PROBLEMS IN AMATEUR SUBTITLING OF ENGLISH MOVIES INTO ARABIC

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Abstract

The present study sheds light on some of the problems encountered in the process of subtitling English movies into Arabic by amateur subtitling translators. It adopted a qualitative approach in the analysis of a parallel corpus, which comprised a sample of scripts of English speaking movies and their subtitles in Arabic. This sample includes the scripts of two English celebrity movies (Jarhead, 2005 and Alpha Dog, 2006) and their amateur subtitles in Arabic. The error analysis approach formulated by Bogucki (2009) was adopted with some modifications to suit the analysis approach used in this study. The English scripts and the Arabic subtitles were juxtaposed and the content analysis method was used in the codification and categorisation of the most recurrent problems in the corpus. In the translation comparison process between the source texts and their subtitled versions, Toury's (1995) 'coupled pairs' model with the back translation technique was used. The findings indicate that the most predominant problems in Arabic amateur subtitling fall within the technical, translational and linguistic domains.

KEY WORDS: AMATEUR SUBTITLING, AUDIO-VISUAL TRANSLATION, SUBTITLING CONSANTAINTA, TRANSLATION PROBLEMS, BACK TRANSLATION

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of the digital revolution and the development in information technology, audio-visual translation is gaining a steadily increasing significance within the realm of translation studies. The tremendous progress in the means of communication and the free and easy use of these means such as the Internet, has made people of all age groups eager to enjoy audio-visual productions of various types, including video games, anime localisation and movie subtitling. One of the most important audio-visual products people seek as a means of entertainment is watching foreign movies. However, since the majority of the audience may not be acquainted with the language used in the foreign movies, which is usually English, the need for translating these movies is therefore inevitable. Usually, most of the cinematic, filmic and televised productions are either subtitled (surtitled) or dubbed, and each of these types of audio-visual translations has its own physical and technical peculiarities. To date, subtitling has become the most widely used mode of audio-visual translation for economic as well as pedagogical implications (Chiaro, 2009) and Tveit (2009).

The eagerness on the part of the viewers to watch movies subtitled into their respective native languages (even before the official release of these movies on DVDs or satellite channels) is one of

the reasons for subtitling of foreign movies into viewers' native languages. Additionally, the use of the Internet and other programming and subtitling software programs, which are free and user-friendly, has eased the process of subtitling. As a result, certain groups of volunteer translators have been established to meet the needs of thousands of impatient viewers. These groups make use of the Internet for uploading their subtitles and disseminating them to very big Internet fan communities worldwide. The work of such Internet subtitling groups is best described by Costales (2012) as "the practice of subtitling audio-visual material by fans for fans"(p. 9). This idea originated in the 1980s with the interest in Japanese anime translation when American and European young viewers were not able to enjoy these programs because they were not familiar with the Japanese language. The solution was that Japanese anime fans began subtitling these products into English(Jorge Díaz-Cintas and Sánchez (2006); Pérez-González (2007)), a phenomenon which attracted other fans, and subtitling began to appear in other genres, including films. Nonetheless, despite the impact this type of Internet translation has on viewers and its wide and fast spread, "this phenomenon seems to have passed unnoticed to the academic community and there are very few studies about this new type of audio-visual translation [. . .], with most referring to it only superficially." (Jorge Díaz-Cintas, 2005, p. 38).

Reasons behind the paucity of academic interest in this type of Internet translation might be attributed to the dubious and illegal nature of the work done by amateur subtitlers. These are anonymous figures that use nicknames and normally do not adhere to common professional subtitling norms. In addition, what distinguishes them form professional subtitlers is their revolt against the professional and interventionist norms and conventions. Hence, while professional subtitlers adopt the 'domestication' approach when conveying the source text contents, amateur subtitlers adopt the 'foreignization' approach. The former group tries to 'normalize' or 'standardize' the original text to facilitate the target recipients' understanding through removing or diluting almost all its foreign cultural specificities and nuances i.e., bringing the text to the target audience. Amateur subtitlers, on the other hand, are driven by their desire to satisfy their peer fans' needs for knowledge and experience with the foreign cultural references. Being themselves fans of foreign movies, amateur subtitlers are said to be quite familiar with other fans' desires. As a result, amateur subtitlers try to keep all cultural references in the source text intact. Thus, they attempt to bring the target audience to the source text (Venuti, 1995). To achieve this aim, they adopt the word-for-word strategy of translation which necessitates that much information should be retained in the subtitles. To compensate for the lack of space on the small TV screen, amateur subtitlers break the golden rules of length concerning the number of lines per subtitle or the number of characters per line. This orientation renders amateur subtitlers to be more creative than their professional peers (Jorge Díaz-Cintas, 2005 ; Costales, 2012).

Besides that, the amateur fandom utilizes the immediate contact the internet provides to foster interaction between subtitling producers, distributers and viewers. This is usually expressed in the form of feedback and the acknowledgments subtitlers get from viewers, which represents a sustaining factor for their community of practice and help subtitlers respond to viewers' needs. Such a contact is missing in the professional subtitling community. Another very important distinctive feature of amateur subtitling is that while professional subtitles are profit driven and provided for celebrity movies only, amateur subtitles are provided on free basis for almost all movies; old and new regardless of the economic gains. Therefore, foreign movies' fans can have access to these movies through the Internet without paying for the DVD or CD versions. Moreover, while professional

subtitling is geographically restricted, amateur subtitling is internationally available. It is no exaggeration to say that amateur subtitlers provide subtitles for movies on demand (Lee, 2011).

Nonetheless, amateur subtitlers are said to be of low linguistic and pragmatic competence (Bogucki, 2009), and (La Forge & Tonin, 2014). They experience film subtitling as a sort of fun or hobby (Lee, 2011) they share with movies' fans through the easy and free access to the internet. Such a practice is the distinctive feature of the new generation that is qualified in using the Internet and computer software. As it is well known, practicing hobbies alone is not enough to cater for the perplexities of the subtitling process that result from the cultural and linguistic mismatches between the source language and the target language. It is well-documented that the decision making process of subtitling is influenced by the linguistic and pragmatic knowledge. The linguistic knowledge of the two languages involved directs the subtitling translator to the differences in information structure in each language. Pragmatic knowledge is also significant when it comes to deciding the intended meaning of words or expressions. Lack of linguistic and/or pragmatic competence, therefore, may have undesirable consequences on the subtitler's performance.

Another distinctive feature of amateur subtitling is the lack of censorship and editing of the subtitles done by the amateur subtitlers, as well as their lack of expertise and formal training in translation skills, which could lead them to encounter problems during the subtitling process(Pérez-González, 2012). In such a situation, the role of translation expertise and formal training cannot be underestimated particularly when encountering cumbersome situations within the limited space and time available for the audio-visual subtitler. Under intensive formal translation training, potential subtitlers are exposed to numerous difficult translation situations whereby they are informed of the suitable techniques experienced translators adopt to overcome these situations. Consequently, potential subtitlers become equipped with the tools that help them manage in critical situations. The lack of censorship or editing, on the other hand, can impinge on the quality of the amateur subtitlers' performance and allow for typo, grammatical and stylistic mistakes to creep into the products.

It is noteworthy to mention that a few scholars have focused their attention on this growing phenomenon. (notably, Jorge Díaz-Cintas and Sánchez (2006), Pérez-González (2007),Costales (2012), Bogucki (2009), O'Hagan (2005)andSajna (2013)). According to Bogucki (2009), amateur subtitlers joined the Internet subtitling communities because they had the desire "to make a contribution in an area of particular interest and to popularize it in other countries, making it accessible to a broader range of viewers/readers who belong to different linguistic communities." (p. 49).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies related to movie subtitling have examined aspects such as technical (those that deviate from subtitling norms), translational, (those that mainly affect message conveyance) and linguistic problems (those that pertain to grammatical mistakes) encountered by professional as well nonprofessional subtitlers (Mazid (2006), Bogucki (2009), Thawabteh (2011b) and Sajna (2013)). Bogucki (2009) did the first study on errors made by amateur subtitlers. In this study, an error analysis approach was employed to examine the problems in the Polish subtitling of the famous

Hollywood movie (*The Lord of the Ring*).The analysis revealed that the inability to fully comprehend the source text lexemes and the reliance on intuitions only were among the most recurrent drawbacks of amateur subtitling. Bogucki attributed these drawbacks to the bad production conditions, the lack of good quality source material, as well as the subtitlers' limited experience and/or aptitude in translation.

In a similar vein, Sajna (2013)investigated the most vulnerable areas that lead amateur subtitlers to make translation errors. He emphasized the role of the verbal and visual channels in the movie, which can be used by the subtitler in the decision making processes, to compensate for the lack of suitable source materials, resulting in awkward performance. The findings of the study show that cultural-specific terms, vulgarism, rhymes, deliberate errors, idioms, mother tongue and irrelevant verbiage represent the areas most likely to cause problems to amateur subtitlers.

Reviewing the literature on problems in amateur subtitling of English speaking movies into Arabic reveals paucity in academic studies focusing on this phenomenon. A search via the Google search engine gives three entries focusing on problems in professional subtitling of English movies into Arabic. However, none of these studies sheds light on the problems of the amateur subtitling phenomenon. For instance, Mazid (2006) used a sample of Arabic professional subtitles of some English movies to highlight modes of "corruption" in subtitles. Literal translation, insensitivity to context, ungrammaticality, inaccurate translations, etc. were among the problems identified in this study(p. 81). The author recommends Katan's (1999) "chunking model" as a solution to account for subtitling problems (ibid, p. 86).

In two studies on problems of subtitling movies from English into Arabic and vice versa (Thawabteh, 2011a) and (2011a) analysed the problems encountered by a sample of Master of Arts' translation students at Al-Quds University. His analysis highlighted lexical, linguistic (e.g., misuse of tag questions, exclamations, discoursal problems), cultural (translation of culture specific references), as well as technical problems (e.g., typeface and distribution, segmentation, space superfluity, synchronization, short line first and background)*,* in the subtitlers' performance. He concluded that suitable training, familiarity with the technical issues of subtitling and teaching audio-visual translation in academies could help account for such problems.

Based on these accounts, it is clear that none of these three studies has tackled problems of amateur subtitling of English movies into Arabic. Hence, the present study attempts to fill this gap in the literature and open the horizon for further studies in this domain. The study was conducted with the following objectives in mind:

1. To identify the technical, translational and linguistic problems amateur subtitlers encounter in the subtitling of English movies into Arabic and 2. To determine whether there is any congruity between the problems encountered by professional subtitlers and those by amateur subtitlers.

Subtitling and its Constraints

Subtitling differs from literary translation in terms of the change it entails in the mode of message conveyance. That is to say, whilst in literary translation the language mode in which the message is conveyed is kept the same, spoken to spoken or written to written, subtitling renders the spoken

filmic dialogue in the source language into written subtitles in the target language. The filmic dialogue, which is originally a written manuscript, is designed to be spoken by actors in accordance with certain set roles acted out on the basis of the development of the story line in the film. This implies that actors make utmost use of the linguistic and paralinguistic elements characteristic of the verbal face-to-face interaction to fully communicate the intended message. This may include facial expressions, prosodic features, nodding, repetitions, and so forth, whereby every film would address a particular audience with certain homogeneous texture and shared linguistic and cultural norms and values. Nonetheless, preserving these features in subtitles is not possible in all circumstances.

 In interlingual subtitling, the spoken dialogue in the language of the movie is once more converted to the written mode in a different language in the form of certain captions that appear consecutively with the utterances at the bottom of the screen. The result of such a change from the spoken to the written mode entails the loss of all the aforementioned characteristics of the verbal face to face interaction. According to Gottlieb (2004), interlingual subtitling is "the only type of diasemiotic translation found in the mass media [That] 'jaywalks' from the source-language speech to the target-language writing."(p. 220). Other audio-visual translation types such as dubbing and voice-over remain 'isosemiotic' as they do not entail a change in the channel of message conveyance.

It is generally agreed that subtitles are added as postproduction elements to help viewers unfamiliar with the language spoken in the movie understand the plot development. This notion is clearly stated by Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2007)who conceive subtitling as a;

> [T]ranslation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavors to recount for the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image [. . .], and the information that is contained on the sound-track (p. 8)

The concurrency between the spoken dialogue in the movie and the added subtitles exposes subtitling to evaluative judgment on the part of the movie viewers with reasonable knowledge of the movie language.(Díaz-Cintas, 1999). That is to say, any discrepancy between what viewers read in the subtitles and watch on the screen will be easily spotted. In dubbing and voice-over, on the other hand, viewers have no access to the original material to make this type of judgment. Consequently, dubbing and voice-over can hide many of the discrepancies between the original and the translated versions. It is only the subtitler who remains a victim to the many constraints of his profession while many viewers will have "at one time or another, left a movie theatre wanting to kill the translator."(Nornes, 1999, p. 17). As a measure to help the subtitler overcome many of the obstacles during the subtitling process, Jorge Díaz-Cintas (2001) suggests that a dialogue list be provided. Such a list can contain explanations of the cultural and linguistic elements in the movie dialogue, which are peculiar to the source language and may cause problems to the subtitler. This appeal is supported by the fact that the subtitler's task is further complicated by the time and space constraints.

The Time Constraint

The time constraint represents the first restricting factor for the subtitler. Since actors in the movie keep on speaking, a sort of harmony or synchronisation should be maintained between the actors'

utterances and the exposure and disappearance of the subtitles. To regulate this process, a time limit is set for the subtitles to remain on the screen. As a general rule, the time during which a subtitle can remain on the screen might range from one to up to seven seconds depending on the estimated reading speed of the viewers and moving pace or rhythm of the movie. The reading ability varies according to the age and level of education of the viewer as well as his/her familiarity with the language of the movie and the information load in the subtitles. According to Gottlieb (2001), the reading speed of the average viewer is estimated as "twelve characters per second (12 cps)". (p. 20). Thus, regulating the exposure and disappearance of the subtitles in movies is of paramount significance for viewers to comprehend the events in the movie and get enjoyment from watching it. To reiterate, if the subtitles precede the actors' utterances, confusion will emanate and it will impinge on the viewers' understanding of the movie. On the other hand, if the subtitles remain longer than the specified time, viewers will re-read them again and again, which will impair their concentration on the image on the screen(Chiaro, 2009). This being the case, Ivarsson and Carroll (1998) suggest that;

> "As a general rule, the minimum time for even a very short subtitle on a television screen is at least one and a half seconds and a maximum time for a full two-liner should not exceed five to six seconds. A full one-liner should be kept on the screen for about three seconds, one and a half lines for about four seconds." (p. 65)

The Space Constraint

It is not only time that restricts the freedom of the subtitler; space is also another hindering factor. The fact that subtitles are added on the screen implies that they will occupy a part of that screen. As a result, the space subtitles occupy should be as small as possible so as not to impinge on the viewers' enjoyment from watching images and actors' movements in the movie. Consequently, the number of lines of the subtitles is regulated to be two, with a total of 35 – 40 characters in each line (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). Preferably the first line is to be shorter than the second to ease eye movement from the beginning of the subtitle to its end.

Restricting the space for the subtitler necessitates that he/she should take certain measures to compensate for this limitation. Antonini (2005) summarises these measures with the help of three techniques namely 'elimination', 'rendering' and 'simplification'. Elimination implies condensing information in the original when subtitled into another language. This means that certain elements should be deleted to provide space on the screen. Usually, less content-significant elements are the most likely to be deleted. Thus, discourse markers, repetitions, expletives among other things characteristic of oral speech will be normally deleted in subtitling. As for rendering, it is the process whereby colloquial and dialectical features of the spoken dialogue are ruled out in the change from the spoken medium in the source language to the written medium in the target language. Simplification, on the other hand, means splitting long complicated sentences with loaded information into simpler chunks of speech so as their comprehension and reading will be enhanced. Moreover, highly sophisticated styles will be normalised to suit the expectation of the viewers despite the harm this might do to style nuances characteristics of each speaker.(pp. 213-214)

It is worth noting that in the case of English/Arabic subtitling, the variety of language used is Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) should be taken into account. This is the variety used in the educational institutions and in the media for certain pedagogical as well as ideological purposes. It has a standardised grammar, which makes it very difficult to cope with the colloquial variety of Arabic. According to Gamal (2012), "the spoken variety of Arabic, [is] an area which almost no translation school is prepared to accept."(p. 496). Moreover, each of the Arab countries has a particular colloquial variety of Arabic with peculiar lexemes and rules of grammar; hence MSA represents a unifying medium of communication that facilitates understanding.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, a corpus comprising scripts of two English movies with their amateur subtitles in Arabic was collated. The data compiled constitute a bilingual unidirectional corpus as the translation was done from English as the source language into Arabic as the target language. In the selection of the movies to be included in the corpus, certain criteria were taken into account. Firstly, the scripts of the movies as well as their subtitles must be downloadable from the Internet where the subtitling was done by amateur subtitlers using websites such as www.subscene.com or www.opensubtitles.com. Secondly, the selected movies (*Jarhead, 2005 and Alpha Dog, 2006*) were from the war and crime genres where the rhythm pace is rather fast, a fact which poses a challenge to the amateur subtitler who relies only on watching/hearing the movie when undertaking the subtitling task. Minchinton (1993) argues that war and crime movies challenge both the viewers and the subtitlers since if the actions are to be followed, the subtitles should be read.

The English scripts of the selected movies (*Jarhead and Alpha Dog*) and their subtitles in Arabic were downloaded from the website www.subscene.com and converted from the *.srt* format to the *.txt* format so as to make them more searchable. The resultant files, the dialogues of the movies in English and their Arabic versions, represented the asset of the corpus for analysis in this study. The English scripts were compared to the voice track in the movies, through watching the movies, to ascertain their compatibility.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the scripts involved several steps. To begin with, the scripts of the movies and their subtitles were put side by side to form a parallel comparative corpus. Such an approach was introduced into the translation studies domain in the 1990s and proved useful in identifying active translation norms and in making comparisons between translated and original texts. Furthermore, it supplies translation researchers with normative facts that encourage making objective generalizations instead of personal or subjective speculations(SHEN, 2011).

After each of the dialogue excerpts in the source texts was juxtaposed with its counterpart subtitles in Arabic according to the time frames allocated in both versions, Toury's (1995) 'coupled pairs' model of translation was used to compare the 'replacing' with the 'replaced' elements, whereby any instance of translation discrepancy was hand-picked. According to this model, the source text and its translated version in the target language should be broken down into their units or segments in order

for the comparison between them to be sound. The segmentation process might be carried out at the clause, the phrase or even the word level. This approach facilitates the analysis process and it stems from the fact that translators have stored a linguistic repertoire of both the source and the target languages in the form of coupled pairs in their long term memory. In the act of translation, certain target language items are called up 'automatically' to replace the source language segments, an act which renders translation 'proceduralized' (p.100). Toury argues that such a process is the result of a mental map the translator makes of units in the source text and then tries to find appropriate lexical items in the hosting language to replace them according to its conventions. The movie from which the excerpt was taken was labelled to facilitate further reference and the segment which represents the source of the problem for the Arab subtitler was underlined. In some cases a back translation into English is provided, which is almost a literal translation to show the discrepancy of the subtitling to readers with no knowledge of Arabic. In others, a transliteration into English of some Arabic translated options is given to ease reading. Still in some other cases, a suggested translation by the authors is given as a would-be better alternative for the discrepant one.

In the analysis process, the content analysis method was adopted and every recurrent problem in the corpus was coded and categorised under either the technical, translational or linguistic domains. The categorisation process was carried out based on Bogucki's (2009) model for analysing errors in amateur subtitling, but with a modification. Bogucki concludes that the reasons why amateur subtitlers commit mistakes can be attributed to their poor linguistic maturity, the change in the language medium during the subtitling process, the quality of the source text material and the inability to better exploit the context of situation. Nevertheless, his categorization is rather fuzzy and lacks sound heading as these problems are treated on an individualistic basis. Therefore, the categorization of problems highlighted in the present study is focused on a clear cut labelling of categories for which each of the identified problems in the examined corpus pertains. Thus, within this categorisation scheme, all problems that relate to the layout features or that violate subtitling norms were regarded as technical problems. On the other hand, those that appear as grammatical mistakes were labelled as linguistic and those that solely affect the content of the message to be delivered were labelled translational. It is worth noting that the number of examples used has been restricted by space constraints but never meant to be exclusive. For the comparison of problems in subtitling, the problems encountered by amateur subtitlers identified in the study was compared to those encountered by professional subtitlers as highlighted by Mazid (2006) and (Thawabteh, 2011b) and(2011a)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the following subsections, each of the problematic areas will be discussed with illustrative examples from the corpus examined. The analysis of the data revealed that the most predominant problems that Arab amateur subtitlers of English movies encountered are mainly related to the technical, translational and linguistic domains. For a more accurate identification of the problems, the authors watched the movies twice; one time before going through the corpus and another after identifying the problems.

PROBLEMS IN AMATEUR SUBTITLING OF ENGLISH MOVIES INTO ARABIC

Technical Problems

These problems usually pertain to certain technical issues such as the number of characters per line, the number of lines per subtitle and other layout features characteristic of subtitling. These layout features might include the use of dashes at the beginning of each subtitle to indicate actors' role turns and the use of dots at the end of unfinished line to indicate an interruption to an actor's chunk of speech.

Number of Lines in Subtitles

In some instances amateur subtitlers tended to use more than two lines in a subtitle. This would most likely impair the viewers' enjoyment from watching the movie as the increase in the number of lines appearing on the screen will blur a large portion of it. Moreover, adding a third or a fourth line to the subtitle increases the effort on the part of the viewer in reading the complete subtitles. Hence, the viewer's attention, particularly those with low reading speed in their native language and little command of the language of the movie, will be directed towards reading the subtitles at the expense of following the development of the plot. Example (1) is taken from the movie *Jarhead*. It shows that while in the original script there are three time frames for presenting the actor's turns, in the subtitled version these have been merged into one time frame with four lines. In the cited example, it is not the space constraint that restricts the subtitler to make a two-liner subtitle. It can be argued that ignorance of subtitling norms might be the reason behind such a tendency. This has resulted in confusion with the ins and outs of the movie dialogue, hence impairing synchronisation between the subtitles and the utterances of the actors.

Example 1:

00:01:57,594<-- 00:01:55,729	00:01:55,599 --> 00:02:00,629
-Get on your face and give me 25...	انبطحونفذ 25 مرة
00:01:59,791 <-- 00:01:57,664	لكلمرةقامتبممارسة
for every time she gets fucked this month.	الجنسهذاالشهر
00:02:01,333 <-- 00:01:59,866	انبطحالآن
-Down on your face!	

Number of Characters per Line

It is not only the number of lines per subtitle that has been impeded on in the amateur subtitling, the number of characters per line has also been increased to reach (48) in some instances. Once more this will affect the viewer's reading speed and impair his/her enjoyment from watching the movie as he/she will be busy in reading the subtitles at the expense of watching. Example (2) is taken from the movie *Alpha Dog,* in which the subtitler has congested a lot of information into one subtitle so that the number of characters becomes (48), excluding spaces. A better solution could have been to split this one liner subtitle into a two liner one, thus reducing the reading effort on the part of the viewer.

Example 2:

01:44:00,180 01:43:57,246
-Yeah. He told me that some friends of his
01:44:03,067-- 01:44:00,317
had done some bad shit and that he was going
down for it.

01:44:04,574 <-- 01:43:59,574
قال لي أن بعض أصدقائه قد تورطوا بعمل سيء وهو متورط معهم
بهذا

Use of Dashes and Interruption Dots

The use of dashes at the beginning of subtitles indicates the turn assigned to each actor in the movie according to the script of the dialogue. The lack of these dashes would tend to confuse the viewers because they cannot identify the speaking actor. On the other hand, the use of three dots at the end of a subtitle line is meant to show either an interruption to the current speaker by another actor in the shot or to show that the speaker is trying to reconsider his/her statement. In example (3) from the movie *Alpha Dog*, the actors' roles are clearly identified. In the subtitles, however, there is no indication of turn taking because of the lack of dashes at the beginning of the subtitles. It might be argued that the subtitler depends on feedback from the audio and visual channels whereby viewers can easily identify the speaker.

Example 3:

00:11:01,290 <-- 00:10:58,126
-What's going on with the job?
-Lot of sales. Really busy.

00:11:01,648 <-- 00:10:57,943
كيفتجريالأمورفيالعمل؟
هنالكالكثيرمنالمبيعات

Translational Problems

These issues address problems that pertain to the application of methods of translation to (in)adequately convey the message to the audience. The identified problems include the use of literal translation, which misses the intended meaning of the chunk of speech within its context of situation. In some other cases, the resultant translation is inaccurate, leading to breakdown in communication due to the discrepancy between the source text message and its subtitled counterpart. The translation of cultural specific references is another often recurrent problem in amateur subtitling.

Literal Translation

This method of translation assigns the denotative meaning to words regardless of the context in which they are used. It is well-known that the speaker might charge his/her words with connotative meanings that cannot be decided on the propositional meaning of these words. Consequently, relying on the dictionary alone without due consideration of the context can lead to fatal mistakes in translation. Sensing the significance of context in meaning negotiation processes is a practice that translators gain by experience and acquaintance with the implications of semantics and pragmatics on translation. For instance, in example (4), taken from the movie *Alpha Dog*, the subtitler coined the

dictionary meaning of the word 'tail' (ذيل), [thail] in his/her translation into Arabic. In the scene, Cosmo, an old man and a friend of Jonny's father, is asking Jonny, a drug dealer, about the way he runs his life. Applying the 'coupled pairs' method shows that the result is an awkward nonsensical translation. The Arab viewer would not understand anything form the implied meaning in this idiomatic expression. According to Online Cambridge Dictionaries, to 'chase one's tail' means "to be busy doing a lot of things but achieving very little." This meaning is obscured to the Arab viewers as the translation has missed its target. An alternative might be (منهمك بما لايجدي نفعا؟) [munhamik bima la yujdi nafa'n], (Lit. busy in useless affairs), which functionally coveys the meaning of the idiomatic expression in the source text.

Example 4:

00:08:18,397 <-- 00:08:15,615	00:08:18,831 <-- 00:08:15,939
-So, what are you doing tonight?	مالذي تفعلها لليلة؟
You <u>chasing tail</u>?	تطاردذيلك؟

Inaccurate Translation

One of the most recurrent problems in amateur subtitling based on the analysis of the corpus under study is the inaccuracy of rendering certain English segments into Arabic. It goes without saying that altering certain elements in the source text or confusing them with other elements might lead to communication breakdown. In example (5), from the movie *Jarhead*, Swofford, a new recruit, is supposed to make a drawing for the next day military drill. What he did was a big miss for the Staff Sergeant. The Staff Sergeant became furious and when he exclaimed, Swofford justified this on the basis of his inability to draw well. The Arabic version completely misses the point and presents a different justification. This state of affairs will be clear when the subtitles are back translated into English as closely as possible. (Lit. Sir, this is drawn on the map!). Furthermore, the subtitling of the Sergeant's furious question as a response to the recruit's justification is completely inaccurate. The subtitler is trying to make a cohesive link with the previous sentence by exploiting the phrase (تشرحها) (explain it) as an anaphoric reference and a substitute for the erroneous word (خريطة)(map). It can be argued that the subtitler is unable to give an exact translation probably due to the lack of a dialogue list so that he translates depending only on hearing/watching the movie. This is why he/she is trying to make whatever association he/she can between the word 'drawing' and the word 'scribe' confusing the latter with the word 'describe'. As a result, the idea that a scribe should be good at drawing is ruled out as a consequence of inaccurate translation. Furthermore, viewers' comprehension of the movie's story line will be impaired.

Example 5:

00:02:23,151 <-- 00:02:20,921	00:02:24,866 <-- 00:02:21,211
-Sir, the <u>recruit's</u> never been good at <u>drawing</u>, sir!	سيدي إن هذامرسوم على الخريطة
00:02:25,657 <-- 00:02:23,223	إذاً لماذ المتشرحها؟
-Why the fuck are you my <u>scribe</u>, then?	

PROBLEMS IN AMATEUR SUBTITLING OF ENGLISH MOVIES INTO ARABIC

Cultural Specific References

There is a general consensus that cultural specific references constitute one of the most identified areas to cause problems to translators. In the words of Pedersen (2005, p. 1), such elements in language constitute "translation crisis points". These references spring from the customs, norms and traditions of a particular culture and might not exist in other cultures. The most widely referred to of these culture specific references are names, institutions, types of food, drinks and so forth. In example (6), taken from the movie *Jarhead*, Swofford mentions the word 'muffins', which according to Collins English Dictionary is "a small cup-shaped sweet bread roll, usually eaten hot with butter" The subtitler adopts the 'retention' strategy where the source text English word 'muffins' is transliterated and adjusted with the Arabic spelling system. (Pedersen, 2005). This strategy cannot be of help to most Arab viewers because this is a culture specific reference that is alien to the Arabic culture. A better choice might be the word (حلوى) [halwa], 'sweet' as a functional equivalent to avoid communication breakdown on the part of the Arab viewers.

Example 6:

00:08:09,135 <-- 00:08:07,167   00:08:09,034 <-- 00:08:07,225
-Making <u>muffins</u> with Mom.   أصنعالـ (موفين) معأمي

Example (7) is taken from the movie *Alpha Dog* and it includes 'beer bong' as an alcoholic type of drink alien to the Arabic culture. Indeed, references to alcoholic drinks such as wine, vodka or beer are objectionable in the Arabic culture on the basis of social and religious implications. The subtitler has literally translated the word 'beer' into (بيرة) causing offence to the Arab viewers. It has been customary in the Arab media to use the word (جعة)[juaa'] as a euphemistic expression for the objectionable word 'beer'.

Example 7:

01:11:05,709 <-- 01:11:02,960   01:11:06,221 <-- 01:11:02,223
-You should have seen me with the <u>beer</u> bong.   يجب انتراني وانا أفعل ذلكبز جاجة البيرة

Linguistic Problems

Under this category of problems encountered by amateur subtitlers, a reference will be made to problems in tense, changing questions to statements or vice versa, changing affirmative to negatives and vice versa, modality and those caused by homophony.

Problems with Tense

In many occasions, the subtitler has changed the tense of the sentence in the source text when subtitling into Arabic. As it is well-known, such a change impinges on the meaning depicted throughout the development of the events in the movie. For instance, in example (8) from *Alpha Dog*, the simple present tense and the present perfect continuous tense are changed to the past tense. A clever reading of the subtitle shows that the use of the past tense contradicts with the use of the

emphatic recursive meaning indicated by the word (مجدداً) [mujadadan] (again). The Arabic subtitle can be back translated into something similar to; (Lit. he told me that you got yourself again in troubles). An alternative translation that can better convey the meaning embodied in the use of the simple present and present perfect continuous tenses might be; (يقول بانك تقحم نفسك مجددا بالمشاكل), [yaqul bianaka tuqhium nafsaka mujadadan bilmashkil], (Lit. he says that you are getting yourself again in problems), thus achieving optimal equivalence.

Example 8:

00:27:05,671 <-- 00:27:03,784   00:27:06,348 <-- 00:27:03,619

-He <u>says you've been getting </u>into trouble again.   لقد قال لي بأنك أقحمت نفسكم جددا بالمشاكل

Changing Questions to Statements or vice versa

In example (9) from *Alpha Dog*, the subtitler changes the furious question into a statement. Moreover, a change in the meaning conveyed has been incurred in the subtitles. This will be evident from the back translation of the subtitle into English. (Lit. you look short, you varmint.). A result of such a tendency is that the thing the speaker is asking about (what is going on?) is completely diluted in the subtitles. What we have in the subtitles is a description of the physical appearance of the addressee.

Example 9:

 00:56:05,133 <-- 00:56:02,799   00:56:06,265 <-- 00:56:04,166

-What's up, <u>you short</u> bitch?   أنتتبدو قصيرا أيها السافل

Changing Negative to Affirmative and vice versa

The examples illustrating this type of problems show that while the sentence in the original text is affirmative, the subtitler changes it to negative, leading to contradiction with what goes on in the movie. In the example below, the speaker in the English version states that there is a way out of their problems. This same assertion is rephrased and emphasized in the second clause which almost carries the same meaning. In the Arabic version, on the other hand, only the internal part of this sentence is in the affirmative form and is contradicted with its first and last parts, which are in the negative form. As a result, the emphasis as well as the reiteration are both missing in the Arabic subtitles. The back translation method might be useful to show this confusion, (Lit. there is no solution to this, but there is a way out which I could not find). Such a problem might be attributed to the lack of a dialogue list that can help the subtitler make suitable translation decisions. The sentences in the following example are so simple to the extent that even a person with a very low level of mastery in English is not expected to mistranslate them.

Example 10:

00:57:02,661 <-- 00:57:00,905

-There's an <u>answer</u> here.

<u>There's, like</u>, a solution.

00:57:06,151 <-- 00:57:02,154

لايوجد حل لهذا ولكن يوجد مخرجما ولكنني لم أجد

Problems in Modality

Model auxiliaries usually express meanings such as probability, necessity, likelihood, obligation, expectation etc. In example (11), the meaning of probability expressed in 'would' in the second sentence of the original text is shifted to the meaning of necessity or obligation in the subtitles. If the second line of the subtitles is back translated into English, this idea will be more evident (Lit. we must get much money from it.). The meaning of 'would' is confused with the mistakenly interpreted word 'had' in the first part of this chunk of speech.

Example 11:

00:17:30,781 <-- 00:17:29,221

-And I had a guy lined up to take it all, man.

00:17:33,372 <-- 00:17:30,852

We <u>would</u> have made so much money on that shit.

00:17:33,070 <-- 00:17:29,146

وتوجب علي أخذها كلها يا رجل

ويتوجب علينا الحصول على المالا لوفير منها

Homophones

Some of the instances of confusion in amateur subtitling can be attributed to the similarity in pronunciation of certain English words which express different meanings. These instances of translation confusion due to homophony prove beyond any doubt that the subtitlers have relied solely on their hearing/watching the movie during the subtitling process and have never had access to the dialogue list. In example (12), the subtitler confuses the word 'receipt' with the word 'respect' on the basis of the similarity in pronunciation. The result is a nonsensical rendition of the English source text into Arabic. In this example, Johnny has found his house looted and his TV set stolen by a group of gangs. He asks for a receipt of the damages of his house. To see if this meaning is retained or not, consider back translating the Arabic subtitle as (Lit. I want some respect). As evident below, the subtitles do not convey the meaning of the intended source text.

Example 12:

00:32:15,485 <-- 00:32:12,103

-All right.

- All right. I want a <u>receipt</u>, too.

00:32:16,154 <-- 00:32:13,257

حسنا

حسنا – وأريد بعضا لاحترام

Collocations

Collocations are linguistic elements consisting of two or more lexemes whose meanings are determined on the basis of the collocability between the head word in the combination and each of its

collocates. Elements in collocations usually go together and splitting them or using a different collocate impairs the meaning of the collocation speakers in a linguistic community are familiar with. Collocations normally cause problems to translators of low competency in the pair of language they work with. In the example below, from *Alpha Dog*, the subtitler has diluted the collocation in Arabic. We normally use the expression (سلامي/تحياتي أبلغ) or (سلامي/تحياتي بلغ), (Lit. send my greeting) as a collocation to greet someone who is not present, but we do not 'send greetings'.

Example 13:

00:11:06,724 <-- 00:11:05,198	00:11:06,719 <-- 00:11:05,518
-How's your mother?	كيف حال أمك؟
00:11:08,390 <-- 00:11:06,797	00:11:09,516 <-- 00:11:06,721
-Wonderful, thank you.	أنها بخير شكرا لك
00:11:10,570 <-- 00:11:09,293	00:11:11,434 <-- 00:11:09,517
-Tell her I <u>said hello</u>.	أرسل تحيتي لها
- I'll do...	

DISCUSSION

A meticulous review of the highlighted areas causing problems to Arab amateur subtitlers of English movies reflects that these mainly relate to the technical domain, issues that relate solely to the actual translation practice or inaccurate use of grammatical rules or what is labelled as linguistic problems. The first of these exhibits problems that relate to the number of lines per subtitle, number of characters per line and the use of dashes as a role assignment indication as well interruption dots at the end of an unfinished line. It is argued that such problems might be attributed to negligence of agreed upon subtitling norms. It is noteworthy that these problems were also recurrent in the studies carried out by Thawabteh (2011b) and (2011a)on professional subtitling of English movies into Arabic. Although such problems can cause great difficulty to the viewers, in terms of causing confusion and affecting their enjoyment in watching the movie, constant practice and familiarity with subtitling norms can help overcome such problems.

The second category of problems encompasses topics such as the use of literal translation as a strategy, which resulted in a distorted type of subtitling, inaccurate translations as a result of the lack of a dialogue list and the translation of cultural specific references. The latter of the problems in this category is the most difficult for subtitlers/translators to handle. Results of analysing the illustrative examples show that Arab amateur subtitlers have adopted the foreignisation strategy in the translation of English cultural specific references into Arabic. Hence, they have been source text oriented and neglected the active cultural norms in the Arab community. It should be emphasised that such problems are not confined to amateur subtitling as Mazid (2006) highlighted similar problems in the performances of professional subtitlers. Overcoming problems such as these requires that the subtitler/translator has a native-like mastery of the cultural practices and norms predominant in the pair of languages he/she is working with.

 The third category is the linguistic one, in which amateur subtitlers have made mistakes in tense, changing interrogative sentences to declaratives or vice versa, changing negative sentences to

affirmatives or vice versa, modality, homophones and collocations. Amateur subtitlers share some of the linguistic problems encountered by professional subtitlers as identified by Mazid (2006)and those identified byThawabteh (2011b) and (2011a). Of great help in this regard is knowledge about the implications of syntax, semantics and pragmatics on the theory and practice of translation as a multidisciplinary field of specialisation.

   The quasi congruity in the problems both groups of subtitlers face might be attributed to the fact that the performance of both groups is affected by other additional factors that constitute the message any film attempts to convey. The polysemiotic nature of the filmic message and the difficulty of keeping this polysemiotic texture intact in the subtitling process leave trances on the outcome of the subtitler's work, regardless of his/her affiliation. Moreover, the highlighted categories represent the major compartmentalizations of the essential components (linguistic, translational and technical) of the subtitling process and, as a result, most of the ensuing problems will belong to either of them.

Conclusion

The present study has tried to bring to the fore the most recurrent problems amateur subtitlers of English movies encounter in their attempts to subtitle certain movies into Arabic. To date, much research has been directed towards professional subtitling of movies whereas amateur subtitling has been completely neglected although it is gaining significance worldwide. The study has shown that there is a certain degree of congruity between the problems encountered by Arab amateur subtitlers of English movies and those encountered by their counterpart professional subtitlers as highlighted by (Mazid, 2006; Thawabteh (2011b)) and(2011a).The findings of the present study agree with those of Bogucki (2009)in that poor production conditions might be behind the problems in amateur performance. A special reference in this regard should be made to the lack of a dialogue list, watching the movie, the distribution of tasks in the subtitling process and the role of editing and censorship in polishing the subtitling product. However, they do not totally conform to Sajna (2013)that the feedback from audio-visual channels in the movie can always assist the subtitler in the meaning conveyance process. There are certain occasions in which such a feedback can work against the subtitler and deepen the discrepancy between what the viewers see on the screen and what they read in the subtitles. Thus, it can be safely said that the amateur subtitling phenomenon of English movies into Arabic is a fertile soil for further research. Hence, it is hoped that it will attract the attention of scholars and academics who are interested in Arabic and audio-visual translation. Future research can explore the deletion of discourse markers in subtitles and its effect on the coherence of subtitling. Moreover, researchers can compare the professional subtitling of certain English movies from different genres with their amateur subtitling into Arabic and the viewers' response to such a type of subtitling. Indeed each of the discussed problematic issues can be a good candidate for future research.

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