

Religious manipulation in Arabic subtitles of English movies: The case of MBC channels

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Abstract: This article aims at discussing ideological manipulation in Arabic subtitles of English movies. It provides a description of some manipulative strategies translators use in subtitles, especially in the religious context. The corpus of the material researched here is based on the Arabic subtitles of four American movies. The study is based on the work of Diaz Cintas (2004) and (2012) on ideological manipulation in Audiovisual Translation (AVT). The theory stipulates that the role of translators has moved from traditionally mere linguists to intercultural agents and mediators shaping the ideological discourse of their culture.

Keywords: AVT, Arabic subtitles, ideological manipulation, American movies

1. Introduction

Audiovisual translation AVT has grown substantially hand in hand with audiovisual production and consumption. Thanks to digital technology, this production, consumption and translation have boomed exponentially. In parallel, AVT studies have been established as one of the richest and most investigated field of research in the current century. It ‘has kindled the interest of many academics and researchers, enticing numerous theoretical, descriptive, sociological and experimental studies.’ (Chaume, 2018: 2) Obviously, this is due to the fact that researchers are pushed by the urge to identify the idiosyncratic qualities of audiovisual translation that could constitute promising translation issues worthy of investigation. Among these issues, we may identify ideological manipulation which is undoubtedly one of the least investigated especially in the Arab literature.

This article is an attempt to study an audiovisual translation issue: religious manipulation of Arabic subtitles. It aims at shedding light on how subtitlors proceed when a religious concept is at stake especially in relation to the source culture and how they manipulate their translation to meet the standards of the target culture.

2. Literature review

2.1 Audiovisual Translation

Chaume (2012) defines audiovisual translation as ‘a mode of translation characterized by the transfer of audiovisual texts either interlingually or intralingually.’ Within this process, two channels of communication are used simultaneously. The ‘audio/acoustic’ channel provides words, paralinguistic information, soundtrack and special effects, while the ‘visual’ channel transmits images, colors, movement, posters or captions with linguistic signs. In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Luis Perez Gonzales defines audiovisual translation as ‘a branch of Translation Studies concerned with the transfer of multimodal and multimedial texts into another language and/or culture.’ (p. 13)

AVT modes comprise all types of transfer of audiovisual texts between two languages and cultures (interlingual) or within the same language and culture (intralingual). Chaume (2012) argues that audiovisual texts are made by introducing on or next to the screen, a target text with the translation or reproduction of the dialogues and inserts (captioning), or by inserting a new soundtrack in a different language and either cancelling out the original soundtrack of the source language dialogues (dubbing) or leaving it in place (voice-over).

In other words, AVT covers all sorts of semiotic transfers, namely dubbing, subtitling, fansubbing, fandubbing, surtitling, respeaking, audiosubtitling, voice-over, free-commentary and goblin translation, subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing and audio-description. However, De Linde and Kay (1999) maintain that all audiovisual modes are just ‘sub-types’ of the two main modes: subtitling and dubbing.

2.2 Subtitling as an AVT mode

Subtitling has been the pivot of hundreds of articles and research papers. Luyken et al (1991) (cited in Munday 2001) defines subtitling as follows: ‘Subtitles are condensed written translations of original dialogue which appear as lines of text, usually positioned towards the foot to the screen. Subtitles appear and disappear to coincide in time with the corresponding portion of the original dialogue (p31).’ Gottlieb (2004) states that ‘subtitling consists in the rendering in different language (1) of verbal messages (2) in filmic media (3), in the shape of one or more lines of written text (4), presented on the screen (5) in sync with the original verbal

message (6).’ Cintas Diaz (2013) describes subtitling as ‘a translation practice that consists of rendering in writing, usually at the bottom of the screen, the translation into a target language of the original dialogue exchanges uttered by different speakers, as well as other verbal information that appears written on screen (letters, banners, inserts) or is transmitted aurally in the soundtrack (song lyrics, voices off) (p274).’

The three scholars agree that, as it is suggested by its name, subtitling, as an AVT mode, means to incorporate a specific written text in the target language at the bottom of the screen while the film is shown in its source language. The written text has to coincide with concordant verbal text on screen.

Titford (1982) (cited in Munday 2001) introduced the notion of ‘constrained’ translation. He defined subtitling with regard to spatial and temporal ‘constraints’ that evidently do not apply to most other forms of translation. These include, in space terms, the number of lines, the position of titles on screen and the segmentation of the text, and in temporal terms, the reading time and speed of the subtitles.

2.3 Arabic subtitling constraints

When translating foreign movies to the Arab world, subtitling is done mostly in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), while in North African countries French is heavily used in parallel. Gamal (2007) deposits that an increasing number of Arab films which take part in international film festivals use subtitles in English, French or Spanish. However, our concern in this study is subtitling in Arabic. That’s why; we shall tackle here the most common constraints of Arabic subtitles.

Subtitles are subject to spatial and temporal constraints. In the case of Arabic, the effect is even heavier. In Arabic, the two-line subtitle may include nearly 70 characters spread over the two lines. This figure is within the European standard which has been applied since 1988 with the 5mm film laser caption. Alkhoury (2011) argues that Arabic subtitles are unique because of the morphology of Arabic words.

L’encombrement des caractères arabes est dû au fait que cette langue cursive et flexionnelle se distingue par deux traits à fort potentiel réductionnel : l’élision des petites voyelles, qui sont généralement prononcées mais pas écrites, ainsi que l’agglutination massive d’affixes et de clitiques ce qui entraîne de facto une réduction du nombre de lettres et d’espaces à l’écran.

Alkhoury states that Arabic subtitles are characterized by two major aspects. First, short vowels are not written but they are pronounced. Second, the root of the word in Arabic and the affixes are assembled in a way that allows a significant reduction of space in Arabic subtitles in comparison to other languages.

A subtitle cannot be displayed on screen for less than two seconds and more than six seconds. The display time of a two-line Arabic subtitle is usually between four and six seconds. Yet, the challenge in the Arab context is twofold. On the one hand, there are striking discrepancies regarding the number of characters per line and their display time. On the other hand, more than 25% of the population (according to Arab League Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Alecso), 2017) is illiterate while another 25%’s ability of reading is between poor and average. So, the reading speed is another constraint that should be considered as a big segment of viewers’ ability of reading is weak in comparison to Western Europe for example.

The spatial constraint must respect the readability of the subtitles. It is highly affected by settings related to editing pace and subtitle cutting. The pace of the editing governs the cutting of the subtitles. Each plan is a global visual unit in which the subtitle is inserted. For this reason, it is highly recommended that a subtitle should be part of a single plan. A subtitle that overlaps two consecutive shots would prompt the viewer to resume reading from the beginning when the plan changes. .

Alkhoury (2011) identifies another type of constraints: the linguistic constraint. This constraint is tightly related to the fact that subtitling is done in MSA which, communicatively speaking, is not as rich as local dialects especially in dealing with different linguistic registers used in movies.

La question des registres de langage n’est pas un phénomène propre à l’arabe. Les variations existant entre les langages argotique, familier, soutenu et châtié ne sont plus à démontrer. Toutefois, le problème qui se pose en arabe lors du transfert traductionnel se situe au niveau des sphères d’usage. (ibid.)

In other words, MSA cannot account for certain semantic and pragmatic loads expressed in slang or colloquial varieties. As a written language, MSA has an aura that distances it from certain spheres of use and essentially confines it to certain official or semi-official situations. Accordingly, when the translator tries to convey source language implications in the target text language, they are confronted to the limitedness of MSA. As an example of this, insults and obscene words seem to be problematic in Arabic subtitles. It is not possible to transpose the cruelty of these words on the screen and obtain the same effect they have on the viewer of the original text. . The translator is required to circumvent this situation by sweetening or softening these words and their effect. For instance, insults in f words are translated (تبا / سحقاً للجنة). In fact, these terms are archaic acts of speech used in classical Arabic hundreds of years ago. They are pragmatically almost meaningless and even absurd.

In other words, the translator converts the vulgarity and offensiveness of the source text into a transcendent language obtained by the nature of the MSA which is a high literary refined variety. Arab viewers conceive of MSA as a sublime celestial language which is practically always used to express decency and courtesy while dialects, everyday language, the low variety, is commonly used to express any rude or offensive meaning.

2.4 Ideology and translation

Most scholars argue, regardless of their approaches or schools, that there are multifarious relationships between translation and ideology. A considerable amount of research has been conducted on the matter and it is mostly agreed that ideology is a decisive element in the process of translation.

In her introduction to *Apropos of ideology: Translation Studies on Ideology- Ideologies in Translation Studies*, Maria Calzada Perez (2003) claims that translators are ideological channels that '(re)produce and (re)create translational behaviour to its most minute detail.' She concludes that they translate in accordance with the ideological settings which govern their behavior.

These settings are varied and have resulted in a rich 'concoction' of ideologies. Feminists, functionalists, descriptive and polysystemic scholars, sociolinguistic researchers, postcolonial exegetes, corpus studies propounders, critical linguistic theorists, gay and lesbian academics, semioticians, contrastive linguists embody some of the very many 'ideologies' that make up TS. Maria Calzada Perez (p 7)

Hatim and Mason (1997: 120) define ideology 'as the tacit assumptions, beliefs and value systems which are shared collectively by social groups.' They establish a distinction between two concepts: the ideology of translating and the translation of ideology. The ideology of translating refers to the basic choices made by translators because they operate within a social and cultural context and because they are part of that context. The translation of ideology designates the 'mediation' provided by a translator to treat sensitive texts. Hatim and Mason (1997: 122) define 'Mediation' as 'the extent to which translators intervene in the transfer process, feeding their own knowledge and beliefs into processing the text.' The translator turns, then, into a processor of texts who filters the text world of the source text 'through his/her own world-view/ideology.' Hatim and Mason studied how messages are transmitted between the lines and demonstrate that the language channels used for this purpose exceed the established limits between the different types of translation. Moreover, they affirm that even in technical texts, the expression of attitudes can be identified. The textual type is also created to serve a specific ideological purpose.

Lefevere is among the fervent scholars who devoted a significantly important amount of work to the relationship existing between translation and ideology. Lefevere's conception of ideology evolved as he was trying to develop his own theory of translation. In 1988, he published his article "Systems Thinking and Relativism" in which he adopted Eagleton's definition of ideology seen as a 'a set of discourses which wrestled over interests which are in some way relevant to the maintenance or interrogation of power structures central to a whole form of social and historical life". This notion of ideology is both political and action-oriented.

Lefevere later developed his own theories of 'the cultural turn' and 'rewriting' in which he identifies three decisive elements affecting the process of translation. First, professionals determine certain decisions in the target text. These include critics, reviewers, teachers and translators. Then, the patrons (persons and institutions) as well leave their impact on the outcome product as they 'can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature.' (Lefevere 2004: 15) Another important element is the dominant poetics. They balance the relationship between literary devices and other social systems. Within this framework, Lefevere defines ideology as 'the conceptual grid that consists of opinions and attitudes deemed acceptable in a certain society at a certain time, and through which readers and translators approach texts.' (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1998) Lefevere identifies three constraints that the translator has to deal with when translating: linguistic, ideological and poetological.

On every level of the translation process, it can be shown that, if linguistic considerations enter into conflict with considerations of an ideological and/or a poetological nature, the latter tend to win out (Lefevere, 1992: 39).

Ideology can refer to the translator's or to the patron's while the poetological constraint refers to the dominant poetics in the target language culture (Munday, 2001: 127). Lefevere argues that with regard to all these constraints, translation is 'the most recognizable type of' rewriting/manipulation which amply contribute to the shaping of the power of the target culture and literature (Lefevere, 1992b: 9).

All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewriting can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the

history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulation processes of literature are exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live. (Bassnett/ Lefevere, 2004 : vii)

However, if all translations ‘reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate’, then how manipulative can they be? How is this rewriting close to or distant from the ‘original’ source text? And as such, can the translator still stay ‘invisible’?

What is crystal clear is that translation as rewriting has made a drastic change in the notion of translation as a whole. It has changed the perspective of translation from an ignored marginalized shadowed act to an artistic piece of work which is governed by the translator’s ideology and perception of the world.

2.5 Ideology and AVT:

For more than a decade, studies on AVT focused mainly on linguistic and technical issues usually from a descriptive perspective: (Danan 1991; Pruys 1997; Avila 1997; Gutierrez Lanza 1999) (cited in Diaz Cintas 2016). It is only in the second decade of this century that scholars have started to approach the socio-cultural and ideological issues of AVT. These issues have been amply investigated in relation to literary works, yet for AVT productions, particularly fiction, the concern is quite recent.

AVT is an extremely fertile field of study. First, it enjoys multimodal aspects in which the meaning is conveyed via many complementing channels. Second, the original version represents the director’s subjective conception of things which reflect a particular socio-cultural environment while the AVT version reflects the translator’s subjective conception molded by their own socio-cultural environment. In other words, in the transfer from one linguistic channel to the other, ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’ alterations will definitely occur. Translators, thus, act ‘as creative writers and politicians, (who) participate in the powerful acts that create knowledge and shape culture’ (Gentzler and Tymoczko 2002: xxi). Third, most fictions, reflect the ideologies of the countries they are made in. For example, American movies represent the cultural hegemony of the dominant American culture. Being aware of this fact, Americans prefer to produce American remakes of foreign movies rather than allow AVT versions.

Diaz Cintas indicates that a field such as AVT is an appropriate representation of Lefevere’s theory of rewriting since AVT texts have to observe the three constraints mentioned earlier: the linguistic, the ideological and the poetological. The powers struggling for dominance are evident. Many parts are somehow involved in the shaping of final product: translators, technicians, dialogue writers, dubbing actors..etc. These are the actors that Lefevere names as patronage. They are ‘powers’ (persons, institutions) which help or hinder the writing, reading and rewriting of literature (lefevere, 1985: 227)’. According to Diaz Cintas (2004), patronage operates on three levels: ideological, economic and social status. As to its implication on AVT, it may be used to approach the state’s interference, the participation of governmental and non governmental bodies, TV channels, translation laboratories, academic centers, distribution companies, audience interests...

The role of translators has moved from traditionally mere linguists to intercultural agents and mediators and from passive transmitters of information to active agents taking part in the shaping of the ideological discourse of their culture. This means that the target cultural system determines the translation product and the approach adopted in the process. Toury (1995: 166) argues that translating into a target culture leads inevitably to the penetration of unfamiliar elements manipulated or adjusted by the target ideology. Diaz Cintas (2004) assumes that Toury’s theory, though it deals with literary translation, must also be applicable to AVT.

Cintas (2012) identifies two types of manipulation in AVT: technical and ideological manipulations. Technical manipulation refers to the changes and modifications that an audiovisual text undergoes in order to meet technical needs and considerations. In other words, it is ‘a need to change the source text in order to respect lip-sync in dubbing or having to condense it so that it will fit in a given subtitle’. For example, in subtitling, reduction, condensation or deletion are manipulative techniques that are used by translators to cope with certain technical constraints. Gottlieb (2005) argues that not to resort to such manipulative techniques may ‘result in poor translation’. Ideological manipulation in AVT, on the other hand, refers to the intentional alterations that the target text has undergone and which have meant to unbalance its relationship with the source text. This can be driven by many factors inter alia political, religious, moral or economic.

AVT is the perfect incarnation of manipulation. IT is omnipresent throughout the whole process. Xènia Martínez (2006) argues that ‘audiovisual translation is probably the discipline in which the text undergoes most change from start to finish. All the stages of the process involve manipulation to some extent of the text submitted by the translator.’ As I have already pointed out, the process involves many players: translators, editors, translation directors, actors (in dubbing) all of whom manipulate the text at varying degrees. Another

aspect of manipulation can result from the multimodality of the text. The audiovisual text is a combination of various channels of communication all intervening simultaneously and complementing each other.

3. Methodology

The corpus we will consider in this article is presented in MBC Group channels. It is taken from the different channels of the group. We have made this choice because of the reputation of the channels among Arab viewers around the globe, also because they deal with renowned institutions of translation, and most importantly they target viewers from all Arab countries and Diaspora. Most of MBC channels broadcast programs in English taken from American productions. MBC rarely dubs these programs. They are mostly subtitled in Arabic either by translators working within the group or by translation companies and agencies based in the Middle East or in Europe. In both cases, the translation product is worthy of study especially in relation to topics such as ours.

To analyze the data, we shall consider religious terms as culture bound terms. Finkel (1962, 112) defines culture bound items as the terms which: “stand out from the common lexical context, they distinguish themselves for their heterogeneity, and consequently they require a reinforcement of attention in order to be decoded.” Tomaszczyk (1983) goes further to argue that these terms should be confined to “objects, ideas, and other phenomena that are truly unique to a given speech community.” Accordingly, they should include only the words that are specific to that culture and which make it different from other cultures.

Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007) provide a detailed set of strategies based on Díaz Cintas (2003) and Santamaria Guinot (2001). These strategies are the ones we shall adopt in this study to help us analyze how CBT are ideologically manipulated. Ranzato (2013,101) argues that Díaz Cintas and Remael’s strategies have “the merit of being both detailed and agile enough to serve as a valid tool for analysis, due to the absence of encumbering subdivisions and to the presence of well-defined clarifications.” These strategies are comprehensive as they include a broader scope of contexts and cases. Here they are:

1. Loan: the word or phrase of the ST is borrowed by the TT and left unaltered, for example: food (muffin), drinks (cognac), places (San Francisco), historical events (perestroika)...
2. Calque: it is a literal translation of a CBT, especially when an exact equivalent in the TL is not available, for example: the Spanish title *Secretario de Estado* is a calque translation of Secretary of State, while *Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores* (Minister of Foreign Affairs) would be more appropriate.
3. Explicitation: the translator tries to make the text more accessible by meeting the target audience half way, either through specification by using a hyponym (tulip for flower) or through generalization by using a hypernym (Belgian quality paper for Le Soir)
4. Substitution: a term is substituted with another one which is deviated from the source one because of technical constraints. A long reference that could be translated literally may be substituted by a shorter one to gain space and save reading time (stew for Goulash).
5. Transposition: the cultural concept is replaced by another cultural concept belonging to another culture (the Dutch HEMA for The British Marks & Spencer).
6. Lexical recreation: it is the creation of a neologism, which may be inevitable if in the ST there is a made-up word as well. (the Spanish neologism *rarezametro* [oddy-meter] for the English ‘weird shit-o-meter’)
7. Compensation: it is compensating a loss somewhere in the translation of an exchange by over-translating or adding something in another. It is “popular strategy in subtitling even though it may not always be practical due to the oral-visual cohabitation of the source and target languages” (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2006).
8. Omission: though it is not an appropriate strategy, but it is sometimes unavoidable either because of space-time constraints or because there is no corresponding term in the TL.
9. Addition: it occurs when CBT might cause comprehension problems. (candidat Palantine for Palantine).

4. Data analysis and discussion

In this section, we will discuss the manipulation of some religious concepts. We will consider Lefevere’s theory on the matter and how it is applicable on Arabic subtitles of English movies.

4.1 The name of God

Arab Subtitlers have used a multitude of strategies to manipulate ideologically the religious discourse expressed in many situations in movies. In this section, we will discuss subtitled scenes from movies in which Arab translators have resorted to manipulative techniques driven by religious motives and imposed by the patrons and the poetics. We will consider how the translation of a simple word like **God** can be subject to

several ways of manipulation. In the movie *The last Exorcism*¹, we come across the following case of manipulation.

Situation: Reverend Cotton Marcus is preaching in his church
Cotton Marcus: Folks! I'm here to tell today that the world is, still worth many many faces. Well! Some of those faces their... their good! Their life of God!
يا جماعة اقول لكم اليوم ان العالم مليئ بوجوه كثيرة. بعض هذه الوجوه خير و متفاهة

The subtitler has applied here the strategy of substitution. The translator has substituted the translation of the English word God/ الله by another Arabic word القدير. In Arabic, the term القدير is surely one of the ninety nine names of Allah, but it is just one of His many attributes and qualities. It can literally be translated in English as the potent. Here is another example from the same movie

Situation: Reverend Cotton (the father) is explaining to the journalist the nature of the Devil
Reverend Cotton (the father): Lucifer was indeed an angel. At one point some people say that he was actually the choir master of heaven, or lacking the better word, he was helping praise his honest to God but he decided he wanted the praise himself! And with that God cast him out from heaven
كان ابليس ملكا في مرحلة ما. البعض يقول انه كان رئيس الجوقة للسميوات اعرف وصفا افضل ان يتلو النشيد للرب انه اراد ان من النعيم يحظى بالتبجيل لنفوسهم القدير

Here again the word God is mentioned two times, and each time the term is given a different counterpart in Arabic: of God/ للرب and God/ القدير. The term رب is usually used as a translation for the term Lord.

The same strategy is followed in a scene occurring in the movie entitled *Zero dark thirty*²

Situation: the commanding officer is announcing the killing of Bin Laden
Commanding officer (through the radio): For God and the country, Geronimo.
و الوطن. نجحنا لاجل القدير

In this translation, the attribute القدير is once more used. With reference to the translation of the word god into Arabic in other references, it is usually translated as Allah. Both words do not refer to a quality or a characteristic, but they are random names given to the Person of the Creator. From the bible, The Old Testament we cite:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. 3. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. 4. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. 5. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. 6. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. 7. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.
<p>1 في البدء خلق الله السموات والارض. 2 وكانت الارض خربة وخالية، وعلى وجه الغمر ظلمة، وروح الله يرف على وجه المياه. 3 وقال الله: «ليكن نور»، فكان نور 4 ورأى الله النور انه حسن. وفصل الله بين النور والظلمة 5 ودعا الله النور نهارا، والظلمة دعاها ليلا. وكان مساء وكان صباح يوما واحدا. 6 وقال الله: «ليكن جلد في وسط المياه. وليكن فاصلا بين مياه ومياه 7 فعمل الله الجلد، وفصل بين المياه التي تحت الجلد والمياه التي فوق الجلد. وكان كذلك</p>

A further example is taken from the New Testament. The word God is rendered Allah/ الله again in Arabic. I quote from the Book of Revelation:

¹A 2010 American supernatural horror film directed by Daniel Stamm. It stars Patrick Fabian, Ashley Bell, Iris Bahr, and Louis Herthum. The story of a disillusioned evangelical minister who decides to participate in a documentary chronicling his last exorcism while exposing the fraud of his ministry

²A 2012 American thriller film directed by Kathryn Bigelow and written by Mark Boal. The film dramatizes the nearly decade-long international manhunt for Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden after the September 11 attacks. This search leads to the discovery of his compound in Pakistan and the military raid that resulted in bin Laden's death on May 2, 2011.

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants--things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,
2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

1 إِعْلَانُ يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ، الَّذِي أُعْطَاهُ إِيَّاهُ اللَّهُ، لِئُرِي عِبِيدَهُ مَا لَا بُدَّ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَنْ قَرِيبٍ، وَبَيِّنَةٌ مُرْسِلًا بِيَدِ مَلَائِكَةٍ لِعَبِيدِهِ يُوحَنَّا،
2 الَّذِي شَهِدَ بِكَلِمَةِ اللَّهِ وَيَشْهَدُ بِسُوءِ يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحِ بِكُلِّ مَا رَأَاهُ.

Manifestly, In Arabic Christian literature, the word used is ِالله. Even in bilingual dictionaries such as Oxford and Almarwrid Alwasit, the first provided option for the term God is Allah. So, how come that subtitles avoid using that term? And why have many of them agreed to use the attribute القدير instead? A simple answer to this question can be that it is an act of ideological manipulation.

Lefevre (1992) acknowledges that translation is 'the most recognizable type of' rewriting/manipulation as it amply contributes to the shaping of the power of the target culture and literature. In this context, manipulating subtitles for the sake of religious beliefs is highly motivated. Some Muslim viewers, especially in the Middle East, have a conviction that their faith is the right one and that Christianity was subject to falsification and forgery. Some Muslim Fuqaha', such as Ibn Baz and Ibn Taymiyyah, even issued fatwas stating that Christians are nonbelievers and that their god is undoubtedly not the same god in Islam. And since Allah is exclusively the god of Islam which is the only right doctrine, He cannot be attributed to other nonbeliever faiths. A solution then could be assigning another translation to the word 'god' which provides the semantic reference but does not go beyond that.

According to Lefevre's constraints, this manipulation is driven by the patrons, in this context Arab TV channels, and the dominant poetics in the target language culture, represented here by the authority of Islam.

In the same way, other strategies are used for the same purpose. The most frequent one is omission. So, instead of translating the word, the translator chooses to omit it at once. Here is an instance taken from the movie the Last exorcism

Situation: Reverend Cotton preaching

Do you believe when you go allow the Holy Ghost into your heart, you will be cleansed of all your sins?
Consider a Kingdom of God! Amen!

هل تؤمن عندما تسمح للروح القدس بدخول قلبك ، سوف يتم تطهيرك من كل ذنوبك؟ في وتدخّل الجنة! آمين!

The expression kingdom of God is substituted by the term الجنة which allows the translator to convey the meaning and at the same time to avoid using the word ِالله as a translation to the word God. Similarly, in the movie *The Master and Commander*³, we encounter the use of the same strategy. For the expression 'God's creatures' (a biblical expression) the Arabic alternative chosen by the translator is مخلوقات بشرية which is more of an earthly expression than of a heavenly one.

Situation: The commander is reading a prayer on the soul of Hollom after his suicide.

The Commander: The fact is, not all of us are born to the sea. Nor do we become the men we once hoped we might be. But we are all **God's creatures**. If some of us thought ill of Mr. Hollom, or spoke ill of him, or failed him in respect of fellowship, then we ask your forgiveness, Lord. And his. We are all of us rough fellows sometimes and we will endeavour to be kinder. Amen.

الحقيقة هي أننا لسنا جميعًا نولد في البحر. ولا نصبح الرجال الذين كنا نأمل أن نكون ذلك اليوم جميعًا مخلوقات بشرية. إذا اعتقد البعض منا أنه سيء للسيد هولوم ، أو تحدث عنه بالسوء ، أو خذلناه فيما يتعلق بالمزلة ، فإننا نطلبه هو نحن جميعًا رفقاء قاسيون في بعض الأحيان وسنسعى لأن نكون أكثر لطفًا. آمين

Subtiters also use other strategies to meet the same manipulative purposes. In the following example, the translator gives the viewer the impression that the use of the strategy of explicitation is just for the sake of trying to make the text more accessible by meeting the target audience half way. The scene is taken from the movie *Mandella long walk to freedom*⁴

Situation: Mandella is arguing with his first wife about his being workaholic. She is trying to convince him to leave things in God's hands

Wife: Nelson, you can't work all night. I'm going to bed now.

Mandella: I'll come later.

Wife: You need to give yourself a rest. You can't do everything. Leave some things to God.

³A2003 American epic period war-drama film co-written, produced and directed by Peter Weir, set in the Napoleonic Wars. The film stars Russell Crowe as Jack Aubrey, captain in the Royal Navy, and Paul Bettany as Dr. Stephen Maturin, the ship's surgeon

⁴A 2013 British-South African biographical film directed by Justin Chadwick from a script written by William Nicholson and starring Idris Elba and Naomie Harris. The film is based on the 1995 autobiographical book *Long Walk to Freedom* by anti-apartheid revolutionary and former South African President Nelson Mandela.

<p>Mandella: Does your god want your children to go hungry? Wife: Nelson... Mandella: I don't see your god caring for our people. Seems to me that he is looking after the Boers. Wife: Nelson... Mandella: Evelyn, go to bed. Go to bed.</p>
<p>الزوجة: نيلسون ، لا يمكنك العمل طوالنا اللطيف الى السرير الآن مانديلا: سأتى لاحقاً الزوجة: عليك أن تأخذ قسطاً من الإيمتك فعل كل ثلثونه بعض الأشياء مانديلا: هل القدر يريد أطفالك أن يجوعوا؟ الزوجة: نيلسون مانديلا: لا أرى القدر يهتم بشعبنا. يبدو لي أنه يهتم بالزعيم الزوجة: نيلسون مانديلا: إيفلين ، اذهب إلى الطرقي إلى الفراش</p>

In this translation, God is translated القدر which can be literally translated as fate or destiny. It may seem that by way of explication, the subtitler is trying to provide an interpretation to the meaning of God in this context. Yet, it is obvious that the translation is utterly manipulative for many reasons, not only because of the problem of terminology we argue for earlier, but also because of the ideas expressed in the exchange. 'I don't see your god caring for our people. Seems to me that he is looking after the Boers.' In some Muslim societies, such ideas can be viewed as infidelity and cannot be related to the name of Allah, even in fiction.

4.2 Other religious concepts

Another case that we shall put under scrutiny is taken from the movie *The Matrix*⁵.

<p>Context: Tank is having a conversation with Neo before he starts the training NEO: You don't have... TANK: Any holes? Nope. Me and my brother Dozer, we are 100 percent pure, old-fashioned, home-grown human. Born free. Right here in the real world. Genuine child of <i>Zion</i>. NEO: <i>Zion</i>? TANK: If this war ended tomorrow, <i>Zion</i> is where the party would be. NEO: It's a city? TANK: The last human city. The only place we got left. NEO: Where is it? TANK: Deep underground. Near the earth's core, where it's still warm. You live long enough, You might even see it.</p>
<p>... ليس لديك أي فتحات؟ كلا - ، 100% من النوع القبولية بشرياً وأخي دوزر نقيان في العالم الحقيقي. ولدنا أحراراً هنا. الأصليون أولاد زايون زايون؟ - يكون الاحتفال فيطو انتهت الحرب غداً، هل هي مدينة؟ المكان الوحيد المتبقياً لظدينا بشر أين هي عند لب الأرض. في جوف الأرض حيث لا تزال دافئة. لو عشت طويلاً، قد تراها</p>

In this exchange, Tank is talking to Neo about *Zion* the dreamland. In the subtitles, the translator has applied the strategy of 'loan': Zion = زايون giving the impression that the term is just a reference to a fictitious place in a fiction; while the fact is that this CBT is part and parcel of Christian cultural references included in the movie.

Matrix was released on Easter weekend in 1999. The protagonist Neo is a representation of Jesus Christ. He is resurrected and deemed to save humanity. He is referred to as 'the chosen', 'the one', and 'the savior'. The heroine is named Trinity with whom Neo falls in love. On the ship, we can clearly read 'Mark III No. 11' which is an allusion to the Bible, Mark 3:11, 'Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and

⁵ A 1999 science fiction action film written and directed by the Wachowskis.^[a] It stars Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne, Carrie-Anne Moss, Hugo Weaving, and Joe Pantoliano and is the first installment in the *Matrix* franchise. It depicts a dystopian future in which humanity is unknowingly trapped inside a simulated reality,

shouted, 'You are the Son of God!' These allusions, among many others, confirm that the term 'Zion' is not an arbitrary choice. It is rather a CBT which evokes a whole range of thought and ideology.

Zion, in the Old Testament, is a specific hill in Jerusalem (Mount Zion). According to the narrative of Old Testament, Mount Zion was populated by a Canaanite tribe before it was conquered by David in the 10th century BC and renamed the City of David. Zion is mentioned in the Old Testament 152 times; most of these occurrences appear in two books, the Book of Isaiah (46 times) and that of Psalms (38 times). In all these references, Zion is translated صِهْيُون. Here are some biblical quotes in English containing the word 'Zion' and its Arabic counterpart.

'Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion—which is the City of David.' (2 Samuel 5:7)

وَأَخَذَ دَاوُدُ جِصْنَ صِهْيُونِ، هِيَ مَدِينَةُ دَاوُدَ.

Here am I, and the children the LORD has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion. (Isiah 8 : 18)

هَآئِذَا وَالْأَوْلَادُ الَّذِينَ أُعْطَيْنَهُمُ الرَّبُّ آيَاتٍ، وَعَجَائِبَ فِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّ الْجُنُودِ السَّاكِنِ فِي جَبَلِ صِهْيُونِ.

The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord! (Psalms 146 : 10)

يَمْلِكُ الرَّبُّ إِلَى الْإَبَدِ الْهَكَ يَا صِهْيُونِ إِلَى دَوْرٍ فَدَوْرٍ. هَلْلُوْا

The translator has opted for the strategy of loan taking into consideration the religious and political dimensions that the Arabic term صِهْيُون bears in the Islamic context. Using the translation as such would refer the viewer to a derivation of the word: Zionism which is الصهيونية in Arabic. Muslim receivers have a hypersensitivity to this provocative term as it stirs up the religious conflict existing between Judaism which is represented in the Muslim subconscious by Israel (The Zionist entity as named by the Arab media) and Islam which is represented by Palestine and its Holly mosque in Jerusalem.

Zionism is a religious movement among the Jewish people which works for the establishment of a Jewish state in the territory defined as the historic Land of Israel in the land of Palestine. In 1948, the movement declared its state on the land of Palestine and declared war on its native population leading to an exodus of Palestinians to neighboring states, and the ensuing denial of their right to return to lands, property and families lost during the 1948 and 1967 wars with the Palestinians and some Arab states.

For generations, Zionism/Zionist/Zion are just synonyms of antagonism and animosity. It is crystal clear then why the subtitler has opted for the strategy of loan instead of using a word that already exists in the Arabic language.

Another example of religious manipulation, with reference to the same topic, is found in the movie *Saint Vincent*⁶.

Situation: Brother Crespi asks Oliver to read the morning prayer on his first day in the new school.

Brother Crespi: Okay, Oliver, why don't you lead us in morning prayer? Everyone does it sooner or later.

Oliver: I think I'm Jewish.

Brother Crespi: Okay. That's good. Oliver thinks he's Jewish. We celebrate all religions in this classroom. That's why we're called...

Entire class: Religions of the World, with Brother Cary Crespi.

Brother Crespi: Bravo. Now, I happen to be Catholic, which is the very best religion in the world.

Because we have the most rules. But some of us are Buddhist, Agnostic, Baptist, Presbyterian, Christian, and "I don't know." Which seems to be the fastest growing religion on the planet. And now we have Oliver. Who "thinks he's Jewish." Which is a new one for us as well. But...it doesn't preclude you from morning prayer duty. Bow your heads. Heads down.

الأخ كريسيبي: حسناً ، أوليفر ، لماذا لا تقودنا في صلاة الصباح؟ الجميع يفعل ذلك عاجلاً أم آجلاً أوليفر: أعتقد أنني من ~~الديانة~~ ~~أوليفر~~.

الأخ كريسيبي: حسناً لك جيبيعتقد أوليفر أنه من ديانة. ~~أوليفر~~ ~~بجميع الأديان في هذا اللفظ~~ ~~السبب~~ تم استدعاؤنا الفصل بأكمله: أديان العالم ، مع الأخ كاري كريسيبي

الأخ كريسيبي: برفو الآن ، أنا كاثوليكي ، وهو أفضل دين ~~فيلاً للطلاب~~ ~~العظم~~ القواعد. لكن البعض منا بوذي ، وملحد ، ومعه ومشيخي ؛ 'لأعرف'. الذي يبدو أنه الدين الأسرع نموًا على ~~هنا~~ ~~الآن~~ ~~أوليفر~~ ~~باعتقد أنه من ديانة~~ ~~أوليفر~~ جديد بالنسبة لنا ~~أوليفر~~.. لا يمنعك من أداء واجب صلاة الطلوع رؤوسكم.

When asked about his religion, Oliver replied 'I think I'm Jewish'. The translator has chosen the strategy of explicitation for this quote while the fact is that he does not need it at all since in Arabic Jewish is يهودي. So, why resort to explicitation then if it were not for manipulation. The translator's aim was to hide the information

⁶A 2014 American comedy-drama film written, directed and co-produced by Theodore Melfi. The film stars Bill Murray as the title character and features Melissa McCarthy, Naomi Watts, Chris O'Dowd, Terrence Howard, and Jaeden Martell.

of Oliver's religion to the audience assuming that this would bother them somehow. Later, when Brother Crespi was listing the examples of religious beliefs in his class 'Buddhist, Agnostic, Baptist, Presbyterian, Christian,' the translation just omitted the last one known for the audience while it mentioned the other ones which the Muslim viewer is quite unfamiliar with. So, we see that the translator, either by way of explicitation or by way of omission, attempts to make the audience feel comfortable by avoiding to mention other doctrines which are thought to be in direct conflict with Islam.

Similarly, in the movie of **American Hustle**, the subtitler opts for the same practice in the following scene.

Situation: Mafia boss Victor Tellegio explains to the fake sheik why it is hard for foreigners to invest money in Florida.
Victor Tellegio: Tell him I speak for our friends in Florida. We're very excited. It's been our lifelong dream to build casino resorts on the East Coast. You told him that? They didn't want the Jews to make money, they didn't want the Italians to make money, definitely don't want the blacks to make money.
فيكتور تيليجيو: أخبره أنني أتحدث نيابة عن أصدقائنا في فلوريدا. نحن متحمسون جداً. كان حلمنا الدائم هو بناء منتجعات كازينو الساحل الشرقي له ذلك؟ لم يريدوا أن يكسب الإيطاليون المال، وبالتأكيد لا يريدون السود أن يكسبوا.

The sentence containing the word Jews has been omitted. This omission is religiously driven as the term 'Jews', unlike the Italians (nationality) and the blacks (ethnicity), refers to a sectarian group which in a relationship of conflict and antagonism with the audience.

In the movie **Patriots' Day**, there occurs a different kind of manipulation. Here is the scene.

Situation: FBI investigator is interrogating the terrorist wife Catherine.
Investigator: Assalamo Alaykom... Assalamo Alaykom. You're disrespecting the prophet?
Catherine: Wa Alaykom Assalam
السلام عليكم... السلام عليكم كل تقليل من احترام الحقيقة و عليكم السلام: كاترين

In this scene the investigator used the word prophet referring to the Prophet of Islam Muhammad. The subtitle uses instead of the word prophet a pronoun احترامه /him which is usually used to refer to a noun mentioned earlier in order to avoid repetition. While in this context the noun was never mentioned. Then, what does the pronoun refer to? The pronoun (him) is manipulatively used to avoid using the 'sacred' word النبي which otherwise can hurt the feeling of the audience if included in a Western movie by nonbelievers, especially in a context where terrorism is at stake. Because even the investigator is a fake Muslim who removes her veil once she leaves the room of investigation. The issue is in this case, what strategy does the translator use to get to this result?

5. Conclusion

This article has attempted to consider the issue of subtitling religious concepts into Arabic. in American movies. The data studied was collected from MBC channels which broadcast American fiction productions to Middle Eastern viewers. The study has shed light on the fact that the translation of ordinary words that we may assume as universal concepts can be problematic and a source of nuisance to translators. This task is even more challenging to subtitlers whose work is displayed on screen together with the projection of the source text. The subtitling of a universal term, such as **God**, has proven to be harder than we may assume. Arabic subtitlers do not use the word الله as it may offend the target audience for whom the term can only be attributed to the god of Islam.

To sum up, we can say that translators play the role of mediators when they apply these manipulative strategies in subtitling. Sometimes viewers are aware of them, but most of the time they are not. As we have seen, subtitlers use them even when you do not expect them.

Can we imagine an AVT text without any ideological manipulation? What could be the reaction of the audience to that text? I believe that manipulation is a necessity especially in the context of communities that are governed by strict norms and values like Muslim communities.

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