

Exploring Subtitling Strategies of Metaphor Translation from English into Arabic

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ABSTRACT

The role that metaphors play in conveying meaning and expressing thoughts is undeniable. However, in the context of Arabic, using subtitles in the translation of metaphors has received relatively little attention compared to their presence in literary texts. This study aims to investigate the strategies employed to render metaphors into Arabic. It also tries to explore the extent to which English metaphors in the three films are domesticated or foreignised. By adopting Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) typology of metaphors and Toury's (2012) translation strategies, this study found that maintaining the same metaphors in Arabic subtitles is the most common strategy that Arabic subtitlers employ, despite the differences between the English language and Arabic language and their cultures. This indicates the essential role of metaphors in conveying meaning, and subtitlers are evidently aware of its importance. The study concludes with some recommendations for further research on metaphor translation.

Keywords: audio visual translation; metaphor; translation; subtitles; foreignisation

INTRODUCTION

Metaphors are linguistic devices that enable us to express ideas, emotions, and vivid imagery in a way that goes beyond their literal or straightforward meanings (Stepins, 2022). Metaphor plays a fundamental role in both human language and cognitive processes. According to Goatly (2007), metaphor is an integral part of human language and thought, making it challenging for individuals speaking certain languages to avoid using metaphors. Similarly, Derman (2017) notes that metaphors are frequently employed when describing feelings. Metaphors can transform abstract and inexpressible ideas into concrete and comprehensible concepts. Therefore, it is evident that metaphors play a crucial role in facilitating effective self-expression and enhancing our understanding of how we experience the world. However, the use of metaphors is not always a straightforward task. It poses one of the most challenging issues in the field of translation because it relies on cultural context and language comprehension for proper understanding (Stepins, 2022). Metaphors often depend on shared experiences, references, and cultural knowledge that may not have equivalents in another language or culture (Khalifah & Zibin, 2022). Furthermore, metaphors can be sensitive, making it challenging to convey the same intended meaning accurately in a different language. As noted by Shunnaq et al. (2020), metaphors extend beyond the literal meanings of words to offer readers a more intricate perspective on the subject at hand, shedding light on various cultural and social aspects in both the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). Likewise, according to Newmark (1988), metaphor translation poses a formidable challenge, not only for translators but also for scholars in the field of translation. Larson (1998) indicates that certain metaphorical expressions can be particularly perplexing to comprehend and may lead to misinterpretation if translated literally. This misinterpretation arises from the cultural disparities

between various languages and cultures, with English and Arabic serving as a pertinent example due to their distinct linguistic and cultural systems.

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on the field of audiovisual translation, particularly subtitling, within the field of translation research (Karakanta, 2022). This amplified attention can be attributed to several factors and developments that have contributed to the increased interest in this area. First, the digital age has been accompanied by extraordinary accessibility to audiovisual content, including films, TV series, documentaries, and online videos from various cultures and languages. Subtitling has emerged as a prominent method to bridge language barriers and make foreign content more inclusive and comprehensible. Furthermore, the increasing need for subtitling services in the worldwide translation industry has led to a transformative development that has modernised the utilisation of subtitles (Oziemblewska & Szarkowska, 2022). As a consequence, this field has become a prominent and dynamic area of focus in the broader landscape of translation research.

Utilising subtitling in literary translation has been the subject of various studies (e.g., Al-Kahtani, 2023; Debbas & Haider, 2020; Haider & Hussein, 2022). Many of these studies have been summarised in comprehensive reviews (e.g., Al-Tamimi & Mansy, 2023). However, there has been a noticeable scarcity of research focusing on the translation of metaphors in film subtitles from English to Arabic (e.g., Abu Rumman et al., 2023; Al-Adwan & Al-Jabri, 2023; Alqawasmeh, 2022). This study aims to fill in this gap and explore the strategies used in subtitling metaphors from English into Arabic. It also aims to explore the extent to which English metaphors in these films are domesticated or foreignised into Arabic subtitles.

This study is significant as it addresses a crucial gap in the literature by focusing on metaphor translation in film subtitles from English to Arabic, an area that has received limited attention despite its importance. The findings will contribute to the field of audiovisual translation, providing insights into effective strategies for translating metaphors in subtitles and enhancing our understanding of the challenges involved in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic metaphor translation, particularly in audiovisual media. Moreover, by examining the domestication and foreignisation of metaphors, this study will contribute to broader discussions on cultural preservation and adaptation in translation practices. In particular, the study is guided by two research questions: a) What translation strategies do subtitlers employ when rendering metaphors from English into Arabic? b) To what extent are English metaphors in the three films domesticated or foreignised?

LITERATURE REVIEW

TRANSLATING METAPHORS

Translating metaphors is a linguistic process that delves into the complex world of language and symbolism. Metaphors go beyond mere figurative language; they serve as influential instruments for communicating abstract concepts and emotions through striking comparisons. Understanding and effectively translating metaphors is a complex task. It requires not only a deep comprehension of the source and target languages but also an appreciation for the cultural and social contexts that highlight these symbolic expressions. According to Dobrzyńska (1995), the interpretation of metaphors is strongly culturally conditioned. Previous studies have explored metaphors from various angles and made substantial contributions to our understating of this concept (Dickins, 2005; Kövecses, 2005; A. Kruger, 1993; Newmark, 1988; Schäffner & Shuttleworth, 2013; Toury,

2012; Van den Broeck, 1981). The majority of these studies have illuminated aspects such as metaphor definitions, classifications, and the ways in which different metaphors evolve from other forms of figurative language.

Regarding the categorisation of metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) divided conceptual metaphors into three primary groups: structural metaphor, orientational metaphor, and ontological metaphor. The structural metaphor is a metaphorical system in which a complex concept, often abstract, is conveyed in terms of another, typically more concrete concept. This means that one concept is comprehended and interpreted within the framework of another concept. For instance, in an illustration provided by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in "*Argument Is War*," the concept of argument is framed as a form of war due to elements of competition and the delineation of winners and losers. The second category of orientational metaphor, wherein concepts are linked spatially to one another, involves relationships like up-down, in-out, on-off, deep-shallow, and front-back. This type of metaphor is grounded in both physical and cultural factors. For instance, an expression like "*I fell into a depression*" employs the orientational metaphor. The third one is the ontological metaphor. It is a specific form of metaphorical comparison in which an abstract concept, such as an idea or activity, is portrayed as something concrete, like an object or container. This type of metaphor is often used to create a more distinct and well-defined structure, even when there might be very little or none. For instance, the statement "*inflation is eating up our profits*" employs an ontological metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson later, in the 2003 afterword, admit that the division of metaphors into three types – orientational, ontological, and structural – was artificial. "All metaphors are structural (in that they map structures to structures); all are ontological (in that they create target domain entities); and many are orientational (in that they map orientational image-schemas)" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 264).

TRANSLATION OF METAPHOR

The translation of metaphor is a complex linguistic challenge that requires careful consideration of both literal and figurative expressions, impacting the overall message and cultural differences of the text. According to Dobrzyńska (1995), when a translator encounters a metaphor in a different context, they have three options at their disposal: they can opt for a direct equivalent of the original metaphor, explore an alternative metaphorical expression conveying a similar meaning, or substitute an untranslatable metaphor with a roughly corresponding literal paraphrase.

In alignment with the predominant trends in Translation Studies, research on metaphor translation has progressively shifted away from strict linguistic equivalence-based approaches, as advocated by Newmark (1988). Instead, it has increasingly embraced the pragmatic concept of *skopos*, and to some extent, it has worn the complex structure of discourse (Dorst, 2016). Two particular shifts have proven to be highly beneficial in the examination of metaphor translation: the descriptive and cognitive orientations. Metaphors are recognised as a challenging aspect of translation. Instead of prescribing how to handle them, scholars now study how they are handled in a descriptive manner (Schäffner, 2004; Toury, 2012; Van den Broeck, 1981). Mandelblit (1995) was one of the early scholars who embraced a cognitive approach to metaphor translation. He introduced the concept of the Cognitive Translation Hypothesis, which proposed two schemes of cognitive mapping conditions: similar mapping conditions and different mapping conditions. Drawing on cultural factors and following the general principles of the cognitive framework, Al-Zoubi et al. (2006) employed three sets of authentic English and Arabic metaphor examples: (1) Metaphors with similar mapping conditions, where shared ideas are expressed through identical

expressions in both languages. (2) Metaphors also have similar mapping conditions but are realised differently in the two languages. (3) Metaphors with different mapping conditions that lack equivalents in the target language.

Numerous studies have made significant contributions to the field of metaphor translation. These studies, including works by Hiraga (1991), Schäffner (2004), Kövecses (2005), Iranmanesh and Kulwindr Kaur (2010), Maalej (2008), Pedersen (2015), Vakhovska (2021), Xie (2022), and others, have primarily approached the nature and usage of metaphor across languages. Scholars in this field have focused on understanding how metaphors function as bridges between language, thought, and culture and how they play a crucial role in shaping our perception of reality. This perspective recognises that the translation of metaphors involves more than just finding linguistic equivalents; it requires an in-depth understanding of the underlying cognitive structures and cultural connotations that these metaphors carry. The works of these scholars have highlighted the complexity of metaphor translation, especially when dealing with metaphors deeply embedded in a specific cultural context (Kalda, 2021; Zhou & Tang, 2022). They have proposed various strategies and techniques for addressing the challenges posed by metaphor translation, emphasising the need to find cognitive equivalence in the target language to ensure effective communication.

Nevertheless, there is a relatively limited body of research specifically dedicated to the translation of metaphors from English to Arabic. Most of the existing studies in this field have primarily focused on literary, journalistic, and scientific contexts. For example, Al-Harrasi (2001) and Aldnani (2018) investigated metaphorical expressions in political discourse, while Al-Jumah (2007) conducted a comparative analysis of metaphors in general business writing in both English and Arabic. Nader (2015) explored the translation of war metaphors in economic texts from English to Arabic. In a similar vein, Merakchi (2018) examined the translation of metaphors in the domains of astronomy and astrophysics. Additionally, Alshunnag (2016) examined the translation of conceptual metaphors in biomedical texts from English to Arabic. Assiri (2017) delved into metaphors in political feature articles translated from English to Arabic, using a dataset comprising authentic Arabic feature articles, authentic English feature articles, and translations of the English feature articles into Arabic, aiming to assess how writers employ metaphors in each of these contexts. Similarly, Musaad (2022) investigated the strategies employed for translating metaphors from English to Arabic in political discourse. This study applied the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and revealed that a majority of the metaphors were translated while preserving the same imagery in the Arabic language.

METAPHOR TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

In the past, a number of scholars have put forward various translation strategies for dealing with metaphors. For instance, Toury (2012) outlined four categories for metaphor translation, which include translating a metaphor into the same metaphor, rendering it as a different metaphor, converting it into non-metaphorical language, or omitting it. Similarly, Newmark (1988) developed a taxonomy consisting of seven procedures: (1) maintaining the same image in the target language, (2) substituting the source image with a conventional target language image, (3) translating the metaphor using a simile, (4) translating the metaphor using a simile and providing its intended meaning, (5) converting the metaphor into its underlying sense, (6) combining the metaphor with its intended meaning, and (7) omitting the metaphor. Additionally, Van den Broeck (1981) proposed that metaphors can be translated using three strategies: transfer, substitution, and

paraphrase. Notably, in his model, the omission of the metaphor was not considered a strategy for metaphor translation. Nevertheless, his other two strategies align with those advanced by Toury (2012), namely translating a metaphor into a different metaphor or converting it into non-metaphorical language, and with the strategies of Newmark (1988), which involve replacing the source image with a conventional target and converting the metaphor into its underlying sense. It is essential to note that researchers and scholars use various terms such as procedures, strategies, and methods. The term "strategies" refers to overarching plans that guide the translator's decisions (Chesterman, 1997), while "procedures" denote specific techniques applied to particular translation challenges (Newmark, 1988). In contrast, "methods" refer to broader theoretical approaches that inform both strategies and procedures (Munday, 2008). For clarity and consistency, this study will use the term "strategies" throughout, as it is more commonly used in the literature within the field of translation studies.

In the Arabic-English context, Alshunnag (2016) proposed a classification of seven translation strategies used to translate metaphors. These strategies are outlined below:

1. Literal: The source text (ST) metaphorical expression is translated literally into the target text (TT).
2. Explication: The ST metaphorical expression is explained or clarified in the TT.
3. Elaboration: The ST metaphorical expression is further developed or expanded upon in the TT.
4. Explication and Elaboration: The ST metaphorical expression is both explained and expanded upon in the TT.
5. Different TT metaphorical expression: The ST metaphorical expression is translated into a different TT metaphorical expression.
6. Non-metaphorical: The ST metaphorical expression is rendered into a non-metaphorical expression in the TT, devoid of any metaphorical imagery.
7. Deletion: The ST metaphorical expression is not translated at all in the TT, resulting in the removal of the conceptual metaphor.

SUBTITLING METAPHOR

Subtitles play a crucial role in the art of translating metaphors. Metaphors, with their symbolic and figurative language, often pose a significant challenge in translation, as they rely heavily on cultural and linguistic distinctions. The skilled translator must not only convert the words but also the underlying emotions and imagery. Subtitles provide a canvas for the intricate portrayal of these metaphors. Subtitles allow the audience to experience the depth and richness of the original language, thereby enriching their understanding of the art, culture, and storytelling of a foreign film or literary work. On the other hand, it is necessary to highlight the constraints that subtitlers face when translating metaphors. These constraints have been discussed extensively in some studies (Al-Batineh, 2023; Diaz Cintas & Remael, 2014; Gottlieb, 2001; Pedersen, 2011).

The previous studies have notably provided a limited exploration of metaphors in subtitling (Abu Rumman et al., 2023; Al-Adwan & Al-Jabri, 2023; Alshunnag, 2016; Al-Zoubi et al., 2006). This underscores the importance of studying the translation of metaphors in everyday communication and in subtitling. The scarcity of such studies underscores the relevance of the present study, which aims to address this gap in the literature by investigating the use of metaphors in subtitling within the Arabic context. In summary, there is a clear need for more research

concerning the utilisation of metaphors in subtitling. Such research has the potential to enhance our understanding of how metaphors are employed across different languages and cultures and how they influence the final translated product.

METHOD

The material used in this study was extracted from three movies: "*Mulan*" (1998), "*Moana*" (2016), and "*Maleficent: Mistress of Evil*" (2019). The nature of this study necessitated the manual extraction of metaphorical expressions, requiring a thorough and repeated reading of the entire scripts of the three selected films. This meticulous approach enabled a focused and detailed analysis, ensuring that each metaphor was accurately identified and examined in depth. Given the constraints of limited resources and time, the decision to analyse three films was essential to maintain the feasibility and manageability of the research. Furthermore, the nature of this study made the selection of three films particularly suitable for an in-depth exploration of the complexities of metaphor translation. Having established the rationale for the film selection, the following section provides a brief overview of the three films under study.

The first movie, "*Mulan*" (1998), tells the story of a young girl who learns that her frail father must join the army to combat the Hun invaders. Unwilling to risk his life, she disguises herself as a man and takes his place in the army. The second movie, "*Moana*" (2016), follows the journey of Moana, the daughter of Chief Tui, as she embarks on a quest to retrieve the heart of the goddess Te Viti from Maui, a demigod. This mission becomes necessary when the plants and fish on her island start dying due to a blight. The last film, "*Maleficent: Mistress of Evil*" (2019), centres around Maleficent, who travels to an ancient castle to celebrate the upcoming wedding of Aurora and Prince Philip. During her visit, she encounters Aurora's future mother-in-law, a conniving queen with a deceptive plan to eradicate the Earth's fairies. To thwart her scheme, Maleficent joins forces with an experienced warrior and a group of outcasts to confront the Queen and her formidable army. These movies were chosen for the study because they were not studied before. In total, the combined duration of the three films is 5 hours and 15 minutes.

STUDY DESIGN

This research aims to explore the strategies utilised for translating metaphors and to determine the most prevalent strategy when translating metaphors from English to Arabic within film subtitles. The investigation involved an analysis of how metaphors are transformed into Arabic, utilising a parallel corpus comprising three films and their corresponding Arabic subtitles. This study applied the categorisation of metaphors according to Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) framework, which includes structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors. To identify the subtitling strategies employed, the research aligns with Toury's (2012) proposed classification of translation strategies, which require using the same metaphor, using a different metaphor, using non-metaphorical language, or omitting the metaphor. Additionally, this study adopts a coupled pairs methodology, wherein the translations of metaphors in the source text are compared with their renderings in the target text. Furthermore, to answer the second research question, the notion of domestication and foreignisation, Venuti (1995) was used to identify the extent to which metaphorical expressions are source or target-oriented when translated into Arabic. That is to say, this concept will deal with translations of metaphors in a broad and general sense, while Toury's (2012) model of metaphor

strategies will be applied to provide a detailed account of the translation strategies used with each instance of metaphors in the three films.

PROCEDURES

Before proceeding with the data collection process for this study, it is essential to highlight the criteria for data selection. The data selection was based on three factors: (1) the three films chosen are popular and widely recognised in the Arab context, reflecting their significant cultural impact; (2) the films have been subtitled into Arabic, ensuring they are accessible for analysis; and (3) the selected films contain a high volume of metaphorical expressions, providing a sufficiently large number of metaphors for analysis.

The data collection process for this study involved several stages. Initially, the dialogues from the three films were obtained from Subscene.com. Subsequently, the films were meticulously watched multiple times while cross-referencing with their respective dialogues to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the film scripts. Following this, the Arabic subtitles were extracted from the films using the software SmartRipper. SubRip, another software tool, was employed to convert these Arabic subtitles, along with their time codes, into a textual format. Next, after extensive reading of the subtitling, 152 metaphors contained within the original script were identified and categorised based on the taxonomies outlined by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). These taxonomies categorise metaphors into three primary types: structural metaphor, orientational metaphor, and ontological metaphor. To ensure the utmost validity of the classification and identification of metaphor types and subtitling strategies, two colleagues evaluated the initial categorisations to identify any discrepancies or areas necessitating refinement. Metaphor identification in this study depends on the transformation of abstract and inexpressible ideas into concrete and comprehensible concepts. Subsequently, each individual metaphor in the source text was compared to its corresponding counterpart in the Arabic subtitles. This comparison facilitated the examination of the distribution and frequency of metaphors in both the source and target texts. Finally, the study focused on identifying and classifying the translation strategies used to convey metaphors into Arabic. This classification was carried out in accordance with the taxonomy established by Toury (2012). After the data analysis, only three translation strategies were found to be used by subtitlers in rendering metaphors into Arabic.

DATA ANALYSIS

The output of the film transcriptions was organised in an Excel spreadsheet. Arabic subtitles were added to the file in a separate column. These Arabic subtitles were extracted from the films using SmartRipper software and were subsequently converted into a textual format using SubRip software. Each metaphor present in the text was identified and categorised, adhering to the taxonomies outlined by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980. These taxonomies classified metaphors into three primary types: structural metaphor, orientational metaphor, and ontological metaphor. The metaphors were further analysed in terms of translation strategies. If a specific strategy had no corresponding metaphor in the data, it was excluded from the final analysis. Consequently, only three translation strategies were found to have been utilised by subtitlers in translating metaphors into Arabic. The final dataset included information on the number of metaphors associated with each strategy and category. To facilitate data analysis, the frequency and percentage of occurrences were calculated for each category and strategy.

RESULTS

TRANSLATION STRATEGIES OF METAPHORS

To find out the translation strategies employed when rendering metaphors from English into Arabic, a descriptive analysis was performed. The results of can be outlined Table 1.

TABLE 1. Descriptive Analysis

	Ontological metaphor		Orientational metaphor		Structural metaphor		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Translating a metaphor into the same metaphor(Literal translation)	58	78%	2	33%	52	72. %	112	73%
Rendering it as a different metaphor	13	17.5%	2	33%	15	21%	30	20%
Converting it into non-metaphorical language	3	4%	2	33%	5	7%	10	6.5%
Total	74	48.6%	6	3.94%	72	47.36%	152	100%

As shown in Table 1, the total number of metaphors in the three films was 152. These metaphors were classified into three categories: ontological metaphor occurred 74 times (48.6%), orientational metaphor occurred 6 times (3.94%), and structural metaphor occurred 72 times (47.36%).

Regarding the translation strategies, about 73% of metaphors in the source text are translated into Arabic by literal translation strategy, with 112 cases out of a total of 152. Therefore, it can be claimed that metaphors are foreignised in most of their occurrences when subtitled into Arabic. On the other hand, different metaphor strategies ranked the second most used strategy with 30 times, making up about 20%. This means that about 94% of metaphors are maintained in Arabic subtitles either through the same metaphor or through a cultural substitution. The remaining percentage of metaphors (i.e., 6%) is translated by using non-metaphor correspondents in Arabic subtitles, with 10 cases. On the other hand, ontological metaphor is the most common type used in the three films with about 49%, closely followed by structural metaphor with 47%, while orientational metaphor is the least frequent type used in the three films with 10 cases, making up about 4%.

To be more specific, the literal strategy used for ontological metaphors occurred 58 times (78%). The different target text metaphorical expression strategy for ontological metaphors was employed 13 times (17.5%). The non-metaphorical strategy for ontological metaphors was observed 3 times (4%). In addition, the literal strategy for orientational metaphors occurred twice (33%). Similarly, the different target text metaphorical expressions and non-metaphorical strategies were each used twice (33%). The literal strategy for structural metaphors was employed 52 times (72%), while the different target text metaphorical expression strategy for structural metaphors occurred 15 times (21%). The non-metaphorical strategy for structural metaphors was used 5 times (7%). Overall, these results highlight that the majority of the metaphors in the analysed text were ontological metaphors, with the literal expression being the most common approach. Structural metaphors were the next most prevalent, with a high proportion also being used in their literal sense. Orientational metaphors were the least frequent, and their usage was almost evenly divided among literal, different target text metaphorical expressions and non-metaphorical expressions.

Drawing from the overall distribution of translation strategies applied in subtitling metaphors into Arabic and based on Venuti's concept of domestication and foreignisation (Venuti, 1995), it is evident that subtitlers show a strong preference for domestication, with approximately 93% of the cases being domesticated.

DISCUSSION

RQ1. What translation strategies do subtitlers employ when rendering metaphors from English into Arabic?

The findings reveal that the majority of the translations examined in this study were characterised as literal translations. Such translations typically maintain a direct word-to-word correspondence between the source language and the target language, preserving the original meaning with minimal alteration. This finding contradicts the consensus in metaphor translation studies in which more sense is given to image retention rather than literal translation, as word-for-word translations tend to sound unnatural. This prevalence of literal translations implies that, in this particular context, there is an emphasis on safeguarding the fundamental essence of the source text. A second strategy observed in the translations involves the use of alternative metaphorical expressions in the target text. This observation underscores the inherent difficulties in translating metaphors, which frequently depend on cultural and linguistic subtleties that lack direct counterparts in the target language. It may also indicate the translator's creative adaptation in effectively conveying the metaphorical concept, even if this entails departing from a strictly literal interpretation. Together, these two strategies—literal and different target text metaphorical expression—highlight that a significant portion of metaphors is recreated in Arabic subtitles, whether by directly translating the metaphor or by adapting it culturally. The relatively minor use of the "non-metaphorical" strategy for translation suggests that a small portion of metaphors are replaced with non-metaphorical expressions in Arabic subtitles. This could indicate a deliberate choice to simplify or clarify metaphors in the target language.

The presence of non-metaphorical translations, constituting a third strategy, suggests that there may not be an equivalent or even suitable figure of speech in the TL. These findings underscore the importance of considering context and content when determining the appropriate translation approach, as not all texts necessarily require or accommodate the use of metaphorical expressions. Additionally, the absence of an omission strategy in the three films further emphasises the significance of metaphorical aesthetic values in the dialogue. Pedersen's (2017) study revealed that one out of every eight metaphors were excluded from subtitles. Subtitles tend to avoid omitting metaphors, resulting in the retention of metaphors in nearly three-quarters of the Arabic screen. The treatment of metaphors in Arabic subtitles differs from other linguistic phenomena, such as profanity and discourse particles, as observed in previous studies like Sahari (2024) and Mattsson (2009), where these elements are more likely to be omitted or modified during the subtitling process.

The upcoming section will feature an examination of the translation approaches utilised in Arabic subtitles. This analysis will include specific instances illustrating how metaphors are rendered in Arabic and the rationales behind the selection of particular linguistic options and translation methods.

The findings of the study are discussed in terms of metaphor types (i.e., ontological, orientational, and structural) and translation approaches (i.e., foreignisation and domestication). Our analysis revealed three main strategies employed by subtitlers when rendering metaphors from English into Arabic: literal translation, different metaphorical expressions, and non-metaphorical translation. These strategies were applied across different types of metaphors, as discussed below.

ONTOLOGICAL METAPHORS

Ontological metaphors, which represent abstract concepts as tangible entities or substances, were the most common type in the analysed films, constituting about half of the metaphor instances. As shown in example 1, metaphors in the source text are literally translated into Arabic. This serves as an indication of the significant role played by metaphors in the source text, leading subtitlers to preserve the aesthetic value of metaphors in the target text.

Example 1:

Source text: Go! The fate of the Fa family rests in your claw.?"		
Arabic subtitle	English back translation	
إذهب! قدر عائلة فا بين أنيابك	Go, the fate of the Fa family is between your teeth	
Subtitling strategy: Literal	Metaphor type	Ontological metaphor

In this example, the scene contains a big dragon with a big mouth. Additionally, the narrative and storyline of the film encourage subtitlers to retain the same metaphor in the Arabic version. Although this strategy may initially seem less straightforward, it is reinforced and complemented by other visual and audio elements. These elements aid both subtitlers and viewers in maintaining the same mental image while, simultaneously, the metaphor is translated literally.

Based on the previous examples, it can be confidently claimed that metaphors in Arabic subtitles are consistently translated in a literal and faithful manner to maintain the original imagery. Several reasons support this approach, including the crucial role of metaphors in conveying complete meaning and the challenge of omitting them in the translated version. In contrast to linguistic elements like speech practices, swearing, and ellipsis, the similarity between English and Arabic in their use of metaphors justifies the retention of metaphors in Arabic subtitles. Moreover, the nature of subtitling allows viewers to comprehend the intended meaning not only through verbal elements but also through various visual and auditory cues, such as images, signs, and sounds. This, in turn, encourages subtitlers to employ a literal strategy, as viewers can grasp the meaning through multiple polysemic channels. That is to say, the visual and auditory context minimises the load on the subtitlers to think big and bring creative and inclusive rendering of mental images indulged in metaphor. Therefore, any loss of meaning in subtitling can be compensated. The viewers can catch the meaning depending on more than one sense. After discussing the use of the literal translation strategy and potential explanations for subtitlers' linguistic choices, the following section will shed light on the use of different visual elements.

While the most common strategy for translating ontological metaphors into Arabic involves a literal approach, there are instances where subtitlers employ alternative Arabic metaphors to address the challenges encountered in the source language. The following example further illustrates this concept:

Example 2:

Source text: "I think it's time we took this war into our hands."		
Arabic subtitle	English back translation	
لقد حان الوقت لنعالج أمر هذه الحرب بأنفسنا	It's time for us to treat this war by ourselves	
Subtitling strategy: Different metaphor	Metaphor type	Ontological metaphor

As illustrated in the previous example, subtitlers often encounter linguistic and cultural challenges that necessitate the use of alternative metaphors when translating into Arabic. These alternative metaphors may convey a similar meaning but are more culturally relevant and understandable to Arab audiences. Moreover, employing different metaphors can enhance the readability and engagement of the subtitles, as literal translations may appear awkward or unnatural in the Arabic language.

After exploring the translation of ontological metaphors, we now turn our attention to how orientational metaphors are rendered in Arabic subtitles.

ORIENTATIONAL METAPHORS

Oriental metaphors, which organise concepts in spatial relationships, were the least frequently used type in the analysed films with 6 cases. Before proceeding to examples of orientational metaphors, it is important to recognise that using MSA can pose linguistic limitations when it comes to adopting specific strategies. To be more precise, while Arabic offers equivalents for English metaphors, these counterparts are predominantly found in Arabic dialects and slang registers rather than in the formal and elevated MSA. Consequently, subtitlers are constrained to choose formal MSA equivalents, which could lead to the use of non-metaphorical translations, even when suitable metaphorical alternatives exist, albeit outside the MSA. The following example serves to illustrate this concept more thoroughly.

Example 3:

Source text: He is warming up.		
Arabic subtitle	English back translation	
امتحه بعض الوقت، فهو يستعد	Give him some time; he is preparing	
Subtitling strategy: Non-metaphorical	Metaphor type	Oriental metaphor

In this example, the subtitler chose to employ a non-metaphorical strategy and used the phrase 'فهو يستعد' (he is preparing), although a similar expression is used in some Arabic dialects. However, the use of slang words is not the norm and is not acceptable in Arabic subtitling, as only the formal and high register of the language, which is MSA, is employed. Therefore, subtitlers may translate the sense of metaphorical expression due to linguistic constraints.

In the same vein, there are a few cases where subtitlers convey the meaning of the source text completely without either omitting the metaphors or rendering the metaphor's imagery. In most of these instances, subtitlers employ this strategy when (a) the metaphor's imagery in the source text would not be clear if translated literally and (b) when there is no suitable alternative in the target language. This can be exemplified in the following example:

Example 4:

Source text: "Don't worry, Father. I won't let you down."		
Arabic subtitle	English back translation	
لا تقلق يا ابي. لن أخذلك أبداً	Don't worry, father, I will not disappoint you	
Subtitling strategy: Non-metaphorical	Metaphor type	Oriental metaphor

In this example, the phrase "*let down*" has been translated into Arabic as "*disappoint*," which may signify a cultural distinction between English and Arabic in the use of certain metaphorical expressions. In other words, the phrase "*let down*" would not be comprehensible if translated literally, as Arabs do not employ such phrases in this manner. Additionally, subtitlers might encounter challenges when attempting to find a suitable substitution from the target language that retains a metaphorical sense. This can lead them to translate it using a non-metaphorical expression while preserving the core meaning of the metaphor.

Regarding the use of different metaphorical expressions in Arabic subtitles, the following examples provide further insight into this translation strategy employed for metaphors.

Example 5:

Source text: "We're under attack! Light the signal."		
Arabic subtitle	English back translation	
هناك هجوم! أشعلوا إشارة التحذير	There is an attack, turn on the warning signal	
Subtitling strategy: Different metaphor strategy	Metaphor type	Oriental metaphor

As shown in the table above, the phrase "*under attack*" has been translated into Arabic as "هناك هجوم" [there is an attack], and the imagery in the source text has been altered to make it more understandable and culturally acceptable in the Arabic language. In other words, if the phrase were translated literally from the source text, the subtitle would appear awkward and unidiomatic. This adaptation can be attributed to the linguistic disparities between English and Arabic, which belong to fundamentally different linguistic systems. These differences necessitate a degree of adjustment and alteration to maintain idiomatic and readable subtitles. Thus, subtitlers prioritise comprehension over strict faithfulness to the source text. With this context in mind, we now turn our attention to the third type of metaphor, i.e. structural metaphors.

STRUCTURAL METAPHORS

Structural metaphors, which use one concept to structure another, accounted for approximately 47% of the metaphor instances in the films. This type of metaphor was translated literally in 72% of cases, using a different metaphor in approximately 21% of cases, and rendered into non-metaphorical expressions in about 7% of cases. The examples below illustrate how structural metaphors are translated.

Example 6:

Source text: "There we go. Nice water. Ocean is a friend of mine."		
Arabic subtitle	English back translation	
هاك. هذه مياه جميلة، المحيط صديقي	"There we go. This water is beautiful; the ocean is my friend."	
Subtitling strategy: Literal	Metaphor type	Structural metaphor

In this example, the speaker attributes human characteristics to the ocean, regarding it as a friend. This metaphor is similarly employed in the Arabic language, where certain objects can be humanised. The metaphor in the source text is rendered literally, preserving the same imagery. This translation is idiomatic and comprehensible to the Arab audience, proving to be an effective choice as it conveys a similar aesthetic image in the target text. In other words, the overall meaning of a sentence would be affected if the metaphor is deleted or manipulated.

Moreover, the nature of subtitling supports the use of a literal translation strategy in Arabic subtitles. In other words, through subtitling, viewers can receive the message through various channels, including images, movements, and sound. This multifaceted communication method may encourage subtitlers to opt for a literal and faithful translation approach because if the language cannot convey the metaphor, the movements and image can do so, even though such a strategy may sometimes result in relatively awkward and unidiomatic translations.

Furthermore, ideological and cultural norms can serve as reasons for substituting a metaphor from the source text with another metaphor from the target text. Here is an illustrative example:

Example 7:

Source text: "But the Gods aren't the ones who make you Maui. You are."		
Arabic subtitle	English back translation	
لكن الأبطال ليسوا من صنعك "ماوي" بل أنت	But the heroes are not the ones who make you Maui; you are	
Subtitling strategy: Different TT metaphorical expression	Metaphor type	Structural metaphor

Evidently, the word "gods" has been replaced with "heroes" due to the sensitivity surrounding the term "god," which might be perceived as offensive and blasphemous to the target audience. Cultural differences often give rise to words and expressions that are acceptable in the source language but may not be so in other cultures, particularly concerning the use of religious terminology. As a result, subtitlers may find it necessary to modify the metaphor to align with the cultural norms of the target audience. Furthermore, it's important to note that films are primarily created for the purpose of entertaining people. This necessity to maintain the entertainment value of films may lead to the utilisation of strategies involving the adaptation of metaphors to different target text metaphors or the transformation of metaphors into non-metaphorical language. In other words, subtitlers choose linguistic approaches that are non-offensive, especially when confronted with issues arising from cultural disparities between English and Arabic.

Based on the above, metaphor is one of the rhetorical and effective tools used for conveying messages and establishing successful communication between interlocutors. Its importance is not confined to the written form of a language; it extends to spoken languages, such as those in Hollywood films. Consequently, this aspect must be taken into consideration when subtitling

English from other languages. The data from this study reveals that ontological metaphors are the most common type used in the three films, constituting about half of the metaphor instances. They are closely followed by Structural metaphors, accounting for 47%, while orientational metaphors are the least frequently used type in these films. The data also demonstrates that 74% of metaphors in the three films are retained and translated as the same metaphor in the Arabic subtitles. This indicates the subtitlers' awareness of the significance and aesthetic value of metaphors. It further illustrates that, despite Arabic and English belonging to different language systems, there are many similarities in the use of metaphors between the two languages, as reflected in Arabic subtitles, where approximately three-quarters of metaphorical expressions are preserved. In addition, the nature of subtitling is such that film viewers have various channels through which they can understand the message of the films, including images, signs, movements, and non-verbal expressions. These factors compel subtitlers, especially in visual metaphors, to maintain the same metaphorical image in the translated version, as meaning is conveyed through these additional channels, not just through the verbal content.

The use of various channels is evident in the previous examples, where retaining the same metaphors led to somewhat awkward Arabic equivalents. Due to these channels, viewers can fully grasp the primary message. Furthermore, the translation of most metaphorical instances signifies subtitlers' willingness to adopt the use of a foreignising strategy. On the other hand, in 30 out of 152 cases, metaphors in the original audiovisual texts are translated into different metaphors in Arabic, accounting for approximately 20%. This indicates that Arabic subtitles retain roughly 94% of metaphorical expressions, either through a literal approach or by introducing alternative translations from the source texts. Only around 6% of metaphors are converted into non-metaphorical expressions, which can be attributed, in general, to the cultural gap between English and Arabic. This necessitates the removal of metaphorical elements to ensure that subtitles are comprehensible, readable, and culturally acceptable, thereby preserving the seamless flow and thematic coherence of the films.

The results of this study contradict the findings of Dickins et al. (2002), who suggested that English metaphors are replaced by a different type of metaphor in Arabic. This difference may be attributed to the nature of subtitling, where multiple channels are employed to convey meaning. Additionally, the percentage of metaphors translated into the same metaphor is higher compared to earlier studies, like Fargal and Mansour (2020), which may indicate the influence of subtitling characteristics, allowing the message to be transmitted through various means. This high percentage of translating metaphors using literal translation can be attributed to the need for brevity and clarity, which aligns with the time and space limitations inherent in subtitling. Additionally, the visual and auditory elements of the film often provide context that helps convey the metaphor's meaning, allowing translators to use a literal translation with confidence that the audience can rely on these other channels. The cultural universality of certain metaphors may also be a key reason for opting for literal translation in metaphorical expressions.

To sum up, the study found that the subtitlers adopted three strategies to translate the metaphors in the three films under study: literal, different metaphorical expressions, and non-metaphorical strategies.

RQ2. To what extent are English metaphors in the three films domesticated or foreignised?

Across the entire corpus, the main translation strategies were identified, namely literal translation (73%), Different TT metaphoric expression (20%), and non-metaphorical (6.50%). Based on the overall distribution of the translation strategies used for dealing with metaphors in English subtitles and based on Venuti's concept of domestication and foreignisation (Venuti, 1995), it is clear that the majority of the metaphorical expressions are domestication. This indicates the essential role of metaphors in conveying meaning, and subtitlers are evidently aware of its importance. Another reason for using the foreignisation approach is the temporal and spatial constraints of subtitling, which demand brevity and clarity. Additionally, the visual and auditory elements of the films may support the metaphors' meanings, making foreignisation strategies more viable. The universality of certain metaphors can also be a contributing factor.

CONCLUSION

The study conducted an in-depth exploration of metaphor translation, with a specific focus on the Arabic-English context. It analysed examples of metaphor translation strategies used in subtitling across three films. This research offers profound implications that extend beyond its immediate scope. It can serve as a valuable source of information and inspiration for both researchers in the field and professional translators and subtitlers. By shedding light on effective metaphor translation strategies, this study can guide and inform their work, ultimately improving the quality of audiovisual translation. One promising avenue for further investigation is the comparison between different versions of the same content, such as the official DVD version and fansubs, or between dubbed and subtitled versions. Such a comparative analysis could provide more insights into the different choices made in audiovisual translation and their impact on the audience's understanding and engagement with the content.

This study contributes novel insights to the field by addressing a research gap in the exploration of metaphor translation in Arabic-English audiovisual contexts. While previous research has often focused on metaphor translation in literary texts or general translation strategies, this study specifically examines subtitling, a field that presents unique challenges due to its multimodal nature and the constraints it imposes on the translator. The novelty of the research lies in its detailed comparative analysis across multiple films, providing empirical data that highlights the diversity of strategies employed in different contexts. This comparative approach not only enriches our understanding of how metaphors are handled in audiovisual translation but also challenges existing theoretical frameworks to account for the variability in translation practices.

The study explores metaphor translation in Arabic-English subtitling across three films, revealing insights that can inform both researchers and practitioners. However, several limitations affect its findings. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the results, and the focus on Arabic-English translations may not apply to other languages or cultural contexts. Additionally, the study is confined to subtitling, which involves constraints different from those in dubbing or literary translation. The study also does not consider the impact of evolving technology on translation practices and may reflect a static view of translation practices rather than capturing long-term trends.

The study's findings have significant implications for both future research and professional practice. For researchers, the study suggests several promising avenues, such as exploring how different translation strategies affect audience reception or comparing metaphor translation in subtitled versus dubbed versions. This could lead to a more comprehensive understanding of how metaphors function across different modes of audiovisual translation. For practitioners, the study offers valuable insights into effective metaphor translation strategies, particularly in contexts where cultural and linguistic differences are pronounced. By highlighting the importance of both preserving the metaphor's impact and adapting it to the target audience, the study provides practical guidelines that can enhance the quality of subtitling work.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares no competing interests. Author contributions

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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