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Netflix English subtitling of the Jordanian movie 'The Alleys': Challenges and strategies

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Abstract

This study examined the translation strategies employed in subtitling the Jordanian Movie *The Alleys* from Jordanian vernacular into English, with special attention to culture-specific items (CSIs) and swear words. The selected movie was produced in 2022 and aired on Netflix. After watching the movie and examining the subtitles, the researchers grouped them into two main categories: culture-specific items (CSIs) and Swear Words. The themes subcategorized under CSIs include i) idioms and proverbs, ii) terms of address, iii) religious expressions, iv) oaths, and v) food and drinks. The themes identified in the movie and subcategorized under Swear Words include i) relative-related, ii) sex-related, iii) animal-related, iv) excretion, and v) rudeness and disrespect. The study utilized the translation strategies proposed by Baker (2001), Gottlieb (1992), and Mughazy (2016). The findings showed that the strategies used in translating idioms and proverbs are metaphorical approximation (idiom to idiom), metaphorization, and literalization (paraphrase). The strategies used in rendering terms of address, religious expressions, food & drinks are cultural adaptation, deletion, substitution, and generalization. Swear words were translated using various strategies: substitution, addition, deletion, or literal translation. The study concluded that language could be creatively and strategically altered to capture cultural contexts, feelings, and underlying meanings. These translation choices might not be merely linguistic tweaks but calculated efforts to accurately capture the essence of the original expressions with clarity and emotional resonance in the target language.

Keywords: culture-specific items, Netflix, swear words, subtitling, translation strategies



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Public Interest Statement

Translation between Arabic and English is challenging due to the linguistic and cultural gaps. This study is concerned with the English subtitles of the Jordanian film *The Alleys*. It discusses the rendering of culture-specific items and swear words. The findings showed that the subtitlers used various strategies in translating the movie, including cultural adaptation, deletion, substitution, generalization, addition, and literal translation. The findings have implications for content accessibility, cross-cultural communication, and audiovisual translation. The study stresses the value of coordinated efforts from translators, filmmakers, and streaming services to provide subtitles that appeal to English-speaking viewers without diminishing the original material.

Introduction

With the proliferation of audiovisual materials worldwide, audiovisual translation (AVT), with its two main modes, dubbing and subtitling, is increasingly gaining importance. Dubbing is a type of audiovisual translation that basically refers to replacing the source language's soundtrack with the target language's soundtrack (Diaz-Cintas, 2009; Baker and Hochel, 2001). Subtitling, on the other hand, is the process of adding captions that are synchronized with the verbal text and displayed at the bottom of images or on screens to present a translation of dialogues in audiovisual materials (Szarkowska, 2005). O'Connell (2007) defines subtitling as "supplementing the original voice soundtrack by adding written text on screen" (p.129).

This paper is concerned with subtitling as an essential aspect of AVT and the strategies that are utilized in rendering spoken language into written text displayed on the screen. Subtitles are used to convey the meaning of dialogues of foreign audiovisual materials to viewers who are unfamiliar with the source language. Subtitling has gained popularity in recent years as it makes these materials accessible to wider audiences in other languages and cultures. It allows an audience to enjoy foreign audiovisual materials which, without subtitling, would remain inaccessible to them. Compared to dubbing, subtitling is cost-effective and more inclusive. By providing on-screen descriptions of sounds and background noise, it makes audiovisual materials accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing (DHH), as well.

Subtitling, however, is a highly demanding process burdened with difficulties and challenges (Karamitroglou, 2000). Gottlieb (2001) discusses formal quantitative and textual qualitative challenges. For example, subtitles should achieve clarity, which entails using simple language, avoiding complex sentence structures, and breaking up longer sentences into shorter ones. De Linde and Kay (1999) examine technical difficulties related to time and space limitations, synchronization, retention time, and viewers' reading speed. Timing is crucial in subtitling because subtitles must be synchronized to appear on screen simultaneously with the spoken dialogue. Subtitles should also be economical so that the number of words fits the screen in no more than two lines. They should be long enough to accurately convey the meaning of the dialogue but short enough to be read quickly. Moreover, the font size and style used in subtitles can affect their readability. Subtitles should be easy to read, so it is important to choose a font size and style that is clear and legible.

In addition, subtitling, like other types of translation, is accompanied by other challenges concerning linguistic and cultural isomorphism between the concerned language pair. Subtitling requires certain strategies that are commonly employed by subtitlers to overcome such challenges. These strategies refer to the techniques and methods utilized by subtitlers to create clear, accurate, and effective subtitles. Gottlieb (2001), for example, proposes a set of strategies that include expansion, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion, and resignation.

The accuracy of translations is critical in subtitling; otherwise, it can lead to dialogue confusion or misinterpretation. Subtitlers must ensure that their translations are accurate and convey the intended meaning. To this end, they apply cultural adaptation, including changing idioms, cultural references, or other elements that may be incomprehensible to foreign audiences. They also apply localization, which

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involves adapting subtitles for specific regions or countries by using local dialects, spellings, or other regional variations. Finally, it is worth noting that subtitling strategies can vary depending on the type of content being translated. For example, documentaries may require a more literal translation approach than dramas or comedies, where creative liberties can be taken with translations (Furgani, 2016).

Building upon these established foundations, this paper undertakes a meticulous examination of the translation strategies employed in the translation of the Jordanian film “*The Alleys*” from Jordanian Arabic into English, with emphasis on two linguistic elements found in the film dialogue, namely culture-specific items (CSIs) and swearwords. A decent, censored version of the film played in local theatres, though the uncensored version, which was released on Netflix on Jan. 5, 2023, reached a wider audience. The thriller, directed by the Jordanian director Bassel Ghandour, portrays the seedy underworld of Amman, showcasing elements of its lowlife intrigue. Ghandour’s multi-genre film, which was shot in Jabal Al Natheef - a claustrophobic, violent, Eastern Amman neighborhood- immediately gained notoriety for its contentious themes and obscene language, sparking parliamentary debate and vigorous social media discussions upon its release, despite receiving support from certain liberal activists and local media outlets (Vivarelli, 2023).

Original textual production, such as novels and poetry of Ayman Otoom (A contemporary Jordanian poet and novelist), and AVT materials, such as *The Alleys*, incorporating controversial themes (sex, adultery, incest, obscene language, violence, political taboos, etc.), violate constraints imposed by taboo topics when introduced into conservative societies, such as Jordanian society (See Haider, Al-Saideen, & Hussein, 2022). Negative reception by the audience and strict state censorship are expected in such cases (Al-Saideen, Haider, & Al-Abbas, 2022).

Dissemination of socially or politically dissident translated materials into Arab or Muslim conservative communities may also incur undesired consequences. Translators in this context are expected to uphold a euphemizing approach to evade censorship and to soften the audience’s reception of such materials. Consequently, translational precautionary measures would be taken to avoid unsolicited reactions. However, this study is concerned with the English subtitle of the Jordanian film *The Alleys*. It would be interesting to find out whether vulgarism was maintained, mitigated, or even boosted in the English subtitle of *The Alleys*. To this end, this study thematically discusses the rendering of culture-specific items (CSIs) and swearwords detected in this film into English.

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How are culture-specific items (CSIs) rendered in the English subtitling of the Jordanian vernacular movie ‘*The Alleys*’?
2. How are swear words rendered in the English subtitling of the Jordanian vernacular movie ‘*The Alleys*’?

Literature Review

This section comprises two parts: the first covers the theoretical background on CSIs and swear words. The second part reviews empirical studies already carried out on the translation of these two cultural aspects.

Theoretical Background

Culture-Specific Items (CSIs)

The function of a language transcends mere communication; it captures the very essence of a culture. People of a particular culture view the world from their own viewpoint. Larson (1984) notes that different cultures have different focuses and that this difference is reflected in the vocabulary available for discussing a particular topic. Thus, a given society may employ both technical and non-technical vocabulary to refer to the same concept/thing. Newmark (1988) was the first to propose the idea of cultural words, which are typically described in everyday language and cannot be translated literally. Baker (1992) refers to Newmark’s cultural words as culture-specific concepts, which represent one of the types of non-equivalence at the word level, and notes that these concepts may be “abstract or concrete; they may relate to a religious belief, a

social custom, or even a type of food” (p. 21). As an example, Baker (1992) claims that the concept denoted by the English word speaker (of the House of Commons) has no equivalent in many other languages, including Arabic. Nonetheless, the term Culture-Specific Items (CSIs), coined by Javier Franco Aixela in 1996, has gained widespread currency in the translation literature. Aixela (1996) describes the nature of these CSIs as follows:

“...in translation, a CSI does not exist of itself, but as the result of a conflict arising from any linguistically represented reference in a source text which, when transferred to a target language, poses a translation problem due to the nonexistence or to the different value (whether determined by ideology, usage, frequency, etc.) of the given item in the target language culture” (p. 57).

Two key points can be drawn from Aixela’s description of a CSI: (i) a CSI occurs when a word (or a group of words) contains a culturally specific reference, and (ii) this culture-specific reference is either non-existent in the target language or has a different value/meaning there. Aixela discusses the example of the word ‘April’ (from the first line of *The Waste Land*: ‘April is the cruelest month...’) where he states that in English, ‘April’ is associated with flowers and spring, whereas in Germany and Spain, it’s ‘May’ that is used to signify this association (p.58).

Arabic, a language revered for its historical and cultural significance, contains a multitude of CSIs. For instance, the idiomatic expression “نادت نيدت امك” (*kamā tadīn tudān*), which translates to “as you sow, so shall you reap,” emphasizes the concept of accountability in a manner that goes beyond mere emphasis. It reflects the culture’s emphasis on personal responsibility in Arab societies. Similarly, the practice of offering “قهوة” (*qahwa*, Arabic for ‘coffee’), which refers to the Arabic coffee tradition, is an essential part of Arabian hospitality. Not only is it a beverage, but it is also a symbol of a warm welcome, highlighting the significance of hospitality in Arab culture.

With that being stated, CSIs provide insights into a culture’s norms, practices, and values and serve as a means for understanding cultural diversity. Due to its long history and complex culture, Arabic provides a vast array of such references, including proverbs and idioms, as well as religious rituals and practices. Translation between Arabic and English highlights the difficulty of bridging the linguistic gap while maintaining the cultural essence of these references. In the following section, we will discuss CSIs within the context of their translation from Arabic into English.

Swearwords

Despite being commonly perceived as rude and objectionable, profanities and expletives hold considerable cultural and emotional significance within linguistic discourse. The intricacy of human communication is evident in the utilization of words and phrases that frequently carry connotations of social prohibition, intense anger, or heightened significance (Jay and Janschewitz, 2008). According to Ávila-Cabrera’s (2016, p. 29) taxonomy on offensive and taboo language, swearwords can be classified as a form of offensive language. This classification encompasses three subcategories, namely abusive swearwords, expletives, and invectives. While the act of ‘swearing’ serves several different functions in communication, Stapleton (2010, p. 294-299) discusses various interpersonal functions, including expressing emotion, humor and verbal emphasis, social bonding and solidarity, and constructing and displaying identity. Consequently, the use of swearwords transcends the mere communicative function, as it also reflects cultural norms and values.

In Arabic, just like other languages, the selection of swearwords and vulgar expressions can provide valuable insights into the cultural outlook on sensitive or taboo topics. For instance, the Arabic term “لعنۃ” (*la ‘nah*), which refers to “curse,” carries a substantial cultural load as a result of its religious and cultural implications. The act of swearing that involves invoking the name of God or employing expressions such as “بعلة نابیہ کالیمۃ” (*kalimah nābiyah*, Arabic for ‘a profane word’) in Arabic-speaking societies highlights

the complex relationship between language, religion, and the concept of respect. In addition, it is worth noting that Arabic expletives often incorporate references to family members or personal matters, thereby emphasizing the importance of familial bonds and privacy within the cultural context.

Empirical Studies

The interdependence of language and culture shapes how meaning is constructed and communicated. It is important to note that when conveying meaning through translation, it is a well-established fact that the target language does not uniformly capture the distinctive cultural elements, as both the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) belong to different cultural systems. Therefore, during the process of translation, it is common to encounter culture-specific terms, which often require significant efforts on the part of the translator to effectively convey their meaning. Among these culture-specific elements are idioms, proverbs, and culture-bound expressions. Numerous scholars within the field of translation have investigated the strategies and difficulties of translating such expressions (See Sentov, 2020; Banikalef, 2019; Dweik, 2013; Alrosan, 2012; Al-Saidi, 2013, among others). Their research reveals valuable insights for both translators and researchers, as they offer significant implications and fresh perspectives on the various translation options available to translators to preserve or alter the cultural context of the ST.

Zitouni (2022) conducted a qualitative inquiry into the translation of cultural items in *Romeo and Juliet* from English to Arabic, where the interconnection between culture and translation was examined while also addressing the difficulties associated with translating English cultural items. The findings of the study revealed that the cultural aspect of Shakespeare's play made the translator opt for a wide range of translation strategies, including functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, transposition, and naturalization, in order to handle the cultural gaps between classical English and modern Arabic.

Swearing is also culture-specific in the sense that people's swearing patterns differ according to the very conservative and liberal nature of their cultures (See Haider et al., 2022). Reflecting the social, cultural, and emotional aspects of a language, swear words are a unique linguistic phenomenon that often carries a strong emotional load (Stapleton, 2010). This load varies significantly due to different linguistic, historical, and cultural contexts. Accordingly, translators are accountable for dealing with the translational burden triggered by such cultural nuances and communicating them thoughtfully, taking into consideration the most appropriate translation norms of the translating language (Abu Rayyash et al., 2023).

Given how deeply ingrained swear words are in each language and culture, translating them between Arabic and English can be challenging (Mounadil, 2023). As a language pair of translations, they belong to different families, Semitic and Germanic, respectively. This, by default, implies the natural exitance of cultural differences between them at the semantic and pragmatic levels. Such differences include how swear words behave semantically and pragmatically in both languages (Al-Yassin & Rababah, 2019). Hence, transferring them from one language to another has been within many researchers' interests.

Several studies have been conducted to examine translation strategies of 'swearwords' as oral manners by which certain cultural differences grow marked and stressed. Abdelaal and Al Sarhani (2021) examined translation strategies and translation quality of subtitling swearwords in the "Training Day" movie. The researchers found that translating swearwords like *fuck*, *fucked*, *bullshit*, *shit*, and *motherfucker* was mostly through translation by euphemism and omission due to cultural factors and equivalence issues.

Roughly, the same results were found by Abu-Rayyash et al. (2023), who investigated translation strategies chosen by Netflix subtitlers to render 1564 swearwords from English into Arabic. Noticeably, these studies and other further ones (see Al-Zgoul and Al-Salman, 2022; Debbas and Haider, 2020; Al-Yasin and Rabab'ah, 2019; Al-Jabri, 2021) stress the fact that, in most cases, subtitlers' acts are marked by opting for omission and euphemism strategies.

However, other studies have been performed to investigate subtitling cases when the direction of translation is from Arabic into English, conservative to liberal. Haider et al. (2023), for example, studied the translation strategies subtitlers chose to render the 'inappropriate language' and 'explicit scenes' of

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the Netflix-Jordanian vernacular series *Jin*. Following Ljung's swearing typology, the findings of the study revealed that taboo expressions in the series fulfilled frequent connotative functions as 'unfriendly suggestions' and 'noun support,' which were rendered by subtitlers through various strategies. The results of the study also revealed that subtitlers opted for using translation by dysphemism (non-taboo to taboo) and taboo to taboo more frequently than euphemism or omission, as it is the most subtitling cases when translation is from English into Arabic (See Thawabteh & Al-Edwan, 2022; Haider & Hussein, 2022).

However, such findings should not be generalized to other genres and registers when discussing how translation direction influences translators' decisions. Register, genre, and translator's ideology tremendously influence translators' choices; *Lolita*'s English version, compared to its Arabic source counterpart, is a good case in point (See Al-Saideen et al., 2022).

Extensive research has been conducted on culture-specific items (CSIs) and swearwords. However, the significance of this study in the field of translation studies, especially from Arabic to English, lies in its examination of the complex subtleties involved in translating CSIs and swearwords. These two elements present distinct challenges in cross-cultural communication.

This paper provides a comprehensive examination of translation practices by comparing the strategies used for these specific linguistic elements, with a dual focus on frequency and the justifications behind the chosen approaches. This dual perspective offers a more comprehensive understanding of the translator's decision-making process and its impact on accurately conveying cultural and emotional nuances. Moreover, the study has the potential to either validate or refute previous research in the field, which contributes to the continuing development of translation theory and practice, eventually enhancing cross-cultural communication and comprehension.

Methodology

Film Description

The Alleys, which was directed by Bassel Ghandour, explores the lives and struggles of various characters in the labyrinthine alleys of East Amman, Jordan, as they navigate the challenges of their everyday existence. The film is known for its portrayal of different social classes, including the working class and those facing economic hardships, whose lives collide and spiral into chaos and get interconnected within the urban setting because of a blackmailing stalker who sets into motion a series of unintended events.

Corpus Compilation

The data gathered for this study was taken from the 2021 Jordanian drama/thriller film "*The Alleys*." The film was accessed for the purpose of data collection through a valid subscription to the online streaming platform Netflix. As a paid subscriber, access to the movie was obtained via the platform's official streaming service. The film has a runtime of approximately 1 hour and 55 minutes. This subscription-based access allowed for the seamless viewing of the film, thereby ensuring compliance with the platform's terms of use during the data extraction process. The status of being a legitimate subscriber underscores the ethical foundation of this data collection approach. In addition, based on Netflix policies, the use of data for educational and pedagogical purposes is allowed.

As for subtitle quality and standards, Netflix prioritizes the precision and contextual appropriateness of subtitles in various languages, as these subtitles and captions are deemed Netflix's "primary assets." Thus, the subtitles provided by Netflix are created with great attention to detail, aiming to faithfully capture the nuances of dialogue, cultural references, and idiomatic expressions. As a result, acquiring appropriate subtitle files in both English and Arabic was a key first step in building the bilingual corpus for our analysis. The English subtitle file was acquired in .srt format, while the Arabic script was written manually. After that, the Arabic utterances were aligned with their counterpart in the Excel sheet. To ensure validity and precision, three MA candidates in translation were asked to verify the quality of the alignment. Their comments and feedback were evaluated and implemented.

Data Analysis and Translation Strategies

After compiling the corpus and aligning the data, the researchers scrutinized the parallel corpus for any incident for culture-specific expressions and swearwords. The collected data were classified into five subcategories under the umbrella of culture-specific items and four subcategories under swearwords, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1

The themes of Culture-Specific Expressions and Swear Words as used in the movie

#	Main Categories	#	Themes	Source Text	Literal Translation	Target Text
1	Culture-Specific Items	1	Idioms & Proverbs	نوه و ان رفح ان فد	We dug here and buried here.	They'd take the secret with them to their graves.
		2	Terms of address	- اي سآنلا تنب ييل يم را حاتف مل اه.	Hey, daughter of the people, hand me this key.	-Open this door, woman!
		3	Religion	ي دح و ه ل ل ا!!!	Say God is one!!!	-You can't be serious
		4	Oaths	ة مح رو حر يوب ا ك طقل ا ...	And by my father's soul, I'll catch you!!!	I swear on my father's grave I'll find you ...
		5	Food & Drinks	دع ب و ن ا ج ن ف ة د ا س ل ا ...	And after the sugar-free coffee	But after drinking to the agreement...
2	Swear Words	1	Relative Related	ع م س ا و خ ا اي ة طوم رش ل ا ...	Listen, bitch brother...	Listen, you son of a bitch.
		2	Animal Related	ن م ن او ي ح د ح او ل ه ا ت س ب ...	From an animal... he deserves it.	From a scumbag who deserves it.
		3	Excretion	ل ي ش ظ اه ا ر خ ل ا !!!	Remove this shit!!!	Get this fucking thing off me!
		4	Rudeness and Disrespect	ي ن ع ي ك زو ب د س ح و ر ع ل ق ن او ن و ل ا ص ل ا ة ر ث ك ش ال ب و ي ك ح ...	I mean, close your mouth and beat it to the salon, and don't talk too much...	I mean, shut it and get going.

Table 1 includes three columns: the source text (ST) in Arabic, followed by a literal translation of the utterance in English. The third column includes Netflix English subtitles of the Arabic text. The second column was intentionally added by the researchers to enable non-native Arabic speakers to understand the ST and how it was translated into English.

As Table 1 shows, the examples extracted from *The Alleys* are grouped into two main categories, Culture Specific Items (CSIs) and Swear Words, and subcategorized according to their themes. The themes identified in the movie and subcategorized under CSIs include i) idioms and proverbs, ii) terms of address, iii) religious expressions, iv) oaths, and v) food and drinks. The themes identified in the movie and subcategorized under Swear Words include i) relative-related, ii) sex-related, iii) animal-related, iv) excretion, and v) rudeness and disrespect.

In the analysis, and as Table 1 shows, the source utterance (in Arabic) will be translated literally

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into English by the researchers to make the texts accessible to non-native speakers of Arabic and to enable readers to spot the changes that were made by the subtitler.

The collected examples will be examined according to the taxonomies proposed by Baker (2001), Gottlieb (1992), and Mughazy (2016).

Translation Strategies proposed by Baker (1992)

Baker (1992, p. 26-42) lists eight translation strategies, which are frequently employed by translators to manage challenging issues during a translation task:

1. Translation by a more general word:

The first strategy involves substituting a source-language expression with a more general word in the TT. This is a widely adopted strategy that effectively manages various forms of nonequivalence. Baker asserts the universality of this strategy across languages because it relies on the shared semantic field, transcending language-specific limitations.

2. Translation by a more neutral/ less expressive word:

This strategy focuses on the structural aspect of meaning.

3. Translation by cultural substitution

This strategy involves replacing a culture-specific expression with a target language counterpart, considering its impact on the intended audience. This strategy enhances the TT's naturalness, comprehensibility, and familiarity to the target reader. The translator's choice to employ this strategy is contingent upon two key factors: the extent of the license granted by the translation commissioning parties and the intended purpose of the translation.

4. Translation using a loan word or a loan word plus explanation:

This strategy is usually employed to manage culture-specific items, modern concepts, and buzzwords. Using a loan word with an explanation proves advantageous when a word is repeated several times in the text. For the first time, the word is mentioned in the explanation, consequently enabling the term's standalone usage in subsequent occurrences.

5. Translation by paraphrase using a related word:

This strategy is utilized in two ways: when the source item is lexicalized in the target language but in a different form and when the frequency with which a certain form is used in the source text significantly exceeds what would be considered natural in the target language.

6. Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words:

This strategy is used when the concept in the source language lacks a direct counterpart in the target language. When the meaning of the source item is intricate in the target language, the paraphrase with unrelated words strategy can be employed, by altering a superordinate or simply by elucidating the source item meaning.

7. Translation by omission:

This strategy proves to be very valuable in some contexts, particularly where omission does not hinder the comprehensibility of the source text. It is used to avoid lengthy explanations.

8. Translation by illustration:

Employing this strategy can prove advantageous when the target equivalent fails to encompass certain aspects of the source item, and the equivalent term pertains to a tangible entity that can be effectively depicted, thereby enabling concise and precise communication while avoiding excessive elaboration.

Translation Strategies proposed by Gottlieb (1992)

Gottlieb (1992, p.166) lists several subtitling strategies that include the following:

1) Expansion is used when the utterance in the source language requires more explanation to ensure

comprehension on the part of the audience; it occurs when the cultural nuance of the source language is unretrievable.

2) Paraphrase is utilized when the original phrase cannot be syntactically reconstructed in the target language. This means that the TT and ST are syntactically incommensurate, but the TT is still comprehensible to the target audience.

3) Transfer is defined as the strategy of producing a correct and complete translation of the ST.

4) Imitation is used with proper nouns or similar name forms, such as people's names, places, book titles, country names, brand products, etc.

5) Transcription is used in some cases where a foreign term exists in the source language.

6) Dislocation in translation is used when the source language dialogue includes special effects, as seen, for example, in a cartoon film featuring a comical song. In such cases, the translation of the effect itself takes precedence over the specific content being conveyed.

7) Condensation is used due to spatio-temporal limitations in subtitling. The strategy is used to ensure efficiency by eliminating redundancies.

8) Decimation is applied when there is an extreme form. This happens when an important element, such as a taboo word, is omitted. It also happens when there is a quarreling scene, and the characters are talking too fast.

9) Deletion is defined as the total elimination of textual elements, e.g., repetitions, question tags, and filler words.

10) Resignation is used when the translator fails to find an equivalent term in the target language and the meaning is inevitably lost.

Translation Strategies proposed by Mughazy (2016)

The taxonomy proposed by Mughazy (2016) will be followed for the translation of idioms and proverbs. According to this model, figurative language can be translated by one of the following strategies:

1. Literalization: It is most useful with cultural-specific idioms because they lack functional equivalents in the target language. It basically involves offering a description of the Arabic idiom by providing a nonfigurative translation. In essence, it entails providing an explanatory interpretation of the idiom.

2. Metaphorical approximation represents a translation approach wherein the translator exerts efforts to find the nearest equivalent of a metaphor in the target language. Furthermore, this technique involves the translation of idiomatic and frozen formulas by using figurative expressions in the target language that are closest in meaning to the source language expressions, although they may not be deemed functional equivalents.

2. Metaphorization: is a translation process whereby texts are rendered metaphorically, using metaphors in the TT. This strategy stands in stark contrast to literalization; it's about using idioms to translate semantically compositional phrases.

Analysis and Discussion

Culture-Specific Items

Cultural-specific items (CSIs) denote elements firmly embedded in the heritage, convictions, and practices of a specific culture. These elements encompass everything from idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and idioms to distinct cultural rituals, attire, and customary cuisine. The translation of CSIs between Arabic and English can prove intricate, owing to the inherent cultural subtleties and disparities existing between the two languages. This section is devoted to the examination and analysis of the themes mentioned in Table 1 above.

Idioms & Proverbs

Table 2 includes examples of idiomatic expressions and proverbs extracted from the movie *The Alleys*, along with their corresponding literal translations and target texts. These idioms and proverbs play a significant

role in delivering cultural nuances embedded in the movie's dialogue.

Table 2

Examples of idioms and proverbs as used in the movie

Theme	#	Strategy	Source Text	Literal Translation	Target Text
Idioms & Proverbs	1	Metaphorical Approximation (Idiom to idiom)	لک عم و هس لی، یک حلاه رث کا ی ف خ م ل ا ف و ش ک م م ل ا ن م	<i>And with all this talk, what's hidden is still more than what's revealed.</i>	But all these floating tales don't even scratch the surface
	2		امی اد ب ل ل ح ا ب ل ح ت ب ... ان ر ص ع ت ڈ ر م ل ک ر ص ع	<i>Always milking it ... You squeeze us every time.</i>	You really squeeze a dollar out of a dime.
	3		ن و و ن و و و ا ن ر ف ح ا ن ف د	<i>We dug here and buried here.</i>	They'd take the secret with them to their graves.
	4		ن م ر ش ت ن ت ب و ن ا د ل ، د ح او م ث ا م د ح ل ، ی ن ا ث ل ا را د ل ک ل خ د ت ڈ ر ا ح ل ا ب	<i>And it spreads from one's mouth to another's, until it enters every house in the neighborhood.</i>	A story spreads like wildfire
	5		ی ف ص و ال و ڈ ل غ ش ال ڈ ل م ع	<i>He ended up without a job or a profession.</i>	Until he became nothing more than a worthless bum.
	6		ش م ہ ت ن ا ن ی م ع م ف ر اع ت ع ق و	<i>You don't even know who you fell with.</i>	You're digging yourself a deep hole
	7		م ہ ی ط ب ز	<i>Make them look nice</i>	Doll them up
	8		ر ص ت خ ا ڈ ل ی ل ل ا ا ن ی ل ع	<i>Cut the night short</i>	Let's call it a night
	9		م ز ی ی س ا ر ش ل ک ات ... م ہ ل و ط ص ل خ	<i>Dude, don't eat my head ... bring them out.</i>	Then give it up already!
	10		ل ک ش م ل ک ا ت ی ب ری ط ڈ م ح ل	<i>Not every bird gets its meat eaten...</i>	She's not the one to mess with.
	11		ت س ب ک ڈ د ح و ڈ ر م	<i>It rained heavily at once</i>	This fucking rain.
	12		ل ق ع ا ح و رو ...	<i>Be smart and go away...</i>	Get the fuck out!
	13		ی د ب و ش ہ ل ل ا ی ... ی د ب ا م ب ا ب ا ش	<i>Are you asking me whether I want or don't?... come on, guys.</i>	Fuck, yeah, we do, boss.

The examples (1-13) in Table 2 are all colloquialisms (Jordanian Arabic), and they effectively convey the intended messages. Similarly, the subtitles of these expressions and phrases also relay the idiomatic meaning in an understandable and memorable way.

The source text in example (1) is a commonly used Jordanian proverb, which means that what is discussed overtly in social chat groups is a lot less than what is kept covert. The target text creatively captures the idea that rumors and stories are superficial and lack depth. Example (2) is also an idiomatic expression

that centers around exploiting someone or something, using the verbs ‘milking or squeezing.’ The subtitler cunningly uses an English idiom with a close meaning (capitalizing from small investments). Example (3) is a proverb that stresses keeping secrets among partners, which is skillfully associated with burial in the target text. Example (4) is a proverb that explains rumor-spreading mechanisms in social circles. The subtitler used an English idiom that matches the rapidity of a wildfire’s propagation to the rapid spread of information. Example (5) explains how someone becomes unemployed or a bum. The target text, however, comes with an added touch of insensitivity, emphasizing the person’s lack of worth. All these examples are creatively rendered using ‘idiom to idiom’ or ‘metaphorical approximation’ strategy. They are accurately rendered in a way that captures the meaning and relays the message of the original idiom, i.e., content and form.

A similar strategy, Metaphorization, is used for rendering examples (6-8), which are also common idioms in Jordanian Arabic. Example (6) is a kind of threat by the speaker, a metaphor that has the sense of an addressee getting involved in a difficult situation without proper awareness of its consequences. The source text is rendered into a stronger English idiom that sounds more intimidating. Example (7) is a Jordanian idiomatic expression whose meaning is context-dependent. It could mean ‘to pay someone off,’ ‘to enhance the quality of a product or service given to a specific person.’ or ‘to make something or someone (*prostitutes*) look nice’ (or more attractive) as in the context of *The Alleys*. The subtitler does a great job using the English idiom with the word ‘doll,’ which more than captures the sense of the original. Finally, example (8) is a suggestion to end an activity or event early. The target text employs a metaphor that suggests exactly the same. For these expressions, the subtitler opted for metaphorization, i.e., transferring the content or message of the source text, which, albeit with different linguistic elements, creates an effect in the target text audience similar to that created by the source text.

However, with examples (9-13), literalization (paraphrase) is used as an attempt to capture the cultural subtleties embedded in the Arabic idioms. Example (9) shows the speaker’s annoyance at somebody who is reluctant to give something up. The idiomatic phrase ‘Don’t eat my head’ means ‘Don’t annoy me and give it up,’ which is exactly what the target text states but in a more succinct and literal manner, thus ensuring that the message gets across. Example (10) is a metaphor that cautions against underestimating someone’s power. The target text is a literal rendition, but it transfers the effect of the message. The same applies to examples (11-13), which are also translated literally, and they create effects that are similar to those intended by the source texts, i.e., the emotional conceptualization of the abruptness and intensity of the rain (example 11), the intensity of the command to leave (example 12) and maintaining the informal tone of a more direct and assertive response (example 13).

Terms of address

Terms of address, according to Oyetade (1995, p. 515), are “words or expressions used to designate the person being talked to while talk is in progress.” In English, for example, these are words like *you, mom, young man, or Professor Snyder*.” These culture-bound expressions should be carefully handled in translation and subtitling in order to ensure an engaging and relatable reading/ watching experience. When adapting terms of address in subtitling and in order to accurately convey the appropriate emotions and relationships between characters, it is important to consider the cultural context, politeness levels, and tone of the conversation (Table 3).

Table 3

Examples of terms of address as used in the movie

Theme	#	Strategy	Source Text	Literal Translation	Target Text
Terms of Address	14	Cultural Adaptation	تنب اي - يل يمرا سانلا حاتف مل اه تن اهيف تيلخ سان تنب	<i>Hey, daughter of the people, hand me this key. Did you leave any daughter in it?</i>	- Open this door, woman! - Don't you "woman" me!
	15	Cultural Adaptation	جاحل او «رمع هتلئسا ريثك ...»	<i>And Haj Omar, his questions are so many ...</i>	That old man kept asking me questions
	16	Deletion	اب حرم ليسا "تس"	<i>Hello, Ms. Aseel.</i>	- Hello, Aseel, how are you?
	17	Substitution	اب حرم ... يتنـ؟؟ـ كـفـيـكـ	<i>Hello Auntie ... How are you?</i>	How are you, my dear?

The examples in Table (3) highlight how word-for-word is not a suitable strategy for rendering such terms. Examples (14-17) demonstrate how the target texts effectively capture the essence and intention of the source expressions. This approach ensures that the translations accurately reflect the emotional nuances and interpersonal dynamics present in the original text.

تنب اهيف تيلخ تن اهاتف مل اه يل يمرا سانلا تنب اي (14) ('Hey, daughter of the people, hand me this key. Did you leave any daughter in it?') is usually used in Jordanian Arabic by an angry person in order to avoid swearing. The target text skillfully achieves cultural approximation by employing direct and strong language that captures the assertive tone of the speaker and conveys the same connotations as the source text. The use of "woman" in the imperative form retains the familiarity and intensity of the source. The same applies to the response 'Don't you woman me,' which also achieves a similar degree of linguistic strength.

Examples (15-17) include honorifics that convey politeness and respect, as in (15), and warmth and familiarity, as in (16 & 17). Avoiding literal translation, these terms are rendered idiomatically in a way that maintains the same contexts. In (15), 'old man' replaces 'Haj' to uphold the same level of politeness and to account for cultural sensitivity. However, the Arabic term 'Haj' literally means "pilgrim," which is derived from the verb "حج" (hajja), meaning "made a pilgrimage to Mecca." It is used in Muslim societies as a term of address to respectfully refer to elderly men, who are usually given priority to perform pilgrimage. Translating 'Haj' as 'Old man' captures the honorific angle of the term, but it definitely leaves out the religious aspect.

In (16 & 17), 'Aseel' replaces 'Ms. Aseel' to provide a more casual translation, thus enhancing the conversational flow, and 'my dear' replaces 'Auntie' to provide a friendly greeting and inquiry about well-being.

Religious Expressions

Table 4 includes instances where religious expressions are translated while considering the context, cultural sensitivity, and emotional nuances.

Table 4

Examples of religion-based expressions as used in the movie.

Theme	#	Strategy	Source Text	Literal Translation	Target Text
Religious Expressions	18	Cultural Adaptation	-هلا يدحوا !!! !! هلا دحوا -	<i>Say God is one!!! (Female addressee)</i> <i>Say God is one!! (Female addressee)</i>	-You can't be serious -For real?
	19	Cultural Adaptation	ةوق الـ و لـ وـ الـ !! ـ هـ لـ لـ اـ بـ الـ	<i>There is no power or strength except with God!!</i>	Oh, my God.
	20	Cultural Adaptation	ـ يـ فـ ةـ يـ قـ بـ لـ اـ . ـ كـ تـ اـ يـ حـ . ـ مـ كـ تـ اـ يـ حـ بـ . ـ ةـ يـ قـ اـ بـ لـ اـ .	<i>May the rest be in your life.</i> <i>In your life may the rest be.</i>	-I'm sorry for your loss -Thank you.

The religious phrases in example (18) are replaced with colloquial phrases that convey disbelief and surprise, respectively. Similarly, the source text in example (19), an Islamic expression used in times of distress or difficulty, is replaced with a common English phrase that conveys surprise or astonishment, aiming to capture the emotional aspect of the Arabic phrase, which does not directly carry the religious load of that phrase. Moreover, example (20) is an Arabic exchange, offering condolence and expressing comfort to someone who has experienced a loss. The religious source text is replaced with culturally appropriate phrases that carry the same emotional load. These renditions, however, are at the expense of the religious content of the source texts as the target texts deviate significantly from the source text, leaving out its religious aspect. Such deviations may lead to misunderstandings of the dialogue, which highlights the cultural and contextual awareness when translating religious expressions.

Oaths

Like other languages, Arabic has a variety of idiomatic expressions for emphasizing oaths and commitments (Table 5).

Table 5

Examples of oaths as used in the movie

Theme	#	Strategy	Source Text	Literal Translation	Target Text
Oaths	21	Idiom to idiom	يُوبَا ظمَحْرُو ... كَطْقَلَا حَرْ	And by my father's soul, I'll catch you!!!	I swear on my father's grave I'll find you ...
	22	Idiom to idiom	يُمْأَضِّعُ وَ ... طَلَخْلَا تِيشَمْ كَدَبْ امْ يَزْ	By my mother's honor, the hustle took place as you wished.	On my mother's soul, that hustle worked like a charm

The examples in Table (5) show commonly used Arabic informal phrases that speakers employ as oaths to affirm a strong commitment or promise by invoking the memory and honor of a loved one, as shown by examples (21 & 22), respectively.

The target texts in examples (21 & 22) maintain the essence and solemn nature of the oaths by referring to the father's grave and the mother's honor. These oaths emphasize the seriousness and gravity of the speaker's statement and commitment using idiomatic expressions that retain the cultural load. When translating these oaths into English, the emotional and cultural aspects of these expressions must be carefully taken into account in order to maintain the oath's meaning and impact in the target texts.

Food & Drinks

Terms related to food and drinks are among the culture-bound expressions. Translating them across languages requires careful consideration to ensure that the target text is comprehensible and relatable to the target audience. This sometimes means having to replace these cultural references with target language expressions that are accurately received by the target audience (Table 6).

Table 6

Examples of names of food and drinks as used in the movie.

Theme	#	Strategy	Source Text	Literal Translation	Target Text
Food & Drinks	23	Cultural Adaptation	دَعْبُو دَاسِلَا نَاجِنْفَ...	And after the sugar-free coffee ...	But after drinking to the agreement...
	24	Generalization	كَلْبَجَبْ رَدَسْ إِلَعْهَايْ إِفَانْكْ	I'll bring him to you on a large plate of Kona-fah.	I'll whip him up into a dessert for you.

The source text in example (23) signals the end of a gathering or a banquet, after which Arabian coffee is usually served. Arabian coffee is usually served on different occasions and for different purposes, one of which is to signal consent to a request. The literal translation of the expression may convey the semantic content, but the function may not be correctly perceived by the target audience. While Arabian coffee is served to conclude an agreement or to grant a request, it is not the beverage served on such occasions in English-speaking societies. Rather, in Western societies, alcoholic drinks are served, and people

'drink to the agreement.' This cultural adaptation efficiently carries the notion of concluding a social or business gathering while adapting to the cultural context of the target language.

The same applies to example (24), where 'Konafah,' a popular Middle Eastern dessert made of pastry and syrup, is substituted with 'dessert' in the target text to achieve comprehension. 'Konafah' is used metaphorically in the source text, which means literal translation may not capture its figurative meaning. Therefore, the target text employs a different generalization strategy by reimagining the metaphor and expressing it more directly as "I'll whip him up into a dessert for you." This adaptation effectively retains the essence of offering something (or someone) to someone but substitutes the cultural reference with a more universally understandable concept. This approach allows for a smoother comprehension of the metaphor, especially for those unfamiliar with the original cultural reference. By using a universally understood concept like *dessert*, the subtitler ensures that the message will resonate with a wider audience and facilitate better communication. The translation strategies in both examples aim at maintaining the meaning and cultural nuances of the source text while adapting them to the target language and culture.

Swear Words

Translation becomes more challenging when translating swear words, as they often carry deep cultural and historical connotations that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. Translators must navigate the complexities of each language's unique expressions of profanity, ensuring that the translated text conveys the intended level of offense or vulgarity without losing its cultural significance. Therefore, a successful translation must go beyond semantic transfer in order to reflect the intended offense, emotional effect, and cultural context of the source text.

As shown in Table (7), the literal translations of the source texts successfully convey the meaning of the swear words, but the intended emotional damage is not equally achieved in the target texts due to cultural differences. The subtitler, therefore, utilized a set of strategies in his rendering of these offensive terms to accomplish not only semantic transfer but also to account for cultural isomorphism and to ensure that the emotional impact is reproduced in the target texts. These strategies include substitution (or cultural adaptation), deletion, literal translation, and addition. The examples in Table (7) are categorized according to the theme of offensive language. These include swear words that are related to relatives, rudeness and disrespect, animals, and excretion.

One of the most prominent cultural differences between Arabic and English cultures is that, in Arab cultures, relative-related offensive language is primarily directed at the addressee's sister and less frequently at the mother, father, and other family members. The addressee's female relatives in Arab cultures are usually targeted by swear words, which makes a common pattern in these cultures. The mother, on the other hand, is more frequently targeted by swear words in English-speaking cultures. Therefore, to ensure that the tone and impact of the source text are effectively conveyed when translating swear words and insults, it is essential to consider cultural sensitivities and the target audience's expectations. This often requires departing from literal translation.

This is evident in examples 1-5 (Table 7), where the derogatory language in the source texts is directed at the addressees' sisters.

Table 7

Examples of swear words as used in the movie.

Theme	#	Strategy	Source Text	Literal Translation	Target Text
Relative Related	1	Substitution	وَخْ أَيْ عَمْسَا ةَطُومِرْشُلَا ...	Listen, bitch's brother...	Listen, you son of a bitch.
	2	Substitution	فَرَاعَ شَمْ هَتَنَا أَيْ تَعْقُونِيْمَعْمَ ةَطُومِرْشُلَا وَخَا	You don't know who you fell with, brother of a bitch.	You're digging yourself a deep hole, you son of a bitch.
	3	Deletion & Substitution	وَخَا كَتْخَا سَكْ كَلْ وَةَطُومِرْشُلَا يَا هَيْتَنْبَ	Your sister's pussy ... bitch's brother ... This my daughter!!	That's my daughter, you son of a bitch.
	4	Substitution	عَقْوَتْ اَمْ لِكْ وَ ةَبْحَقْ وَخَا دَنْعَ نَسْلَاعَ اَهَكْلَعْ بَ حَحِيرَبْ يَلْلَالَا	And every time it lands with a brother of a prostitute, he chews it on the tooth that makes him feel well.	Then every son of a bitch has his way with it.
	5	Substitution	وَخَا أَيْ الْوَ طَيْمَارْشُلَا الْلَوْ تَنَا تَعْلَطْ يَكْ؟؟ يِنْمَ أَيْ	You brother of sluts ... it's you? You fagot!!	You son of a bitch, So it's you, motherfucker?
	6	Substitution	يَتَنَا بَطْ تَخَابْ يَنِيْتَلْخَدْ يَا هَكْوَدَلَاهْ شِيلَلْ؟؟	Then why did you get me into this thing's sister?	Then why the fuck did you drag me into this?
	7	Deletion	دَالَوْلَكْ يَلْخَلْ اُوبَعْلَيْ هَرَاحَلَا وَخَا أَيْ ... مَهِيلَعْ أَيْ ...ةَطُومِرْشُلَا ... بَحْقَا	I'll make all the neighborhood boys make out with them ... you brother of a bitch ... you bitch.	I'll have the entire neighborhood take turns with them.
	8	Literal	كَدِيَا لِيْشْ صَرِاعَتْ نَعْلَأْ كَتْأَوْخَا	Remove your hand or I'll curse your sisters' prostitution.	Get your hand off me before I pimp out your sisters.
	9	Literal	ةَطُومِرْشُلَا نَبَا لَزْنَبْ اَذَا اَدَاهْ اَنْحَا وَيِدِيْفَلَا اَهِيفْ حَوْرَنْبَ ... دَبْؤَمْ ...	This son of a bitch, if he downloads the video, we will get life for it...	If this son of a bitch leaks the video, it's a life sentence.
	10	Literal	أَيْ دَرْمَنْتَبْ ؟؟ةَبْحَقْلَا نَبَا	You rebel, you son of a bitch	You son of a bitch!
	11	Substitution	كَمَا حَضْفَيِ	May your mother be scandalized.	Son of a bitch.
	12	Substitution	فَيِكْ عَيْهِ وَشْ ةَلْغَشْلَا كَمِ؟؟	What? Is it up to your mother?	Get the fuck out of here.

Rudeness and Dis-respect	13	Substitution	يُكُوبَا اعْبَط مِزَالٌ هُوَضْنَلَا دُوْجُومْ نُوكِي	<i>Of course, your valiant father must be present</i>	Of course, your worthless father has to be present.
	14	Substitution	اَذَهْ وَدَبْ يٰ ... رِيْقَحْ لَلَا يُكِيْفَ لَبْهَنْمَا	<i>This despicable person seems ... crazy about you.</i>	It seems this asshole is obsessed with you.
	15	Substitution	نُودْ نِمْ كِيْه اَعْلَقَنَا ... شِيل اوْحُور	<i>Just because ... no reason ... beat it!!</i>	Because I fucking said so! Get the fuck out!
	16	Substitution	هَتَنَا ... الْوَوْش الِّا اَدَحْ يِلْخَمْ شِم ؟ رُوْصَمْ وَهْ	<i>You boy?? You filmed everyone??</i>	You prick. You've been filming everyone?
	17	Deletion	كَخَنْرَا اَمْ هَتَاه	<i>Give it back ... how obnoxious you are.</i>	No translation
	18	Deletion	صَغِيْرِيْ حَوْر... اَلْا مَالِس.. كَلَاب	<i>No, no ... go, may your mind be filled with worries ... Peace.</i>	Yeah, whatever...
	19	Literal & Deletion	دَسْ يِنْعِيْ عَلْقَنَا اوْ كَزُوب نُولِاصَلَا حَوْر ةَرْثَكْ شِالَبْ وَ يِكْ حَ ...	<i>I mean, shut your mouth and beat it to the salon, and don't talk too much...</i>	I mean shut it and get going.
	20	Literal	هَتَنَا كَلَو ... َلِعْنَ شِاْوَسْتَب هَرْدَنْك ...	<i>Oh you ... You are not worth a sole of a shoe.</i>	You aren't worth the muddy sole of a shoe.
	21	Deletion & Substitution	نِسْحَأْ كَزُوب دَس هَبْنَجْ نِفَدَنْت اَم اي ... بَلْك اي ... رِيْقَح	<i>Better shut your mouth or you'll be buried beside him... you dog... you scumbag!!</i>	Shut your mouth unless you want to be buried next to him, bastard!
Animal Related	22	Substitution	نِنْ اُويْحِ دَحَا وَ نِم لَهَاتِسْب	<i>From an animal... he deserves it.</i>	From a scumbag who deserves it.
	23	Substitution	ظَاهِ اَخْلَا لِيْش !!!	<i>Remove this shit!!!</i>	Get this fucking thing off me!

Literal translation in these cases does not carry the emotional impact across due to unfamiliarity with the source text forms of insult to the target audience. The target texts, however, show a cultural difference emerging from the subtitler's utilization of the substitution strategy. The target of all the insults in these examples shifts from the sister to the mother of the addressee, which creates a cultural context that is relatable and more familiar to the target audience. Even the second expletive in example (5), 'you fagot,' is redirected from the addressee himself to his mother. Example (6), on the other hand, is an instance of cultural adaptation, where the expletive 'the fuck' is used as an emphatic slot filler to use Ljung's (2011) taxonomy. While the swear word in example (7) is deleted, the expletive in example (8) is the only instance of literal translation where the form and content are maintained in the target text.

Arabic insults directed at the addressee's mother are also common in Arabic-speaking cultures but less frequent in the movie dialogue. Examples (9-12) in Table 7 show a variety of such swear words, some of which have equivalents in English, while others do not. Examples (9 & 10) easily translate into similar English phrases that carry the same emotional load and achieve the same level of offense, adapting at the same time to the cultural context. Examples (11&12), on the other hand, show how cultural differences impose cultural adaptation in the rendering of derogatory language. The source texts in these two examples contain offensive language involving the addressee's mother, which the subtitler effectively replaces with the

common expletive ‘son of a bitch,’ maintaining their offensive tone and intensity and adapting them to the English language and cultural norms.

In the second category, Rudeness and Disrespect, only one example (20) is translated literally. This is because the phrase is a common insult in Jordanian Arabic and has a formal equivalent in English. Therefore, literal translation achieves both the semantic transfer and the intended insult. However, this strategy does not work with the other examples where substitution or cultural adaptation is employed, as examples (13-15) show. The expletives (*worthless father, asshole, and get the fuck out*, respectively) in the target texts are even dysphemizing and more insulting to the referents and addressees. Example (16), on the other hand, includes a form of cultural adaptation since the literal translation might be inappropriate and racial due to the expression’s historical association with forms of address used with African Americans in the US. Nevertheless, the intended ridiculing sense of the expression ‘*wala*’ (boy) is lost here, but the insult is delivered.

Deletion is employed in the examples (17-19) in Table (7). The deleted expressions are used both as insults and forms of endearment in Jordanian Arabic. Deleting them does not significantly impact the overall comprehension of the dialogue, but translating them idiomatically may reveal the kind of relationship between speakers and addressees. The source expressions in examples (17&18) are said as endearment, while in (19), the subtitler toned down the utterance by deleting the phrase ‘*beat it or fuck off*’, which could have been more effective since it is coming from a gang leader to an inferior gang member.

In the category ‘Animal Related Swearwords,’ only two examples are found in the extracted data. The expressions used are ‘*dog*’ in example (21), and ‘*animal*’ in example (22). Both words are insulting in Arab cultures, as well as in English cultures. The subtitler chose to delete the word ‘*dog*’ in example (21) and to limit the insult to the other swearword in the utterance (*scumbag*), which he substituted with (*bastard*). The word ‘*animal*’ in example (22) is substituted with ‘*scumbag*’, which is more insulting to the referent in the target culture. Literal translation here (i.e., ‘*animal*’) may not convey the same amount of disrespect because this word is commonly used in English in competition contexts as praise and an indication of physical strength. This is, we believe, an appropriate cultural adaptation. The same is done with the last example (23) in Table (7). The source text expression meaning ‘*shit*’ is substituted with the expletive ‘*fucking*.’ Although literal translation could have conveyed the same amount of vulgarity, the target text expression is more culturally adaptive.

Table (7) presents various ways in which rude and disrespectful language can be expressed through substitutions, additions, deletions, and literal translations. The choice of words and expressions significantly affects the level of disrespect conveyed, ranging from milder forms of irritation to stronger derogatory language. These examples highlight the importance of understanding the cultural and contextual nuances of language to accurately convey the intended tone and meaning.

Table 7 shows how rude and disrespectful language can be translated by utilizing a variety of translation strategies, such as substitution, addition, deletion, or literal translation. The level of vulgarity and disrespect conveyed can vary depending on the choice of words and expressions, from mild irritation to strong derogatory language. These examples underscore the significance of evaluating the cultural and contextual meanings of swearwords in order to accurately communicate the intended message and the amount of emotional impact.

Conclusions

The examples extracted from the subtitle of *The Alleys* demonstrate how language can be creatively adapted to capture cultural context, emotions, and underlying meanings. The target texts often rely on metaphors, directness, and intensity to convey the essence of the original expressions. The translation choices reflect the intention to make the meaning clear and emotionally resonant in the target language. The analysis of these idioms and proverbs shows that translation isn’t just about word-to-word correspondence but rather about capturing the essence, cultural context, and emotional nuances of the original expressions. The target texts

often creatively adapt the source expressions to convey similar meanings and emotions in English.

To delve into the intricate realm of English subtitles for Arabic films, *The Alleys* on the Netflix platform was chosen as a focal point. We encountered a multitude of challenges throughout our research, spanning from linguistic subtleties to cultural sensitivities. In addition, we reflected on several strategies and methodologies that aimed at enhancing the quality and effectiveness of English subtitles for Arabic content on Netflix, offering solutions to address these encountered challenges.

The study findings hold significance for various domains, including content accessibility, cross-cultural communication, and audiovisual translation. It remains crucial to guarantee that subtitles effectively convey the intended message while maintaining the cultural richness of the source material, especially as streaming services are expanding to reach wider global audiences. Our recommendations emphasize the importance of collaborative efforts involving translators, filmmakers, and streaming platforms to deliver subtitles that resonate with English-speaking viewers without compromising the essence of the original content. Moreover, our study underscores the ongoing need for research and education in the field of audiovisual translation, equipping professionals with the requisite skills and expertise for this challenging undertaking.

Finally, the rather successful English subtitle of *The Alleys* on the Netflix platform augments the streaming experience for viewers while testifying to the value of translation in bridging cultural gaps and advancing intercultural communication. It is hoped that the knowledge and suggestions presented in this study will help to develop Arabic-English subtitle techniques,

Finally, the relatively “successful” English subtitling of *The Alleys* on Netflix augments the streaming experience for viewers while also serving as a testament to the value of translation in overcoming cultural divides and promoting intercultural understanding. It is our aim that the knowledge and suggestions offered in this paper may help to advance Arabic-to-English subtitle techniques, enhancing the accessibility and enjoyment of a wide range of cinematic content for viewers all around the world.

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