| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Subtitling of Stand-up Comedies: Strategies and Challenges: The Case of "The American Dream" by Gad Elmaleh

Dr. Abdellah Ghazi
EFL Teacher- Marrakech, Morocco
Corresponding Author: Dr. Abdellah Ghazi, **E-mail**: ghazi1ma@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

The current study aims to evaluate the translation strategies used in the subtitling of the stand-up comedy entitled "The American Dream," performed by the Moroccan-French comedian Gad Elmaleh and broadcasted on Netflix. It is taken for granted that translation is needed to bridge communication between two languages and between cultures. Nowadays, however, digital translation has changed the way information is created and accessed to the extent that it is now consumed via the screen. Examining the difficulties of English-to-Arabic subtitling is another primary goal of this research. The task gets harder when the source text is a humoristic one because humour touches many areas of people's lives. Humour is always difficult to subtitle as it is often linked to cultural and linguistic factors. Though humour is universal, some humour is culturally specific and cannot be funny if you are not part of the target culture. This paper identifies the main strategies translators use to render the source text into Arabic. It will also take a look at the linguistic, cultural, and technical challenges that may hinder communication. In the case of humour, the intended meaning is lost, and translation does not perform its tasks. Having some cultural references for this show will allow us to understand and analyse the translation and identify the challenges, losses, and inaccuracies.

| KEYWORDS

Audio-visual Translation; Subtitling; Translation Strategies; Translation Challenges; Cultural Items.

1. Introduction

The act of translation is an indispensable element of communication and language. Audiovisual translation is a critical component that is employed in a variety of industries, including advertising, television, and cinema. Today, subtitling is one of the most frequently employed methods of audiovisual translation. Furthermore, the process of subtitling may become even more intricate when dealing with humorous texts. This article is divided into two sections: a theoretical segment and a practical one. Theoretical guidelines regarding audiovisual translation and subtitling will be introduced in the theoretical section. Following that, we will examine various features of the subtitling process of "The American Dream", a humorous show that was broadcasted on Netflix and performed by the Moroccan-French artist Gad Elmaleh. So, this paper tends to identify the translation strategies used by the translator to render the source text into Arabic. It will also take a look at the linguistic, cultural, and technical challenges that may hinder communication. The paper focuses on the subtitling process of the forementioned TV show, specifically discussing the cultural context, examining the key disparities between English and Arabic subtitles, and proposing methods to address translation mistakes. Then, ending with results and conclusions drowned out from the study of the sections and samples in the text previously mentioned.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Audiovisual Translation

For many years, translation studies have ignored audiovisual translation. Today, the situation has radically changed, and many specialists are now focused on the distinction between subtitling and dubbing. Audiovisual translation is a fast growing field of study in the translation research domain. A diverse range of works have been published, and academic studies on the topic have begun to flourish as a result of the release of several articles and books. With the advancement and appearance of new technological inventions, as well as the emergence of new forms of international and intercultural communication, new kinds of translation have emerged, as well as the necessity to make this sector accessible to a broad audience. As a result, new terminology has been coined as an alternative to audiovisual translation; for instance, film translation, television translation, multimedia translation, and so on are only a few examples. However, experts begin to discuss "screen translation," which is a term that refers to the translation of text on a computer screen.

According to Cintas and Remael (2006), audiovisual translation refers to the translation of products in which materials from other media supplement the verbal component. "Audiovisual translation" is defined by Delia Chiaro, cited in (Munday, 2008, p.25), as "the transfer of the linguistic components present in audiovisual works and products from one language to another. Feature films, television shows, theatrical plays, musicals, operas, web pages, and video games are just a few of the many audiovisual works that need to be translated. Audiovisuals, as the name implies, are designed to be heard (audio) and seen (visual) at the same time, but they are primarily intended to be viewed." This means that audiovisual translation has broadened to include a wide range of industries and is no longer limited to television and film. The importance of this area of research has been boosted by technical advancements.

Audiovisual translation is a relatively new branch of translation theory and research. Due to the limits imposed by the technical and linguistic features of audiovisual products, audiovisual translations encounter numerous obstacles. Translators have been working diligently to improve their translations in order to fulfill the needs of the intended audience. As a result, audiovisual translating necessitates the use of specific methodologies. First, translators must not only work with written texts but also with other forms of multimedia art in order to synchronize verbal and nonverbal elements. Second, translation strategies are evaluated not just within the specific scenario but also within the broader context of the entire audiovisual product. The rise of new technology has led to the development of new kinds of international and intercultural communication, thereby resulting in new types of translation, as mentioned by Nataliia Matkivska (2004).

2.2 Audiovisual Translation Types
2.2.1 Intralingual audiovisual translation:

This type of translation is distinguished by the fact that the source and target languages are the same. It is a type of linguistic material transfer within the same language. It entails a transition from spoken to written language. Using approaches such as paraphrases to describe the content in alternative words is sometimes necessary. There are four forms of intralingual translation: The first is SDH, which is designed for those who have hearing problems. In the Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies, Baker and Saldanha (2009:15) state that this type of translation may create paralinguistic information that those people are unable to access, such as the irony of a statement about a knock on a door.

The audio description for the visual parts of an audiovisual product is the second sort of intralingual translation. It entails a sort of parallel narrative that runs alongside the main language and recounts everything seen in the film or on stage. It may also incorporate actions, facial expressions, attire, or scenery descriptions to aid the blind in comprehending the plot of the story. (Cintas & Remael, 2006).

Live translation is the third type of intralingual translation. It's also known as re-speaking, which necessitates some technical assistance, such as the use of special keyboards that let the typewriter simultaneously press two or more keys or create syllables rather than single letters. They also have software that recognizes voices. As a result, the subtitler repeats what is on screen while the software converts the utterance into written lines. (Cintas & Ramael, 2006).

For opera and film, the fourth form is known as surtitling. During a musical performance or an opera, subtitles are provided. The lyrics are shown over the scene, either translated or transcribed. They are either employed to transcribe difficult-to-understand lyrics or to translate the meaning of the songs into the audience's language. A super-tilting machine is used to depict them. (Cintas & Remael, 2006). Surtitles are used to express the meaning of what is being sung rather than the style of singing. The audience has come to see the opera, not the subtitles; thus, titles should be discreet and unobtrusive. Transparency, if not complete invisibility, should be the subtitler's goal.

2.2.2 Interlingual Audiovisual Translation:

Interlingual translation is the substitution of elements from one language with equivalent elements from another language. Revoicing is the first sort of interlingual audio-visual translation. It is defined by Karamitroglou (2000:5) as "the term used to refer to the audiovisual language transfer methods of dubbing, narration, and free commentary collectively, and describes the attempt to cover (partly or entirely) the spoken source text of an original audiovisual production by a new spoken target.". Dubbing completely replaces the spoken source text with the target text, which is why it is also known as lip-sync dubbing. It corresponds to the original's lip movements. Voice-overs, on the other hand, do not emphasize the original text's lip movements or the accuracy of the translation. It is an uninhibited translation of the source language into the target language. It is sometimes supplemented with elements not found in the source texts, such as journalistic comments. Karamitroglou, (ibid).

2.2.3 Subtitling:

Within the larger field of translation studies, subtitling is one of the most growing topics. An area that has been overlooked by researchers but has gained attraction in the 1990s as a result of the development of audiovisual production and delivery. According to Cronin (1996), "Globally, this is the age of mass communications, of multimedia experiences, and a world where audiences demand the right to share the most recent text, be it a film, a song, or a book, across cultures at the same time," which explains why the world markets are flooded with American productions.

Subtitling is defined as a translation practice that involves displaying a written text, usually on the lower half of the screen, that attempts to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, etc.) and information contained on the sound track (songs, voices off). Szarkowski, (2005). Cintas & Ramael (2007) go on to say that subtitling is a technique in which the original sound track is retained, and a shift from spoken to written form is accomplished by adding text to the screen. It has a number of advantages over dubbing. Hearing the original language while reading the dialogue in context, for example, provides a dynamic atmosphere for pupils to consolidate what they are learning while also expanding their vocabulary.

In a natural situation, individuals become acquainted with and absorb the culture of a foreign language. (Cintas,2007). It's also less expensive than dubbing, and it's a product of globalization. Subtitling is an important facilitating and target-oriented technology that should be considered since it helps audiences that are viewing, listening, and reading at the same time and who frequently have to rely on the written channel. (Cintas, 2007). The subtitler serves as a mediator, participating in the act of communication in order to ensure that the new audience gets the most out of the film or audiovisual program while preserving the substance of the source text and adhering to certain limits. (Cintas, 2007).

Subtitling is defined by Luyken et al. (1991, p.31) as "a condensed textual translation of the original conversation that appears as lines of text, usually at the bottom of the screen." Subtitles appear and fade in rhythm with the original dialogue and are virtually always applied to the screen image as a post-production operation." This means that subtitles must meet particular reading standards and be as brief as possible in order to avoid diverting viewers' attention away from the show.

2.2.4 Technical elements in subtitling include:

Two lines of text are usually the standard. As far as readability is concerned, a one-sentence subtitle is perfect.

Time: the text should be balanced with the proper reading time setting at all times. If viewers do not have time to read the subtitles, they may fail to serve their objective.

The size of the characters, their placement on the screen, and the technology used for subtitle projection in the theater (DTS, Dolby, and so on), TV transmission, DVD, and so on.

Textual features, on the other hand, include the following:

Subtitles should just provide the most basic linguistic information, allowing viewers' eyes to follow the sights and actions. The subtitlers' job is to create the most complete subtitles possible so that no one is left out. The placement of the subtitles on the screen, as well as the lines and words themselves, should improve readability. The subtitles' syntactic structure must be considered. The least amount of effort is required to grasp its meaning.

Textuality issues: The visual information typically aids viewers in processing the subtitles, which compensates for the little verbal information they carry to some extent. Furthermore, superfluous speech parts must be removed.

Change of mode: The transition from speech to writing poses a number of obstacles, all of which are essential aspects of spontaneous speech. Slips of the tongue, pauses, false starts, unfinished words, ungrammatical construction, and so on are difficult or impossible to represent in writing; the same is true for subtitling dialectal idiolectal pronunciation.

Finally, there are linguistic limitations. Grammar and word order issues, as well as issues relating to cross-cultural shifts, are among the most difficult to deal with; therefore, most subtitlers prefer to use a reduction technique. When it comes to subtitling, this is by far the most essential and commonly employed approach. Due to the fact that they may acquire information straight from the picture or the sound track, certain aspects of interpersonal and textual meaning can be ignored. An important part of the subtitling process is the filtering of information that may be lost as a result of the process. When it comes to conveying nuance, the written word just cannot compete with spoken language.

According to Cintas, subtitles must appear and remain for a sufficient period of time in order for viewers to understand the message. As a result, the length of time allotted for the appearance of subtitles and for adequate lip synchronization determines the length of time that the audience comprehends the message. Another consideration is that subtitles should not contradict what the characters are doing on the screen in order to ensure that the correct message is conveyed. Cintas & Rameal (2014).

3. Methodology

The primary goal of the current study is to evaluate the problems associated with subtitling English into Arabic-language films. The information is derived from several segments of Gad Elmaleh's stand-up show "The American Dream," which was performed in the United States and broadcast on the Netflix TV channel. A sample of sentences with subtitles were picked and put into sharp focus. The methodology used in this article is a comparative approach that involves the source text and the target text. The purpose of this study is to discuss audiovisual translation in the context of translation theory and practice by investigating the features of audio-visual translation that influence the manner in which it is accomplished, the types of translation, and the translation strategies that are used. The two texts are compared based on the strategies used, the challenges faced, and the evaluation of the inaccuracies. The aim of this comparative study is to compare the source text to the target text. The use of two different translations will allow for a triangulation of the results to underline anything in the source text that could be culturally marked and that involves a play on words or made-up words that would have no predetermined equivalent in the target language, or that would be otherwise difficult to translate.

4. Results and Discussion
4.1 Data Analysis
4.1.1 Linguistic issues
The linguistic difficulties present a challenge for the translator, and this challenge becomes even greater for the subtitler as a result of the additional technical limitations. For example, the impact on syntax, lexical choice, collocations, idioms, and other aspects of language used in the subtitling process would be immeasurable. For the purpose of corroboration and diversification of our argument, let us discuss various linguistic problems, with some illustrative examples, to see how easy or difficult the subtitling task was.

4.1.2 Word Choice
Drawing a comparison between the source text and the target text, we notice that the subtitler failed to make the right choice of words. This can be explained either by using a strategy that did not contribute to achieving equivalence, for instance,

<div align="center">

I am browsing

أنا استطلع

</div>

When a shop assistant asks a customer for help while they are shopping, the natives of the USA frequently use the aforementioned phrase. They simply reply that they are not intending to make any purchases. The word browsing is a technical term used when we are surfing online and moving from one page or from a website to another. The Arabic literal translation could be أنا أتصفح, which can be used when talking about the internet, books, or newspapers. The subtitler has used أنا استطلع. This phrase means that one is conducting a survey. However, both words do not convey the right meaning, and the chosen word has led to a misunderstanding of the source text. Opting for this translation strategy is perhaps the worst procedure because it ignores the context in which the expression is used, giving rise to unnatural Arabic.

<div align="center">

She said, "Oh, that would be dope."

قالت،سيكون ذلك تحشيشيا للغاية

</div>

The literal translation used in this case has failed to convey the right meaning. The expression "would dope means" "I am too young to date." So, the subtitler has used the proper meaning of the word dope without referring to the other contexts in which the same word can be used. According to Kharma and Hajjaj (1989, pp.72–75), "an idiom is a fixed phrase whose meaning cannot be predicted from a knowledge of the meaning of the individual words. They are regarded as a channel for international communication; translating them into the target culture will result in an inaccurate rendering". Thus, choosing formal equivalence has resulted in an anomalous translation. An alternative could be functional equivalence.

But you said, "airport

ولكنك قلت 'متار

In this example of subtitling, there is a spelling error. The translation is conducted from oral to written. The target audience will read a sentence that is unclear to them and cannot relate it to the source text. The word should be written as "مطار" which means "airport".

Nouveau Riche is somebody who can afford traveling business class

حديث نعمة هو شخص قادر على تحمل اجور السفر بالدرجة الأولى

The word اجور fails to transfer the right meaning. It refers to salary rather than what the subtitler is intending to convey. اجور is income, but the source text intends to express an inability to afford travel expenses.

لا اقوم ب "إ.م.ع. PDA She said, "I don't do"

قلت لست مصابا ب (اس تي دي)."STD no" I said, but

The use of acronyms to convey a specific message is not efficient. The target reader has no previous notions or knowledge about what the subtitler is trying to point out. Acronyms often stand for specific terms. The subtitler should have opted for another alternative to ease comprehension.

4.1.3 Grammatical Inaccuracies

تسبح فيه بعض "السموك

A few foosh swimming inside

The target reader may have difficulty understanding the plural form used in this context. For an Arabic reader, the term "السموك" does not represent the plural of the word fish. It should be أسماك, taking into account the time for the reader to grasp the meaning. This will almost certainly result in a lack of humorous content.

أنا متأكد من انكم سمعت تلك القصة مرات عديدة

I am sure you have heard this story many times

A quick look at this subtitled form shows an ungrammatical structure. The subtitler has used the plural pronoun انكم (you) to address the singular سمعت form of the verb. There may be confusion between the singular and plural forms. The right form should be as follows: أنا متأكد من انك سمعت تلك القصة I am sure you have heard this story many times.

4.1.4 Cultural Challenges

When it comes to cultural challenges, humor is the most common, owing to the fact that, in certain humoristic shows, such as the one under scrutiny, "The American Dream," laughter is more important than understanding the plot. Among the most difficult cultural challenges for translators are local or national jokes.

وقلت للسائق: " خذني الى مطار (دجى اف كي

and I said the driver please take me to JFK airport.

This example represents a cultural challenge related to subtitling. The translation used may not be familiar to the audience. Not everyone is well informed about the world's airports. If one does not know where that airport is, he may not be able to grasp the intended message. So, a domestication strategy of translation could be adequate in this case. Choosing a famous airport in one of the Arab world's cities. Yet the use of the word airport in Arabic can help the target audience understand its meaning.

إنهم يتحدثون مع شخص

Talking to another guy

<div dir="rtl">

من الواضح انه لا يتفوه ببنت شفة
</div>

Who apparently never says anything

The phrase بنت شفة is hard to recognize even for native Arabic speakers. It is known that Arabic differs from one country to another. Countries that do not speak classic Arabic on a daily basis, such as in the case of North African countries, may not get the meaning. So, the subtitler should have opted for a more appropriate strategy.

<div dir="rtl">

فطور طوال اليوم
</div>

All-day breakfasts

What is confusing about this subtitling is the cultural understanding. Target readers will question the fact that breakfast takes place the whole day long in some countries, and probably there is no lunch or dinner. The subtitler should have used a phrase that is clearer to ease comprehension.

<div dir="rtl">

غداء طوال الليل
</div>

all-night lunch

Here is another example that can be confusing to understand. The target reader may think that lunch is served all night long. In fact, the thing is that either breakfast or dinner are as huge as lunch. Another way of rendering this sentence can be more adequate for achieving equivalence.

4.1.5 Technical Challenges

Leppihalme (1994) and Cintas and Remael (2010) state that this is the most common type of challenge in the subtitling process and that it places some restrictions on the work of the translator in comparison to translating written texts. It was decided that they would be divided into two groups.

Space: Translators are restricted to a limited number of characters through the subtitling process, which is approximately (37 +, -) characters per line, with a maximum of two lines for one image. The number of characters used may vary slightly from one language to another.

<div dir="rtl">

أرغب في المشي في تلك الشوارع المتعرجة
</div>

I want to walk in those winding

<div dir="rtl">

.والمرصوفة بالحجارة تحت ضوء القمر
</div>

Cobblestone streets by the moonlight

These two translations fail to respect the number of characters per translation. About 50 characters have been counted here.

<div dir="rtl">

كنت في فندق في احدى الأيام

ورأيت رجلا عند المائدة المفتوحة
</div>

Another case that exceeded the number of characters and did not abide by the technical rules of subtitling.

There is also the challenge of missing translation when the actor is performing but no subtitling is provided. It is not a question of synchronization but of unprovided texts.

These technical issues can generate Another technical limitation is that the allowed time for subtitles on the screen is no more than six seconds, which means that the content must be condensed to fit within the character limits as well as the time allowed for the subtitle to be displayed on the screen. This may have an impact on the viewers' ability to understand the subtitles and comprehend the content.

Spotting: The subtitle on the screen must be aligned with the dialogue in order for it to be spotted. Nevertheless, subtitles may not only include the dialogue of the characters or narrators, but they may also include other meaningful signs, letters, or any other written words that are not directly related to the dialogue (Cintas & Remael, 2010). Many cases were noticed where signs, interjections, and so on were not translated.

4.2 Strategies and procedures

Within an audiovisual context, Cintas and Remael (2014) have proposed the following strategies for translating cultural references:

Loan, Calque or literal translation, explicitation, substitution, transposition, Lexical recreation, Lexical recreation, compensation, omission, and addition.

In the order that they appear in the show, the subtitler's typical tactics are as follows:

A loan is when the ST word or phrase is incorporated directly into the TT without any alterations, either because no translation is possible or because both languages use the same word. For example:

<div align="center">

Nouveau riche

حديث نعمة

Life is hard, and if you die, you die. C'est la vie.

الحياة صعبة وبعدها الموت، وهذه هي الحياة

</div>

Calque is a literal translation.

<div align="center">

He said, "Hello and welcome. How are we doing today?"

قال اهلا و سهلا. كيف احوالنا اليوم؟"

Don't reach for the stars; you will never make it.

لا تصبو الى نجوم لن تبلغها

</div>

Explicitation can take the form of specification with a hyponym or generalization with a hypernym or superordinate, with the latter being more common in subtitling. According to Cintas and Remael (2014), this technique results in the loss of specificity that is typical of subtitling, and it also demonstrates that it is not always possible to choose the shortest word available, as clarity may be more important.

<div align="center">

She said, "I don't do P.D.A."

قالت، "لا اقوم ب (إ.م.ع)   P.D. A stands for Public Display of Affection.

</div>

Transposition involves replacing a cultural concept from one culture with one from another.

Lexical recreation is required when an ST speaker makes up a word. For example, the use of a made-up word such as:

<div align="center">

"اقول، "ماذا يجري معك بحق الجحيم ياصديقي؟

I am like, "What the hell is going on with going with you, my friend?"

</div>

Compensating for a translational loss in one instance by overtranslating or adding something in another is known as compensation. This strategy, according to Cintas and Remael (2014: 206), is "a blessing for the translation of humorous films."

The last two strategies, omission, and addition, refer to the act of removing or including words, phrases, or other information as appropriate. Additions are also used in subtitling to provide additional clarification, particularly in the case of cultural references that require further explanation. Many cases of those strategies are spotted during the subtitling process. There are times when no subtitling is provided, even when the actor is delivering his speech.

4.3 Deletion

<div align="center">

Talking to another guy who apparently says anything

انهم يتحدثون مع شخص من الواضح انه لايتفوه ببنت شفة

</div>

It is critical to emphasize that the use of these translation procedures or strategies should not be viewed in isolation but rather in context. Furthermore, some procedures cannot be considered better or more appropriate than others because their application is dependent on the goal of the translation, the translator's attempt to subvert or maintain the source culture, the potential readers, the cultural distance between the SL and the TL, and so on. However, one thing that we are sure of is that translating humor is one of the most challenging challenges translators face. Our suggestions for an appropriate translation could be summarized as:

- Human translation requires multiple drafts and countless edits to nail the intended tone and effect of the original jokes.
- A translator may have to rewrite the wordplay in a way that works in the target language.
- Making a direct translation may not align with the set goals.
- Word play can be lost upon translation into a different language.

- Subtitling reduces the intended meaning of laughter.

5. Conclusion

The process of subtitling comedy from English to Arabic is complex and goes beyond simple language translation. A thorough comprehension of the source and target cultures, the capacity to communicate complex concepts, and the inventive adaptation of cultural allusions and idioms are necessary for a successful translation. Because Arabic- and English-speaking audiences have different cultural backgrounds, translators must navigate challenges such as differing senses of humor, societal norms, and language structures. A lot of humor is based on wordplay, idioms, and cultural allusions, which are difficult to translate. Puns and jokes that are based on certain cultural phenomena, for example, might not have direct Arabic translations, so creative solutions are needed to maintain the humor.

Subtitlers can accomplish this by employing strategies like localization, in which allusions and jokes are modified to better suit the target audience's cultural background. This could entail shifting the joke's context or replacing a culturally particular reference with one that Arabic viewers would find more relatable. Moreover, regional dialects and colloquial language can improve the relatability and authenticity of the translated material.

6. Study Limitations and Future Research

Based on the findings of this research, a number of limitations are to be carefully considered. Firstly, it is necessary to analyse the particular features of the show, such as its intended audience, linguistic subtleties, and cultural background. Knowing these components makes it easier to choose a subtitling approach that best fits the movie's overall objectives. The demographics of the target audience, especially their level of linguistic and cultural proficiency, should also be taken into account. Customizing the subtitling strategy to the viewer's preferences and expectations can improve the viewing experience overall. Furthermore, the majority of subtitling research appears to be concentrated on linguistic elements, such as dialogue and textual translations. Even though language is obviously important when subtitling, it is necessary to recognize that a show's visual and audio elements also contribute significantly to meaning and enhance the viewing experience. But, it appears that the research technique has not given these visual and audio components enough consideration. The show's visual and audio elements, such as music, facial expressions, and nonverbal clues, all add to the scene's overall story and emotional impact. These components frequently express nuanced aspects of meaning, cultural background, and character emotions that words alone might not be able to adequately portray. Characters' body language and facial expressions, for instance, might portray emotions like joy, grief, or rage, giving their interactions and relationships more nuance.

To solve the limitations identified, a comprehensive approach is necessary, which probably relates to difficulties in subtitling across varied cultural contexts. This strategy calls for more study, which means digging deeper into the corpus of existing information about subtitling. Researchers may investigate diverse facets, including but not limited to linguistic subtleties, cultural sensitivities, technical innovations, and audience preferences. By uncovering new insights and trends, researchers can better understand the complexities involved in subtitling across different cultures.

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