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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Between Educational and Expressive Functions in Arabic-Dubbed Anime

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**ABSTRACT**

This research aims to investigate the function and themes of Arabic-dubbed anime originally released between 1985 and 2020 and aired on SpaceToon. To classify the function(s) of Arabic-dubbed anime, a fifth function was proposed, i.e., educational. Unlike the expressive and informative text types, the educational text types have informative and operative qualities. Using a qualitative and quantitative descriptive analysis, the research looked at 60 opening title sequence lyrics to assess their use of rhyme, language variety, and themes. The research has found that only rhyme analysis indicated an expressive function, whereas the language variety and theme analyses indicated an educational function, leading Arabic-dubbed anime to be classified as mainly educational. Analysis of themes has shown determination, adventure and excitement to be the most occurring themes throughout the data. Themes, such as separations, destruction and Arabism, were kept to a minimum. This, however, does not mean nationalism and unity were scarce as well. In fact, the Chi-square analysis has shown that these themes occurred more than expected during the 1990s. The analysis also identified other educational themes that spiked during the 1990s, but they were less apparent in the 2000s and 2010s when some expressive themes were observed to rise. This indicates a shift of the Arabic-dubbed anime towards the expressive function since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**KEYWORDS**

Translated Children's Literature, Anime, Dubbing, Text Types, Young Adult, Culture

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### 1. Introduction

Children's literature has many genres, ranging from short stories, commonly in the form of picturebooks, to songs, poems, manga, comics, novels, cartoons, and anime. Some characteristics, functions, themes, and targeted age group(s) are shared between some or all these genres, whereas others are unique to (a) genre(s). The presence of aesthetic language, for example, can be expected to be found in all literary genres. However, onomatopoeia is common in manga and comics, and metre, rhythm, and rhyme are common in poetry and songs. Anime can target all children's age groups, including adults (Clements, 2013); on the contrary, picturebooks commonly target younger children. Therefore, it is not possible to assume one function for all the children's literary genres, nor assume that all these genres will revolve around the same themes. Each of these genres should be investigated separately.

Starting in Japan and coined in the 1950s, anime has spread globally since the 1950s and has significantly grown in popularity across the second half of the 20th century (Clements, 2013). By 2009, anime was distributed in 139 countries, making Masuda Hiromichi call anime truly global (Clements, 2013, p. 179). Memories of early animations dubbed in Arabic were mostly Japanese, e.g., UFO Robot Grendizer, Future Boy Conan and Heidi, Girl of the Alps, known in Arabic as جريندايزر, ولينا, عدنان وهايدي, respectively. Regardless of its popularity across both children and adult viewers, Arabic-dubbed anime has not been as popular in research, resulting in a lack of understanding of this field.

Literature generally has an expressive function, as Reiss (2000, p. 163) indicates in her seminal work on text types. Reiss (2000, p. 163) divides texts into three types based on the function they serve: informative, expressive, and operative. However, these three types do not serve all types of texts, as some research in children's literature has pointed out their educational function (Alsaleh, 2019; Mdallel, 2003, 2004; Suleiman, 2005).

Themes present or absent in Arabic translated children's literature have been investigated by some scholars. Nevertheless, no previous research has systematically investigated the themes present in Arabic-dubbed anime. To investigate both the function and themes of Arabic-dubbed anime, this research paper asks two questions:

1. What is the function of Arabic-dubbed anime released between 1985 and 2020?
2. What themes are found in the lyrics of Arabic-dubbed anime's opening title sequences produced between 1985 and 2020?

## 2. Literature Review

Research into Arabic-translated children's literature has seen some attention from researchers but remains a relatively new emerging field. Although some research has investigated the function of Arabic-translated children's literature, either generally or in certain genres, very few studies have systematically investigated the function of each translated children's literary genre. One of the few researchers who systematically investigated the function of an Arabic-translated children's literary genre is Al-Daragi (2016). Al-Daragi's research has looked at Arabic-translated novels and has found that they have both educational and expressive functions. Al-Daragi has observed the shift from a heavily adapted Arabic translation of Harry Potter novels to almost no adaptation. This indicates a shift from educational to expressive function, particularly in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Harry Potter books, i.e., *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, published in Arabic around 2005-2007. Since the first Arabic translation of the Harry Potter novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, was published around 2002, the shift was rapid within around 5 years.

Unlike Al-Daragi (2016), most studies discuss the function of Arabic-translated children's literature within a different research scope. As a byproduct of her picturebooks' analysis to investigate the status and norms of Arabic-translated picturebooks, Alsaleh (2019) reported the apparent educational function found in this genre. One of the observed norms was the dominance of social and moral values in translated picturebooks, indicating the use of picturebooks as an educational tool for young children. Similarly, Alsiary's (2016) bibliographical analysis of translated books by Saudi publishers from 1997-2016 has revealed the educational nature of translated children's literature. The shift of function identified in film translation, for example, by Al-Daragi (2016) has not been observed in picturebooks investigated by Alsaleh (2019) and Alsiary (2016). Thus, although both Alsaleh's (2019) and Alsiary's (2016) observations contributed to the understanding of how picturebooks are used for educational purposes and what themes and patterns are found in translated picturebooks that are sold in the Saudi market, a study on the function and themes of anime is still needed.

Themes present in literary works could vary by genre, age group, language pair, and time. In the late 1960s USA, Macleod's (1994) investigation of adolescent literary works showed the presence of certain themes, such as teenage sexuality, racial conflict, drug dependency, and divorce. In Scandinavian children's literature, Nikolajeva (p. 227 1998) has pointed out the dark endings that have become common towards the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where themes like suicide, death of main characters, despair, and sorrow are present. However, Arabic translated and original literature in Saudi Arabia lacked some of these themes but saw other themes emerging. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Alsudairi (2000) concluded that Saudi children's literature is dominantly religious, i.e., educating children about Islam, and idealistic, i.e., showing well-mannered, good, obedient children.

In Arabic-translated children's literature, Alsaleh (2019) concluded that there was an absence of certain themes, i.e., alcohol and racial conflict, in picturebooks sold in the Saudi market between 2010 and 2016. Nevertheless, her study found other themes present in Arabic-translated picturebooks, i.e., magic, myths, violence, and social and moral values. Unlike Alsaleh's (2019) study, the themes found in translated children's literature are usually investigated in a limited scope, e.g., culturally specific items, taboos, and speech acts. In her multimodal analysis of adopted translation strategies of some Disney comics published between 1993 and 2001 by Egyptian, Emirati, and Kuwaiti publishers, Zitawi (2008) has pointed out the sensitivity of certain themes that have gone through some modification before they can be published. These themes were mostly visual and included women's immodest clothing, pigs, and top hats, as the latter is perceived to be symbolic of Jewish people. On manga translation, Alkhaldi (2024) investigated Arabic manga translation in the Saudi market and observed the sensitivity to alcohol, even though the manga was targeted at young adults above 15 years old. The non-presence of alcohol in Arabic-translated children's literature has also been observed in picturebooks (cf. Alsaleh, 2019; Alsiary, 2016). Nevertheless, alcohol was present in Arabic-translated children's films, i.e., *Harry Potter*, but was kept to a minimum (Altahri, 2013, p. 179), showing how themes could vary by genre.

Altahri's (2013) analysis of the subtitles of eight Harry Potter films released between 2001 and 2011 included other culturally specific items, such as names, magic references, food, weights and measures, transportation, and songs. As with alcohol, most of the cultural references have been maintained in translation. Moreover, some of these references, i.e., food and magic, have been translated using explication (Altahri, 2013, p. 254). Not all film translators opted for a SL-oriented method. Alsuheim (2020) has reported shifts in sensitive themes deemed socially or culturally inappropriate, where these were omitted or modified in three Disney films. These include themes related to love and swear words. In her comparative analysis of *The Loud House* dubbed by a regional streaming platform, i.e., Shahid, and an international streaming platform, i.e., Netflix, Alsuheim (2024) has found that both tailored the text to meet the expectations of the target viewers. Interestingly, although both platforms have adopted TL-oriented methods, Alsuheim found a greater number of shifts in Netflix translations of negative face-threatening acts compared to Shahid's. The observed shifts could be a result of the educational system's control of translated children's literature, showing the educational function of translated children's cartoons.

In Arabic-dubbed Russian TV series, *Masha and the Bear*, Olwi et al. (2022) studied the verbal cultural references that can be sensitive to the Arab culture and the translation strategies used in correlation with the para-verbal and the non-verbal. Olwi et al. (2022) analysis found various cultural references, such as magic, religion (e.g., Christmas and Santa Claus), animal names (e.g., guinea pig), food (e.g., Portobello mushroom), and dances (e.g., moonwalk). Similar to Alsuheim's (2020, 2024) findings, the dubbers opted for a TL-oriented method, where these themes were paraphrased, substituted, and generalised (Olwi et al., 2022, pp. 159–161).

Since the medium, age group, and modes of picturebooks, manga, and comics are different from those in anime; and since the previous studies in these genres, as well as in cartoons and films, have looked at the themes and/or function from a limited perspective, a dedicated study of Arabic-dubbed anime is needed. Although films and cartoons are similar to anime in the sense that all are audiovisual products, this does not necessarily mean that their function and themes will be identical. Additionally, anime, as opposed to cartoons and animated films, is originally Japanese rather than English or Western. This could lead to different results than those found in films and cartoons.

### **3. Methodology**

Since Arabic is the official language of 22 countries across the MENA region, the social and cultural context can vary from one country to another. However, as the anime aired on SpaceToon, a free satellite channel targeting the MENA region, the translation was tailored to the broad context of the Arab culture rather than a specific Arab country or country. Thus, the research can be taken from the perspective of the broad target Arab audience. The research adopts a quantitative and qualitative descriptive analysis to investigate the functions and themes present in Arabic-dubbed anime. To understand the text-types, a new perspective based on Reiss's (2000) text typology will be introduced in the next section. The research data, including its genre and time frame, will be discussed next. Finally, the analytical framework will be introduced at the end of the methodology section.

#### **3.1 Text types, text functions**

As pointed out earlier, Reiss's (2000, p. 163) typology of basic text types is informative, expressive, and operative. Informative texts aim to give the reader information about the real world (Nord, 2018, p. 35). Expressive texts aim to create an aesthetic effect on the reader at the expense of information (Nord, 2018, p. 36). Lastly, the operative texts aim to achieve an extralinguistic effect on the reader by utilising both content and form (Nord, 2018, p. 36). Nevertheless, being aware of multimodal nature of some texts, Reiss et al. (2014, p. 187) added a 'hyper-type' called *multimedial*, which coexists with the other three basic text types. Therefore, anime and TV series of a literary nature would be categorised as multimedial and expressive.

Reiss's typology, even though expanded to acknowledge multimodal texts, does not serve all the potential functions present in children's literary texts. It has been previously noted that some research has revealed that original and translated children's literature has an educational function (Alsaleh, 2019; Mdallel, 2003, 2004; Suleiman, 2005). However, this category does not exist in Reiss's (2000, p. 163) typology. Literary texts with an educational function, besides their expressive function, can give information and persuade the reader to act/think in a particular way. Therefore, the education function in children's literature is not merely informative. It is both informative and operative. In the children's poem *TV Dinner*, for example, by Steve Turner (1997), the text tells the story of a curious boy who asked his father if he could watch his sandwich and eat the TV instead. As a poem, it has an expressive function present in its aesthetic language and the musicality of its rhythms and rhymes. Nevertheless, the poem also states facts, e.g. when you leave out your sandwich for a long time, mould will grow on it. An operative function is also present throughout the *TV Dinner* poem, particularly in the last stanza when the father says, 'It's best to leave things as they are', trying to steer away his son from eating the TV and watching his sandwich, after pointing out the unpleasant turnout of his idea.

Educational function in literature should not be confused with purely educational function in some informative texts, such as school textbooks, which are roughly based on facts and scientific information. In most of these 'purely' informative texts, the educational

function is the main and only function. Math and science school textbooks, for example, have no expressive or operative functions. Even when literature is used in educational settings, e.g., schools, to improve reading skills and expand students' vocabulary, this does not strip away their expressive function. Therefore, the language used in purely texts, e.g., school textbooks, is plain, while the language used in informative literary texts, including those used for learning purposes, is artistic and aesthetic.

Reiss (2000) has pointed out that not all text genres are 'pure': a text can be a hybrid of more than one function. For example, a political speech can give information and facts and, at the same time, tries to persuade the listeners to believe or act in favour of the politician. In children's literary texts, the expressive function is always visible in the form of a scale (see Figure 1 below), starting with a low presence of the expressive function (far left in Figure 1) to a high presence of the expressive function (far right in Figure 1). The green colour in Figure 1 represents the expressive function. As its presence becomes more prominent in a text, the shade of the green colour gets deeper. The other two functions that could be found in children's literature are informative and educational.

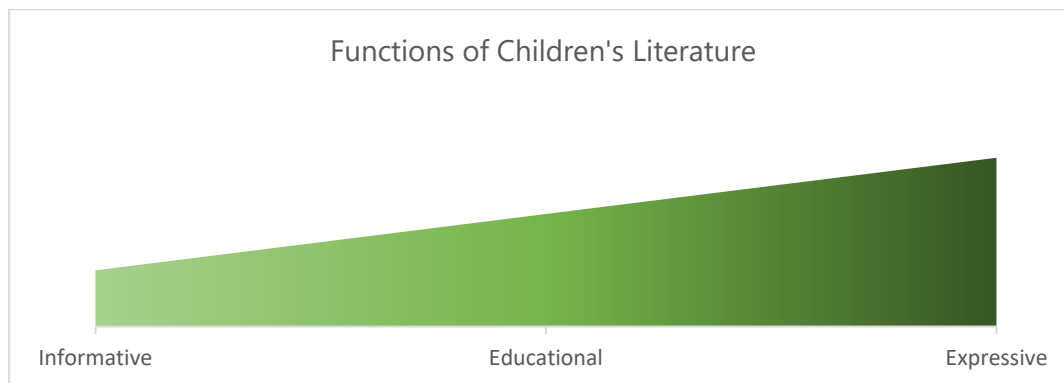


Figure 1: Functions of Children's Literature

As shown in Figure 1 above, there are three cases of children's literature functions:

1. Informative: these are literary texts with a strong informative function, which are commonly produced for the preschool age group. For example, short stories (expressive) to teach children the names of colours, shapes and fruit (informative).
2. Educational: this is the most hybrid case of all the three, where the text is informative, operative and expressive. These texts come in many mediums and genres and target all age groups. This could include TV series on animal life written in a story form (expressive) to introduce animals (informative), including endangered ones, to try and make young viewers believe in the need to protect these animals and their habitat (operative). Another common example is moral stories: a story (expressive) that holds a moral lesson, as perceived by the culture it was produced for, such as skipping school is bad for your education (informative) and the negative consequences of this action (operative).
3. Expressive: these are texts based solely on the expressive function; thus, they are not trying to teach the child nor persuade them. Examples include nonsense poems and silly songs.

The last case seems to be growing in popularity in some cultures, but still, the second case seems to be dominating many cultures. The first and third cases, especially the latter, are less common and have emerged in the past few years. The third case can be quite hard to see in some cultures, such as the Arab culture, where research on many children's literary genres has shown a strong educational function (Alsaleh, 2019; Mdallel, 2003, 2004; Suleiman, 2005). The difference between the educational and informative cases is that the former has an operative function: they commonly teach the cultural and social norms and values in a way that encourages the child to follow them. Informative texts, on the other hand, tend to deliver objective facts and information to prepare children for school. It is used as a fun way to teach children the fundamental concepts of knowledge. When a text is purely informative, as in school textbooks, this is no longer part of children's literature as literature is identified by its expressive function, no matter the degree of its presence in a text. These three cases of children's literary functions are better envisioned as a scale of expressive function, where it is purely expressive on one end and hybrid with other functions across the scale. Therefore, each literary work might fall anywhere on this scale.

### 3.2 Data

In this research, Arabic dubbed anime originally produced from 1985 to 2020 will be analysed to determine their place on the proposed scale above (see Figure 1). The data includes anime aired by SpaceToon, which is the first free children's satellite channel (Jeanette Steemers & Sakr, 2017, p. 8). SpaceToon aired its programmes in 22 countries across the MENA when satellite was introduced in the Arab world region with over 230 million viewers (GRAM, 2024). Manaa Hijazi founded Venus Centre in 1992 then

founded SpaceToon in 2000 (Sayfo, 2021, p. 151-2). By then, the Venus dubbing centre has dubbed at least five thousand episodes of anime and cartoons (Sayfo, 2021, p. 152). Venus then used these as content for their newly founded children’s channel, making Venus’s dubbed episodes the majority of Spacetoon’s content (Sayfo, 2021, p. 152). Anime from Japan was a favourite choice for Arab media owners due to its relatively lower prices compared to American cartoons, and its content is seen as more appropriate for the Arab market (Sayfo, 2021, p. 6). In this study, only anime, i.e., Japanese TV series, will be analysed, excluding cartoons.

No official public information was found on the release dates of the Venus’s dubbed anime. Several contacts with Venus Centre and SpaceToon did not yield any data. As such, the research considered the release dates of the source anime rather than the target anime. Even though some anime might not get dubbed within the same year of its release in the source language, the year is roughly relative to the production of the dubbed version in Arabic. As the data shows, very few dubbed anime by Venus were released in Japan before 1985. Thus, the data considers Venus dubbed anime aired on SpaceToon, which was originally released from 1985 to 2020, resulting in a time range of 35 years.

Venus Centre has at least 180 dubbed anime in this 35-year timeframe; therefore, the study aims to randomly choose two anime titles per year. Nevertheless, this was not always possible. Some years had only one dubbed title, or no titles at all, especially after 2016. Another issue was that some anime opening title sequences had no lyrics, or the lyrics were completely based on repeating the anime title name, e.g., One Piece. To ensure that the data is still sufficient for this study, some years with a relatively higher number of dubbed anime were given three titles. This has resulted in a total of 60 dubbed anime to be analysed in this paper. For further information about the data, see Appendix 1.

Opening title sequences of anime, the intro song of an anime, has many purposes. These include setting up the tone and context and revealing content and characters (Abbott, 2015, pp. 111–113). Additionally, the opening title sequence can act as a promotional trailer, reveal part of the narrative, and engage the viewers (Davison, 2013, p. 8). Therefore, analysing the lyrics of the opening title sequences is a sufficient method for analysing the whole anime script, which will allow me to consider all the proposed 60 anime titles.

**3.3 Analytical Framework**

To answer the first question on the function of Arabic dubbed anime, three elements will be investigated. First, the nature of the dubbed lyrics will be classified into three categories: ‘rhyme’, ‘partially rhyme’, and ‘not rhyme’. When lyrics have a consistent rhyme scheme, e.g., AABC CCCB, AABB CCDD, etc., the anime will be classified as ‘rhyme’. When the lyrics has a rhyme pattern but it gets ignored on some occasion to prioritise the content over the sound, or musicality, of the lyrics, the anime will be classified as ‘partially rhyme’. Otherwise, when there is no clear rhyme scheme, the anime will be classified as ‘not rhyme’. Second, the themes present in the lyrics will also be analysed. Theme analysis has two aims: to investigate what themes are present and absent in Arabic dubbed anime and what category these themes fall into. Some categories indicate the expressive function, whereas others indicate the educational function (see Table 1 below). Third, the language variety employed in the lyrics will be analysed. The lyrics will be categorised into: ‘MSA’, ‘MSA with colloquial’ and ‘colloquial’. When the lyrics are fully written in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and colloquial, the anime will be classified as ‘MSA’ and ‘colloquial’, respectively. In cases where the lyrics are mostly written in MSA with a few colloquial words, the cases will be classified as ‘MSA with colloquial’

To carry out the theme analysis of the opening title sequences, an analytical framework was built. The framework was first built on previous observation of themes present in Arabic-dubbed anime. However, as I was carrying out the analysis, many other themes were found. As a result, the analytical framework was expanded to include all the themes found in the lyrics of Arabic-dubbed opening title sequences. The final analytical framework has ended up with 64 themes as summarised below in Table 1.

Expressive				Educational					
No.	Theme	No.	Theme	No.	Theme	No.	Theme	No.	Theme
1	Adventure	15	Love	23	Arabism	37	Helping	51	Pride
2	Athleisure	16	Mystery	24	Bravery	38	Heroism	52	Sadness
3	Beauty	17	Nonsense	25	Cautious	39	Honesty	53	Safety
4	Curiosity	18	Play	26	Challenge	40	Hope	54	School
5	Dream	19	Singing	27	Destruction	41	Intelligence	55	Separation
6	Excitement	20	Talent	28	Determination	42	Kindness	56	Strength
7	Family	21	Tales	29	Evil	43	Law	57	Truth
8	Food	22	Winning	30	Fairness	44	Losing	58	Uncertainty
9	Friendship			31	Faith	45	Loyalty	59	Unfairness

10	Fun		32	Fear	46	Mistreatment	60	Unity
11	Games		33	Fighting	47	Nationalism	61	Usefulness
12	Happiness		34	Focus	48	Pain	62	Well mannerism
13	Imagination		35	Good	49	Patience	63	Wiseness
14	Longing		36	Healthiness	50	Peace	64	Work

Table 1: The Themes analytical framework

These themes were categorised according to their nature into two categories: expressive and educational. The first left two columns of Table 1 represent the expressive function, where themes revolve around joyful and playful themes. Family and friends bring children a sense of joy, love and safety. Dreams, games, talent, athleisure, play, adventures, fun, excitement and mystery create an expressive function as they are centred around the child's playtime. Food, as discussed by Oittinen (2000, p. 55), is like magic to children, giving them happiness and safety.

The themes on the right three columns of Table 1 are educational since they teach children feelings, morals and values in an attempt to influence their beliefs and behaviour. This ranges from good personal attributes, such as kindness, bravery, loyalty, intelligence, well mannered, to negative emotions, such as sadness, pain, uncertainty, and separation. Educational themes also include themes of a political nature, such as Arabism, nationalism, unity, law and fighting. Some themes focus on life hardships and the attributes needed to overcome them, for example, challenge, good, evil, unfairness, work, determination, focus, faith and hope. Nevertheless, some themes were not as straightforward to classify. Heroism, although seemed expressive at first, was mostly associated with educational themes, such as fighting and nationalism. While winning can bring joy and, thus, is classified under the expressive category, losing brings negative feelings to the child and was used in educational contexts to teach determination to children. As a result, losing was classified underneath the educational function.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

##### 4.1 The Function of Arabic Dubbed Anime

The opening title sequence lyrics of 60 Arabic dubbed anime originally produced in Japan between 1985 to 2020 were analysed. To indicate the function of Arabic dubbed anime, three lyrics analyses were carried out: the presence of rhyme, the nature of themes found, i.e., expressive or educational, and the employed language variety, i.e., MSA, colloquial, or MSA with colloquial.

The analysis of rhyme in the data has shown that 80% of Arabic dubbed anime, i.e., 48 cases, has opening title sequences with a clear rhyme scheme. Interestingly, there was only one Arabic-dubbed anime with no rhyme scheme, i.e., *Dāy Alshoja'*, accounting for 1.67% of the data. The lyrics in this anime were minimal: it contained 50 words, 36 of which were nonsense. Thus leaving only 14 meaningful words in the lyrics. In the middle ground between the 'rhyme' and 'no rhyme' categories, the data shows 18.33%, i.e., 11 cases, of Arabic dubbed anime rhyme partially.

	Frequency	Percentage
Rhyme	48	80.00%
Partial Rhyme	11	18.33%
No Rhyme	1	1.67%
Total	60	100.00%

Table 2 Rhyme analysis results of 60 Arabic-dubbed anime originally released between 1985 and 2020

However, if all 11 cases of partial rhyme were to be placed on a scale between the 'rhyme' and 'no rhyme' categories, they would fall heavily on the rhyme side. Instances where the rhyme scheme is broken, resulting in a partial rhyme case, were caused by prioritising the content, which turns out to be mostly educational, over the musicality of the title sequence. In *Soqōr Alarḍ*, for example, the anime's rhyme scheme was broken once to introduce a political image 'تعاهدنا سنعلني راية الفداء' [we pledged to raise the flag of sacrifice], where the whole title sequence was on protecting one's land from the enemy. *Soqōr Alarḍ* was not an exception; the rhyme scheme was broken in another three cases for political messages, leading to 36.36% of total partially rhyming title sequences.

Although most opening title sequences have rhyme, which is an indication of expressive meaning, many rhymes across the data felt forced. In some cases, it was a result of the clear struggle between content and sound. The translator wanted to introduce certain educational themes while striving to maintain the lyrics' musicality. This has led to the use of complex vocabulary that can rhyme and deliver the intended meaning. However, using complex structures will be a barrier for children to understand the meaning in the first place. In *Dāys*, for example, the choice of 'ينبو' in 'سلا سيفا لا ينبو' [draw a sword that does not fail] makes the

line rhyme with the previous line. Still, the word is difficult for most children to comprehend, leading to the loss of its meaning. In other cases, to create rhyme, the translator opted for vague expressions that can be hard to understand. The difficulty does not stem from the words themselves but from the embedded meaning in these expressions. In Janā, for example, the line 'لمن أنار لي العينين' [to whom who lit my eyes] has relatively easy vocabulary; nevertheless, the embedded meaning is very vague. It can be hard for an adult to understand, let alone children.

Janā anime is not the only case; several anime opening title sequences use figures of speech to convey meaning. In Sālī, the lyrics contain personification in 'أنا جرح الزمان' [I am the time's wound] to emphasize Saly's painful story, atypical for a child. Besides the sad emotions conveyed in these lyrics, and the whole anime, the meaning of the expression is not clear enough to be understood by children. The use of personification here is less complex than in Draghon Bōl, where 'أزلت الغبار عن وجه الحنين' [You removed dust from the face of longing] is extremely vague. Another example of personification in Draghon Bōl's lyrics is 'أيقظت الرؤى والذمم' [You have awakened visions and consciences], which is not as vague as the previous example, but still complex for children to comprehend. Proverbs were also found in lyrics, contributing to the ambiguity in meaning. In Māwklī, the line 'وحدك عود غض وطرير و الجمع عصا لا تكسر' [you alone are a tender and fresh branch, while a group is a stick that does not break] represent an Arabic proverb on the importance of unity. In Anā wa Okhtī, simile is used in 'قد مرت أمني في حلمي مثل النجم' [my mother passed through my dream like a star] to indicate the fast or short nature of that dream. However, the simile used here is not common, making the intended meaning behind it unclear. In Emilī, simile is also used in 'قمر لا ينام وليال باردة.. قمر لا ينام و ليال باردة' [days may seem like still waters... a moon that never sleeps and cold nights]. The similarity between days and still waters, a sleepless moon and cold nights, is not very clear to young viewers, leading to an ambiguous meaning. Metaphors are one of the figurative languages used in Arabic-dubbed anime lyrics. In El Bi Eks, addressing the protagonist's father, the lyrics use multiple metaphors, such as 'يا منارتي حين أضيع' [my lighthouse when I get lost], 'يا دمعتي حين أريد البكاء' [my tears when I want to cry] and 'يا رياحي' [my wind, from you I am the storm]. In all of these metaphors, the vocabulary used for tenors and vehicles is relatively easy; however, the meaning is not.

To further investigate the function, 1483 theme instances were analysed from the opening title sequence lyrics of 60 Arabic-dubbed anime. These themes, as mentioned above, were categorised underneath the two functions, i.e., expressive and educational. The frequency and percentage of expressive themes and educational themes were counted. The results have shown almost a half split between the expressive and educational functions.

	Frequency	Percentage
Expressive	741	49.97%
Educational	742	50.03%
Total	1,483	100.00%

Table 3: The frequency and percentage of expressive and educational themes in Arabic-dubbed anime

As shown above, in Table 3, the frequency of the expressive theme is 471, whereas the frequency of the educational themes is 472. There is only one occurrence difference between the two functions. In percentage, there is only a 0.06% difference between the expressive and educational functions, where the educational themes are higher at 50.03%. Based on the analysis of the theme, the results show that the Arabic-dubbed anime mainly employed educational themes. Nevertheless, this is not to disregard the expressive themes, as both themes are almost equal, but to point out that Arabic-dubbed anime has a slightly higher educational theme than the expressive themes. Unlike the three categorisations of children's literary functions proposed in Figure 1, the educational themes referred to in this analysis are purely educational, whereas the educational function in children's literature is a hybrid of informative, operative and expressive.

	Frequency	Percentage
MSA	60	100.00%
Colloquial	0	00.00%
MSA With Colloquial	0	00.00%
Total	60	100.00%

Table 4: The frequency and percentage of language variety in Arabic-dubbed anime

The analysis of the language variety employed in the 60 Arabic-dubbed anime showed a consensus across time. As shown in Table 4, all 60 anime opening title sequences, i.e., 100% of anime, have used MSA as opposite to colloquial Arabic. This result is not surprising; research on many children's literary genres has pointed out, directly or indirectly, the consistent use of MSA, including Alsaleh (2019), Altahri (2013), Bazzi (2024), and Alsuhaïm (2024). In fact, Mejdell (2011) has pointed out that using MSA in translated children's literature is the norm; otherwise, translations into colloquial Arabic will occupy a peripheral position in the TC system

compared to those translated into MSA. There is an agreement amongst researchers and educators on the need to maintain the use of MSA in children's literature in order to teach it to children since Arabic is a diglossic language. In their study of translated children's literary books, Emara et al. (2022, p. 12) argue that the decline in translated children's literature quality is linked to the decline in the level of MSA amongst translators. This shows the assumption that translated children's literature will inevitably be written in MSA; and to improve translations, an improvement is needed in translators' MSA level.

In the three analyses to determine the function of Arabic-dubbed anime, the theme and language variety analyses have indicated its educational function, while the rhyme analysis has indicated its expressive function. The results of the themes analysis showed a 0.06% difference between the expressive and educational themes only. Thus, although the results of the theme analysis leaned slightly towards the educational side, its expressive function is almost as significant and visible in Arabic-dubbed anime. While rhyme analysis showed 80% of the data adopted a clear rhyme scheme in favour of the expressive function, the language variety analysis results of the employment of MSA in lyrics were 100% in favour of the educational function. In short, while the results of the theme analysis were almost equal between the educational and expressive functions, rhyme analysis showed a lean towards the expressive function by 80%, and language variety showed a lean towards the educational function by 100%. Since the educational function proposed in this paper entails both expressive and educational functions, but the latter is more dominant, it can be concluded that Arabic-dubbed anime has an educational function. Returning to Figure 1, Arabic-dubbed anime would fall on the midpoint between informative and expressive.

Going back to Reiss's (2000, p. 163) typology and taking into consideration the nature of the proposed literary, educational function, it can be said that Arabic-dubbed anime is super-hybrid: it has an informative function, i.e., in the form of presenting emotions and social values and norms, an operative function, i.e., to persuade children to believe and follow these norms and values, and expressive function, i.e., in the presence of joyful themes, aesthetic language, and rhymes. Since anime is multimodal, or as Reiss et al. (2014, p. 187) called it multimedial, Arabic-dubbed anime has all four types in Reiss's typology. Although Reiss has indicated the hybrid nature of some texts' functions, the typology still lacks functions present in some texts. The educational function, for example, found in Arabic-dubbed anime, is not merely a case of a hybrid function. Both informative and operative functions occur consistently together to state and promote social and cultural values and norms. In such contexts, none of the two functions will be present separately. Thus, the two are best categorised as one function, i.e. educational, rather than two, i.e. informative and operative.

#### 4.2 Themes in Arabic-Dubbed Anime

Although the function analysis has found Arabic-dubbed anime to be educational, 12 of the top 20 themes and 3 of the top 5 are expressive. This could be due to the fact that the expressive themes categories are fewer than the educational themes categories. Still, it reflects the close results between the expressive and educational themes discussed above. Table 5 below lists all the top 20 themes found in Arabic-dubbed anime, along with the frequency and percentage of each theme found in the data.

Theme	Frequency	Percentage	Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Determination	91	6.14%	Winning	49	3.30%
Adventure	76	5.12%	Hope	43	2.90%
Excitement	69	4.65%	Strength	43	2.90%
Love	64	4.32%	Friendship	39	2.63%
Unity	62	4.18%	Beauty	36	2.43%
Nonsense	59	3.98%	Athleisure	35	2.36%
Dream	58	3.91%	Helping	35	2.36%
Heroism	57	3.84%	Happiness	31	2.09%
Play	50	3.37%	Evil	30	2.02%
Fighting	49	3.30%	Imagination	29	1.96%

Table 5: The top 20 themes in Arabic-dubbed anime between 1985 and 2020

The results show that determination is the highest theme present in Arabic-dubbed anime, with 91 instances (6.14%). Terms such as 'العزم', 'الإصرار', and 'لن نستسلم' were common. Determination is also presented using figurative language, e.g., 'هيا إلى الأمام', or implicature, e.g., 'فليس هنالك مستحيل'. Following determination themes are adventure (76 instances; 5.12%) and excitement (69



instances; 4.65%), respectively. In these two themes, elements of trips, investigations, traveling, flying, fictional worlds, clapping, and cheering are used. Unity is one of the common themes, with 62 instances (4.18%) that occur in politically charged and friendship nurturing contexts. Nonsense (59 times; 3.98%), as the term suggests, lacks sense and indicates playfulness, e.g., 'هؤؤؤ' and 'لا لا لا لا لا لا'. Play (3.37%), fighting (3.30%) and winning (3.30%) are commonly present in gaming contexts. However, fighting can also be present in real fighting scenarios, where weapons, such as swords and arrows, are mentioned. Friendship, with 39 instances (2.63%), is in the top 20 themes, whereas family (including parents and siblings combined) is not, with 26 instances (1.75%). Happiness (2.09%) is among the top 20 themes, whereas sadness presence is less with 19 instances (1.28%). Nevertheless, when it comes to good versus evil, the case is the opposite: evil is present amongst the top 20 themes with 30 instances (2.02%), whereas good is present 18 times only (1.21%).

Theme	Frequency	Percentage	Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Mistreatment	8	0.54%	Peace	4	0.27%
Uncertainty	8	0.54%	Usefulness	4	0.27%
Unfairness	7	0.47%	Singing	3	0.20%
Law	6	0.40%	Healthiness	2	0.13%
Truth	6	0.40%	Pride	2	0.13%
Curiosity	5	0.34%	Arabism	1	0.07%
Wiseness	5	0.34%	Destruction	1	0.07%
Faith	4	0.27%	Food	1	0.07%
Fear	4	0.27%	School	1	0.07%
Losing	4	0.27%	Separation	1	0.07%

Table 6: The rarest 20 themes in Arabic-dubbed anime between 1985 and 2020

Table 6 above indicates the rarest 20 themes found in Arabic-dubbed anime. Out of these 20, only three belong to the expressive function: curiosity, food, and singing. The remaining 17 themes are all educational. The 17 rarest educational themes include positive, negative, and neutral themes. There are 7 negative themes: mistreatment (0.54%), uncertainty (0.54%), unfairness (0.47%), fear (0.27%), losing (0.27%), destruction (0.07%) and separation (0.07%). Unlike Alsaleh (2019) findings of themes in Arabic translated picturebooks in Saudi Arabia, negative emotions, such as emotional violence, misery, pain, and fear, are not as present in the Arabic dubbed anime. Nevertheless, similar to Alsaleh’s findings, food is very limited in anime opening title sequences, although it has been observed in Harry Potter subtitling (Altahri, 2013, pp. 233–238) and described as magic to children by Oittinen (2000, p. 55). It is surprising to see some positive themes being rare, i.e., pride, wisdom, faith, and peace. Although Arabism, referring explicitly to the Arab nation, is rare, with only one occurrence (0.07%), nationalism, implicitly referring to the/an Arab nation, is more frequent with 23 occurrences (1.55%).

The Chi-Square analysis of observed and expected values for the 64 themes has revealed some interesting results. All themes with a high deviation between the observed and expected values, i.e., the observed/expected value is 10 or greater, had higher observed values than expected ones. Additionally, most of these instances of deviation, i.e., 13 out of 17 instances, are expressive themes. These expressive themes were excitement, adventure, nonsense, family, love, beauty, winning, play and athleisure. The four remaining instances of deviation are educational themes: determination and heroism. Looking at the distribution of these instances across time, 10 out of the 17 peaking instances occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, i.e., the 1990s and 1980s, only 7 instances occurred in the 2000s, and no peaks occurred in the 2010s. The deviation between observed and expressive values is an indication that some factors in these periods have affected the stability of certain themes. Peaking themes of the 1980s were beauty and athleisure. The 1990s saw a variety of peaking themes, i.e., nonsense, love, family, adventure, heroism, and determination. Besides determination, nonsense, and adventure, which also peaked in the 1990s, the 2000s saw a rise in play and winning themes. This shows that peaked themes in the 1980s were all expressive, whereas those peaked themes in the 1990s and 2000s were a mix of both expressive and educational themes. Nevertheless, the 2000s have one educational theme, i.e., determination, while the 1990s have two, i.e., determination and heroism.

The themes’ fluctuation at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century could be the result of the cultural, political, and economic changes and realities in the Arab region during that era, as well as the shifts of the Arabic-dubbed anime perspective in the region. While the 1990s had a higher occurrence of the family theme, the 2000s had a higher occurrence of the friendship theme. Thus, giving more attention to friends, perhaps to attract young viewers, than family members, where family is

mentioned sometimes in educational contexts. Interestingly, this is not an exceptional case. The 1990s have also witnessed the rise of certain educational themes, such as nationalism, evil, good, unfairness, fairness, heroism, loyalty, safety, and well-mannerism. On the other hand, the 1980s, 2000s, and 2010s have seen some rise in certain expressive themes, such as fun, excitement, dreams, and tales. Political agendas can also be sensed through the rise of nationalism and unity in the 1990s. However, while references to unity have continued to rise above expected in the 2000s, nationalism did not. This could be the result of the decline of pan-Arabism in the 1990s.

In conclusion, most instances where the observed occurrence value is greatly higher than the expected value were instances of expressive themes. The educational themes saw higher than expected presence mostly in the 1990s and to a lesser degree in the 2000s. Similar to Al-Daragi's (2016) observations of children's films, the perspective of Arabic-dubbed anime function seems to have shifted at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century from educational to expressive. Although it remains generally educational, the 1990s saw more educational themes than the 2000s and 2010s. During the 1990s, Arabic-dubbed anime emphasised on unifying Arab readers and focused on family and moral values.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of the research was to investigate the function and themes of Arabic-dubbed anime released originally from 1985 to 2020 and aired on SpaceToon, the first free children's satellite channel. To classify the function of Arabic-dubbed anime, I proposed expanding Reiss's (2000) typology of 4 text-types to accommodate the educational function observed by many scholars investigating original and translated children's literature. In my perspective, the expressive function, which is expected to be the main function of this text type, is always present but to a varying degree. Other two functions coexist, sometimes, with the expressive function: informative and educational. The higher the presence of the expressive function, the lower the presence of the informative or educational functions, and vice versa. In all cases, in hybrid function cases, the expressive function will be present in a higher degree with the educational function than with the informative function. Nevertheless, some children's literary texts can only be expressive, i.e., non-hybrid. In the Arab world, the educational function seems to be dominating. Educational is different from informative in that it provides information commonly related to the socio-cultural norms and values and persuades the reader to adopt them. So, it is a hybrid in itself: informative and persuasive.

To understand the function and norms of Arabic-dubbed anime, a quantitative and qualitative descriptive analysis has been run on the opening title sequence lyrics of 60 anime. In the three analyses to determine the function of Arabic-dubbed anime, the theme and language variety analyses have indicated its educational function, while the rhyme analysis has indicated its expressive function. The themes analysis showed that the educational themes presence was 50.3% and the expressive themes presence was 49.7%, with a 0.06% difference between the expressive and educational themes only. The rhyme analysis showed that 80% of lyrics have a clear rhyme scheme, while the language variety analysis showed that MSA was used in all the 60 anime lyrics (100% of cases). Since the theme analysis has a slight difference between the expressive and the educational themes, with one analysis, i.e., rhyme, in favour of the expressive function and the other, i.e., language variety, in favour of the educational function, the research identified the function of the Arabic-dubbed anime to be educational, falling midpoint between the informative and expressive functions. Having said that, this does not mean that Arabic-dubbed anime lacks an expressive function, as children's literature will always have an expressive function alongside any other function. It is to say that the educational function is more visible than the expressive function.

To identify the themes in Arabic-dubbed anime, an analytical theme framework has been built with 64 themes, including educational and expressive themes. After analysing 1483 segments, it has been found that the top ten occurring themes were: determination, adventure, excitement, love, unity, nonsense, dream heroism, play, and fighting, respectively. The least employed themes were separation, school, food, destruction, Arabism, pride, healthiness, singing usefulness, and peace, respectively. Interestingly, the Chi-square analysis of themes has revealed that the 1990s saw more educational themes than the 2000s and 2010s. The 1990s emphasised on unifying Arab readers and focused on family and moral values. Since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many expressive themes have been observed more than expected in the Chi-square analysis, indicating a shift towards the expressive function.

The research is significant in that it identifies the actual function of Arabic-dubbed anime, as opposed to the expected function suggested by Reiss (2000). Along with the proposed fifth text type, i.e., educational, the research also shows how the themes employed in the opening title sequences have shifted throughout time to indicate a change of function. The research has some limitations in that it only looked at SpaceToon's aired anime and focused on dubbed versions as opposed to subtitled ones. Although many attempts have been made to obtain the release dates of the Arabic-dubbed anime, these attempts did not yield any results, resulting in using the source release dates. Further research is still needed to compare the findings of this study with those of subtitled anime, as well as subtitles and dubbed cartoons and other children's literary genres. The results could also be compared to children's literary genres in other languages and study their functions and themes in their socio-cultural contexts. It

would also be interesting to see whether the shift towards the expressive function in Arabic-dubbed anime continues in the 2020s and 2030s, moves back to the educational function, or employs a completely new function.

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## Appendix 1

ST Release Date	ST Title	TT Title
1985	炎のアルペンローゼ・ジュディ&ランディ	أغنية أبي
1985	小公女(プリンセス)	سالي
1986	ドラゴンボール	دراغون بول
1987	新メイプルタウン物語 パームタウン編	مدينة النخيل
1987	仮面の忍者赤影	الفرسان
1987	グリム名作劇場	في جعبتي حكاية
1988	トッポ・ジーゴ	سوسان
1988	鉄拳チンミ	مدرسة الكونغ فو
1989	ダッシュ！四駆郎	السباق الكبير
1989	ジャングルブック 少年モーグリ	ماوكلي
1990	ロビンフッドの大冒険	روبن هود
1990	ふしぎの海のナディア	الماسة الزرقاء
1991	ドラゴンクエスト・ダイの大冒険	داي الشجاع
1991	横山光輝 三国志)	صقور الأرض
1992	ママは小学4年生	أنا وأختي
1992	あしたヘフリーキック	الضربة الصاعقة
1993	スラムダンク	سلام دانك
1993	若草物語 ナンとジョー先生	جنى
1994	七つの海のティコ	أسرار المحيط
1994	銀河戦国群雄伝ライ	هزيم الرعد
1995	ロミオの青い空	عهد الأصدقاء
1995	新機動戦記ガンダムW	أجنحة كاندام
1995	パーチャファイター	المقاتل النبيل
1996	赤ちゃんと僕	أنا وأخي
1996	家なき子レミ	دروب ريمي
1996	名探偵コナン	المحقق كونان
1997	ポケットモンスター	بوكيمون
1997	格蘭ダー武蔵	الصيد الجريء
1998	Bビーダマン 爆外伝	بيدا بول
1998	ロスト・ユニバース	السيف القاطع
1999	ハンター×ハンター	القناص
1999	モンスターファーム	أدغال الديجيتال
2000	デジモンアドベンチャー02	أبطال الديجيتال الجزء الثاني
2000	とっとこハム太郎	همتارو
2001	オフサイド	أوف سايد
2001	激闘！クラッシュギアTURBO	كرش جير
2002	デジモンフロンティア	أبطال الديجيتال الجزء الرابع
2002	パタパタ飛行船の冒険	الطاقة الزرقاء
2003	冒険遊記プラスターワールド	بلاستر
2003	出撃!マシンロボレスキュー	فريق الإنقاذ الآلي

2004	B-伝説！バトルビーダマン	باتل بيدامان
2004	マシュマロ通信	غيمة
2005	ディノブレイカー	دايس
2005	ドラえもん	دورايمون
2006	爆球HIT! クラッシュビーダマン	كراش بيدامان
2006	ハローキティ りんごの森のファンタジー	هيلو كيتي
2007	風の少女エミリー	إيميلي
2007	爆丸バトルブローラーズ	باكوغان
2008	イナズマイレブン	أبطال الكرة
2008	秋川 勇太	بي بو با
2009	ジュエルペット	رنين الجواهر
2009	あにやまる探偵 キルミンズら	محققون
2010	ギャラクシーレーサー スキャン2ゴー	سكان توغو
2011	ダンボール戦機	إل بي إكس
2012	探検ドリランド	دريلاند
2012	獣旋バトル モンスーノ	مونسونو
2014	妖怪ウォッチ	يوكاي واتش
2015	かみさまみならいヒミツのここたま	كوكوتاما
2016	ベイブレードバースト	بي باتل برست
2016	モンスターハンター ストーリーズ RIDE ON	مونستر هنتر ستوريز