflix guidelines exert a great deal of pressure on the subtitlers’ behaviour and are thus expressions of strong norms. Since Netflix is such an influential stakeholder in the VOD world and since these norms are expressed prescriptively in the TTSGs, an investigation of these may provide a good example of strong subtitling norms in the age of VOD, even though other companies may employ (and enforce) other norms (p. 87).

For Netflix Arabic Timed Text Style Guide, see:

<https://partnerhelp.netflixstudios.com/hc/en-us/articles/215517947-Arabic-Timed-Text-Style-Guide-Style-Guide>

The problem is that when norms are conflicting, see Zabalbeascoa (2005) or governed by ideologies. Lefevere (2001) defines ideology as:

Conceptual grid that consists of opinions and attitudes deemed acceptable in a certain society at a certain time, and through which readers and translators approach texts (p. 48).

Policy, in its broad concept, is a group of measures agreed upon by “stake holders”, usually a government or a regulatory authority, to serve and protect the interests of the country, the party, the institution or other bodies whether individual or otherwise. In AVT, a distinction is often drawn between governmental and non-governmental policies. At the governmental level,

policies include regulations of license issuing, customs product release, script approval with concern of national security and public interest. Among the few scholars who addressed 'audiovisual policies in the Arab world' is Gamal (2014). Gamal describes the media scene in most Arab countries as "fragmented and unregulated. At the institutional level, they include marketing policies, audience considerations and the institution's ideology. With regard to ideology's impact on strategy choices in the context of dubbing, Rishah (2013) found in a comparison between two companies that dubbed the children animated cartoon Disney into Arabic, namely Venus and Disney, that company's ideology plays a great role in 'what' and 'how' to dub. In her words, "while censorship and manipulation are practiced on the ST" by both companies (ibid.: p. 110), "these two companies have different ideologies in relation to the selection of texts to be translated and the treatment of the social and cultural content in the original" (ibid). Among the findings emerged from investigating dubbing Disney, as pointed out by Rishah (ibid), is the fact that:

Venus uses naturalization as a translation strategy to adapt the entire English children work to meet the needs of the Arab children and their way of living, values and religion. They use this strategy especially when dealing with controversial translation such as religious issues or taboos (p. 9).

According to Rishah (2013) "Venus translates with great liberty. Its translators are able to play with the source text in various ways by changing, bridging it or by deleting or adding to it" (p. 111), see also Zitawi (2008) with regard to Contextualizing Disney comics within the Arab culture). Disney, on the other hand, "always transfers the animated cartoons exactly as they are with the same plots, clothes and values" (ibid.). Such an inconsistency among dubbing agencies is also found elsewhere in parts of the Islamic world whose cultures would be expected to impose a type of manipulation of instances that appear to be in conflict with the host culture, see, for example, Kenevisi et al (2016) discussing the situation in Iran.

Hence, norms in this context are to adhere to audience perception and readership in the target culture acceptance. 'Acceptance' according to Gambier (2018) is related to "language norms, stylistic choices, rhetorical patterns and terminology". In the absence of market research or audience surveys similar to the research carried out in Europe, however, dubbing and subtitling in the Arab world do not seem to be governed by agreed on definitive binding norms. The

situation seems to be generally based on accepted conventions and audience expectations, rather than fixed and explicit criteria. The term 'conventions' is used here in the sense they are "neither explicit nor binding", as used by Nord (1991a, p. 96), but "based on common knowledge and on the expectation of what others expect you to expect them (etc.) to do in a certain situation" (ibid.). In TS, "expectancy norms reflect the expectations of readers of a translation" Gambier (2018). Thus, to measure these two concepts, namely audience perception and acceptance is not a straightforward process as will be discussed below.

6. AUDIENCE PERCEPTION

Perception is looked at through reception studies and theories. Giovanni and Gambier (2018) offer a full detailed edited issue of 353 pages on that comprises reception studies and audiovisual translation. Theories on audience perception involve diverse issues related to psychology, sociology, philosophy and others which are beyond the scope of this study. In AVT, Gambier (2018) looks at 'perception' in relation to 'reception' as the following:

Perception could be defined as what is impressed on the eyes when watching a film and the way in which viewers represent the viewing act: how they think they watch a film, how they believe they apprehend the viewing process. Perception is made of opinions and impressions and varies over time. Studying reception means to investigate the way(s) in which AV products/performances are processed, consumed, absorbed, accepted, appreciated, interpreted, understood and remembered by the viewers, under specific contextual /socio cultural conditions and with their memories of their experience as cinema going,

https://www.academia.edu/37064026/Translation_Studies_Audiovisual_Translation_and_Reception.

Among the studies that focus on audience acceptance in AVT are those that address "Politeness in Screen Translating", see Hatim and Mason (1997).

In the context of AVT, Gambier (2018) also differentiates between the two terms: 'audience' and 'viewers'. With regard to viewers reactions to deviations from subtitling standards, Gottlieb (1995) establishes a framework for a typology of subtitle reading strategies.

Looking at the situation in the Arab world, what seems to be lacking are studies to investigate audience perception of foreign productions translated into Arabic similar to those carried out in Italy, see Antonini (2005) and in Spain, see Fuentes (2001), cited in Antonini, (2005). What is discouraging, however, is a conclusion like the following reached by Antonini (ibid.) in the context of appreciating humor in subtitled foreign productions: “what clearly emerged from the analysis of the data is that although the majority of the respondents declared that they had understood, they actually hadn’t” (p. 217). This shows the difficulty of measuring audience perception. Such a difficulty is also emphasized by Gambier (2018).

For understanding, Gambier (ibid.) refers to two concepts within what he terms the “hermeneutic circle”: “I only understand something if I already know a part of it”, which the partial previous knowledge and “my horizon of knowledge”, which, in his words, “merges with the horizon of the sender/author” (ibid.). Such an equation explains too well the extent that common shared knowledge between participants in one culture has on understanding, not only ‘overt’ information but also ‘covert’, while the opposite is true.

Among the detailed and highly technical studies that analyzed fixation-based and pupillometric data gathered using the Eye-Tracking technique on viewers’ perception focusing on the effect of visual nonverbal cues in subtitled TV anime is Caffrey (2008). For more eye-tracking research focusing on cognitive issues such as reading speed, see also Jensema, (1998); Romero-Fresco (2015) and Sandford (2015). In the Arab world, studies like these would probably be more accurate to pinpoint the degree of audience involvement and appreciation of audiovisual productions. In the context of subtitling perception by Arab viewers, Gamal (2005) reports on general audience feedback in the media on language defects and technology flaws rather than on other sociocultural issues through empirical studies carried out under research conditions:

Although no formal surveys or studies of viewer perception of the quality on Arab television is known, public opinion on the quality of subtitling on Arab screens has been made public and accessible to all through the media. Quite often articles, comments, complaints and letters to the editor of Arabic newspapers and magazines deal with “translation” errors, subtitlers’ mistakes, poor linguistic command and most significantly technical complaints

such as the font size, the colour of the subtitles and as is expected the erroneous spotting of subtitles. A large collection of these clippings has been examined for an analysis of the nature of viewer perception of the quality of subtitling, (<https://www.tib.eu/en/search/id/BLCP%3ACN067122286/Issues-in-Arabic-subtitling/>)

With regard to Arab audience, failure to address sociocultural issues could, as agreed by many, result in subtitling or dubbing to be seen as contrived. In support of this argument, as noted by Maluf (2006), is the case of the unpopularity of the dubbed American feature film, “Police Academy”, shown 1999 on MTV, the Lebanese satellite channel (p. 207). The film, in Maluf’s words, “was not well received” (ibid.). He adds “Being virtually ridiculed by the local press, the station discontinued what it had originally programmed as a weekly showing of a long U.S. feature film” (ibid.).

Having said that, one wonders what then made the significantly culturally modified dubbed version of the Simpsons’ series “did not fare very well and only 34 of the 52 adapted episodes aired”, (<https://simpsons.fandom.com/wiki/Al-Shamshoon>, accessed 28 March 2019). One guess could be that whether to modify culturally bound elements or not, what remains an added impediment in subtitling and dubbing foreign productions into Arabic is when cultural references bare rhetorical implications and extra associations in the original as the case of playing on words, for instance:

MBC, the first independent Arabic satellite TV station, wanted to make a splash, so they presented a “culturally modified” and Arabic-dubbed version of The Simpsons in 2005. It premiered to criticism and some negative reviews, but it still makes for a fascinating cultural artifact, <http://mentalfloss.com/article/57722/11-memories-arabic-version-simpsons>.

In such cases, an inevitable translation loss is inescapable, see, for example, Alabbasi (2009) with regard to subtitling and dubbing proper names and cultural references that allude to literature, history and legends in Harry Potter into Arabic. Also see Abu Yaqoub (2016) with regard to the inevitable loss in translating culture and ideology in the dubbing and

subtitling of the Disney animated films into Arabic. For translation loss in translating between English and Arabic, see Dickins et al (2002).

To test audience perception of screen translation and consequently their acceptance of translated products would not be valid without taking into consideration 'audience types'. Among the studies that focused on 'audience type' with regard to age, level of literacy and cognitive development in the context of translating humor in TV shows from English into Arabic is Abu Ya'qoub (2013). Abu Ya'qoub found that:

Translators tend to add, omit, change, or euphemize the source text terms and references to get the intended humorous effect in the target audience in relation to their ages, cognition and culture, (ibid. p. ix).

For a detailed study of viewers types, see Gambier (2018).

One issue that touches on audience perception of AVT into Arabic is whether to translate into Standard Arabic or colloquial. This seems to be governed by the production type. Historical films proved to be well received in standard Arabic as in the case of *The Messenger* and *Omar Mukhtar: lion of the desert*, which proved to be not only informative but also thrilling and entertaining (Deeb, 2018). A good number of children cartoons in Standard Arabic also proved to be highly educational and well received. As for other productions, particularly humorous ones, the trend seems to go for colloquial; but the dilemma remains: in which dialect?

In the context of subtitling from Arabic into English, one example that shows giving great consideration to audience perception is the case of the world's first self-declared Islamic satellite channel Iqraa. As stated by Moll (2017) "being a channel aimed to commend the virtues of Islam for a large audience" (p. 333), it seems it has implicit norms that cater for audience perception in the target language as the following statement indicates:

The main workflow at the center was divided between Egyptian translators, who were responsible for creating English subtitles of the original Arabic programs, and foreign editors, who were tasked with ensuring that these translations sounded "native" in English, (ibid.).

This is aimed at ensuring that the purpose of subtitling that cares of viewers' perception is fulfilled:

Iqraa translators saw their task as twofold: to act as "cultural mediators" responsible for countering perceived Western stereotypes about Muslims through subtitles, on the one hand, and, on the other, to be "preachers by proxy," transmitting correct and relevant religious knowledge to viewers ... (ibid.).

All this, however, remains individual efforts that lack an overall vision that caters for the situation in the whole of the Arab world. In this context, see Gamal (2014) for what the Arab league and, particularly, the Arab League Education, Culture and Science Organization (ALECSO) '<http://www.alecso.org>' can do in this respect

7. CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that the AVT industry in the Arab world has not gained the status it deserves; recent years have witnessed a boom in both AVT productions and AVT research. Accordingly, old claims in this context need to be further verified. In fact, there is an available bulk of exceptional work that can set the principles for investigating issues in the area between Arabic and other languages. For example, there is a substantial work done to investigate cultural, and linguistic issues but less to address technical matters. Even less work is done in studying norms, policies and audience perception. Available studies include films, series, cartoons and animations and talk shows but less to investigate documentaries. Moreover, most studies focus on subtitling and dubbing and less on other media of AVT.

With regard to policy-making, no doubt that independent agencies and self-declared channels would be more autonomous than governmental stake holders. Accordingly, with regard to policies that govern AVT production in the Arab world, apart from some censorship measures that impose restrictions on what to be broadcasted and what not aimed at preserving the local culture, caring for public taste and protecting national security interests, there does not seem to be policies that impose minimum quotas for domestic production as against foreign productions. Moreover, there does not seem to be updated mandatory rules to secure copyrights in accordance with technological advances neither fund allocations

in governments' budgets specifically for audiovisual translation projects or training programmes. Hence, at the official level, initiatives to encourage investment in AV are extremely limited.

Surveying the situation of AVT with regard to screen translation between Arabic and other languages, particularly the English language, we find that two things need to be addressed: the volume and variety of productions and the quality and diversity of scholarly research seriously addressing the topic.

Research done to investigate companies' policies show inconsistency among subtitling and dubbing agencies with regard to audience perception. Policies seem to be governed by ideologies more than norms.

Last remark is that while translating the dialogues with no bearing to Arab reality could result in audience negative perception and the unpopularity of the production, the opposite does not, however, guarantee that the production would be well received. Accordingly, the situation is not a matter of either "domestication" or "foreignization" but it could be a mixture of both.

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1. Deeb, Zakia. (2018). The Manipulation of Power Game and Handling of Culturally-bound Elements in the Dubbing and Subtitling of the Film —Omar Mukhtar: Lion of the Desert. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*. 7 issue 12, 1348-1356.
2. Deeb, Zakia. (2017). True or False questions in translation oriented research methodology exams – the reality between myth and truth. *Journal of Translator Education and Translation Studies*, (2) 4, 45-61 <http://www.tetsjournal.org>
3. Deeb, Zakia. (2013). Markers of Register Shift in Students Translation: The Case of Lady Jane Digby Biography. The 1st International Conference on Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies, 22-24 August 2013, 482-495.

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