

The Impact of Function and Context on Translating Film Titles and their Occurrences in Subtitles

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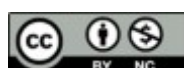
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Abstract

Film titles are often comprised of single words or short phrases, their length rarely exceeding a sentence. Despite this, translating titles for new audiences is a complex task. This study examines this complexity by comparing how the same phrases are translated from English into Arabic when used as film titles versus when they appear within the dialogue as subtitles. Films where the title was uttered during the film were selected. The subtitles of the lines that contained the title reference were contrasted with the official target language title. The comparison focused on the influence of context and function on the translation strategies. The analysis confirmed the extent of this influence and showed that translating titles tended to take a more general approach that focuses on appeal rather than fidelity, while subtitles were specified by context and were thus more sense-oriented. The study recommends that both title localisers and subtitlers resort to the context of the film to produce accurate renditions.

Keywords: *film titles; translation strategy; context; Arabic; English; subtitles; audiovisual translation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Humans create art in various formats to express different ideas and emotions. Each format has its own components and features that set it aside from all the rest. A feature that is found consistently throughout the many mediums is a title, a short phrase that encapsulates and completes a work. Levinson (1985) for instance, argued that a title is an essential and integral part of any piece of art. Often, the title has a reach beyond the work itself and beckons audiences to interact with the work. This is the case for audiovisual media like films, series, and documentaries, as stated by Malur (2022), who described the title as the first update that grasps the attention of potential audiences.

With audiovisual works, the title has significant value as it represents the piece and simultaneously markets it. Beleslin, Njegovan, and Vukadinovic (2017) found that seeking engagement but neglecting the creation of an adequate reflection of the work is a poor approach. Thus, the title must also give a glimpse of the story and its theme and genre. Moreover, a good title provokes audiences to watch the piece and spread awareness of its existence. As Kadyrovna, Rasulovna, and Shavkatovna (2020) put it, a title must leave an impression on the reader on both the level of the title and the piece of media. Furthermore, Zagovora, Weller, Janosov, Wagner, and Peters (2024) found

that an attractive title has a positive impact on the reach of the work. Additionally, Fomenko (2016) emphasised that media titles often possess a functional role.

Krasina, Rybinok, and Moctar (2020) described the choice of a title as a crucial part of the commercial release of films and series. The relevance of titles inevitably results in the importance of an adequate translation. This translated title typically differs from the original but must perform the same function in its new environment for a different target audience.

Thus, translators must utilise various translation strategies to reflect the many aspects of the source title while ensuring that it will function in a similar manner in a new linguistic and cultural environment (Farghal & Al-Hamly, 2015; Farghal & Kalakh, 2017). As Lakkaraju, McAuley, and Leskovec (2013) stated, both the title and the audience influence how a piece of media is perceived. Additionally, Limon (2012) found that the translation of titles is connected to cultural transfers where stylistic and semantic shifts are a result of the application of translation strategies that aim to increase audiences. Likewise, Fuciji (2016) stated that the translation of titles is a complex act that requires a skill set that includes translation strategies and cultural awareness alongside an understanding of the work.

Moreover, Limon (2012) noted that the translation of titles is often determined by distributors and broadcasters. In many cases, literal translations are prioritised. In instances where films are based on other media, such as books, the translation of the original works' titles may also be repurposed. Genre and plot were also cited as influences. Finally, commerciality was also described as a determining factor.

In many films, the title may appear in the dialogue through a direct or indirect reference. Since the audience is familiar with what they are watching, they will recognise this reference. Sometimes, this callback is the only intent, but other times, the mention of the title may be used for certain effects, such as contextualisation and clarifying the reasons behind the title.

When a title appears in the dialogue, it is not unbound as it was in its original form. Instead, it becomes part of a larger context and is structured by the characters, setting, and

dialogue. This context influences its standing and, thus, its translation. This implies that translating the same phrase in title and dialogue form may have different requirements. Therefore, this paper compares translations of film titles with subtitles of their references in the film itself, i.e. when they appear in the film's dialogue. This is done with the aim of assessing the influence of contexts, such as the content of the film and the intended function of the phrase as a title or piece of dialogue, thus answering the following question:

How do function and context affect the strategies employed in subtitling phrases in title and subtitle form?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the theoretical background related to translation strategies and reviews some empirical studies that discuss the same topic.

Theoretical Background

Iliescu Gheorghiu (2001) described titles as an essential part of dramatic intercultural communication. Boyko (2011) also emphasised the importance of titles and, in turn, their proper rendition as they are the first area that is introduced to the audience that should both reflect and complete the work itself. Likewise, Bai (2018) found that titles should represent the work in an appealing manner. This is achieved through cultural aspects that must be adapted for the new target audience to perform the same functions. As a result, title translation is influenced by both linguistic and exterior factors. Quchqor o'g'li and Amirovich (2023) related the introductory role of a title to a requirement that the translation provokes a similar function as the original. This, however, is complicated by polysemy, grammar, vocabulary, culture, and history. Additionally, Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey (2013) found that the translation of titles requires competence and is complicated by pragmatic issues and functional aspects. Similarly, the translation should work alongside the whole text and reflect

the connotative functions of the source text. Additionally, audience responses should be considered, and equivalence should be prioritised when possible; in cases where reflectiveness is impossible, substitution is viable. Furthermore, Yuryevna Ermolenko, Radikovna Sakaeva, and Rafailovna Baranova (2020) argued that a failure to adequately translate a title results in a disconnect between the content and its title.

Corcodel (2022) argued that the title of a work contains a depth that represents the complexity of the work and, therefore, must be recoded and analysed before it can be recoded as a translation. Yin (2009) stated that the translation of titles is shaped by cultural awareness, faithfulness and aesthetic and commercial aesthetics. Peña-Cervel (2016) highlighted the cognitive functions of titles and stated these functions, alongside commercial and aesthetic functions, must be reflected in their translations. Likewise, Mei (2010) found that translating titles should follow a Skopos approach that reflects the function of the text and its title. Additionally, Şraier (2019) found that titles contain a rhetorical function which can be affected by even slight modifications through translation. Alousque (2015) also stated that the translation of film titles is a cognitive process, and in order to reflect the features of the original title and draw in potential audiences, literal and zero translation are not always enough, and translation techniques like strengthening, expansion, parametrisation, reduction, and mitigation are needed. Furthermore, Ruiz and Pardo (2014) argued that the relevance of film titles in art discourse requires that their translation is a complex rewriting process that results in new intriguing titles that reflect the sociocultural and ideological aspects of the target culture in place of fidelity to the original.

Briffa and Caruana (2009) advocated for a stylistic approach that could work in continuation with the remainder of the text while also reflecting symbolic and cultural values. Such a stylistic approach would work with the functions of the text. Nord (1995) stated that titles act as their own text types while providing these functions: expressive, phatic distinctive, referential, metatextual, and appellative.

Each mode of translation coexists with recommendations and restraints that suit its functions (Abu Tair, Haider, & Alkhawaldeh, 2025; Aldualimi & Almahasees, 2022;

Ghassan & Haider, 2025; Haider & Shohaibar, 2024; Silwadi & Almahasees, 2022). This is especially true with subtitling due to its unique nature. Gottlieb (1994) described interlingual subtitling as a diagonal form of translation that shifts from one language to another and from the spoken mode to the written mode. Additionally, Kapsaskis (2019) described subtitles as a representative mode of translation that reflects the dialogue linguistically and culturally. Furthermore, Díaz-Díaz-Cintas (2013) stated that subtitling is limited due to temporal and spatial constraints such as limited characters influenced by synchronisation, reading speeds, and assuring they do not obstruct the screen. Moreover, subtitles are often simplified to accommodate reading speeds, which are affected by the split of attention between media and translation. According to Perego, Del Missier, and Stragà (2018), these constraints shape translation choices and lead to simplified renditions. Tveit (2005) also emphasised how the importance of a readable subtitle affects translation strategies.

Empirical studies

Martí and Zapater (1993) found that translating film titles is done through many approaches. By examining Spanish translations of English titles, they found that a common approach is retaining the original title with minimal to no modifications. This approach is mostly used with titles that consist of proper nouns and titles that have a catchy quality. Literal translations can also be found; however, this approach is not always viable as it is hindered by linguistic differences that make one-to-one equivalence impossible. Moreover, this approach may include errors which result in non-equivalence when terms are mistranslated. To overcome linguistic differences, translators may resort to the use of cultural and colloquial equivalents. Linguistic differences are not the only contributors that make literal translation impossible, as sociocultural references may cause similar issues in translation. The strategies used in translating titles are motivated by commercial potential or a desire to reflect the connotations of the original title with influence from sociocultural factors. Farghal and Bazzi (2017) came to similar conclusions when examining English translations

of Arabic titles. Where literal translations represented over half of the examined data. However, this strategy was only plausible when the titles possessed literal and cultural transparency. Otherwise, different strategies are needed, and therefore adaptation, paraphrasing, explicitation, and transliteration were also used. Moreover, transliteration may be seen as a replacement for the retention of a title in language sets where the spelling systems do not overlap.

Díaz Pérez (2008) found that the decoding and recoding process, even on a linguistic meaning level, may be complex as some titles contain puns or double meanings. When dealing with such titles, the translator may succeed in rendering both meanings but may also struggle in reflecting even one. Moreover, there are cases where the title is substituted with a rendition that does not reflect either. Furthermore, Kwong (2011) argued that cultural nuance causes the most issues in translation that result in the loss of depth and connotation.

However, Leonardi (2011) found that marketing influences overpower other issues in translation, such as language and culture. Ideally, a title's translation should cover these areas: informative and aesthetic functions and cultural backgrounds, in addition to the commercial angle.

Puzik (2019) found that translators often attempt to render titles literary but are forced by grammatical differences to make modifications. Vocabulary and cultural differences result in the need for changes as well. Moreover, Ebralidze (2022) found that because of these linguistic and cultural differences, some features of the title may not be conveyed even in cases where the meaning is not distorted.

Darwish and Sayaaheen (2019) found that translating titles from English into Arabic involves manipulations in the forms of changing explicitness, amounts of genre information, altering interpretations and viewpoints, altering moral lessons appealing to the target audience, character aspects, and altering allusions.

While many studies determined that the translation of titles requires different approaches from general translation, arguing that a title differs from a regular

phrase, no study has cemented this fact by contrasting how the same phrase may be translated differently based on their position as either a title or a part of a larger text. This comparison highlights how context and function influence translation strategies, emphasising the difference between title localisation and other forms of translation. Furthermore, since the study contrasts title translation with subtitles specifically, it also highlights the effects of the nature of subtitling on translation.

III. Methods and Procedures

Twenty-five films where the title was uttered in the dialogue were selected. The strategies used to translate these phrases were examined and compared to assess the role of content and function in translation. This section includes the procedures taken in this study, from the selection of the data to its analysis.

Data Selection

Twenty-five films and series that referenced their titles in their dialogue were selected. These pieces of audiovisual media consisted of different genres and unique storylines. Since films are given titles based on their genres and plots, and since storylines and genres influence the dialogue where said titles are referenced, this diversity allows for a variation in the functions of these titles and utterances. This variation influences the applied translation approaches and the acceptability of their outcomes. The target texts included the titles used in the media's official promotion as well as the subtitles of their in-text references.

Table 1: *Films investigated in this study.*

No.	Source Title	Production Year	Source of Translation
1	<i>All Dogs Go to Heaven</i>	1989	Netflix
2	<i>Strange Magic</i>	2015	Netflix
3	<i>Beauty and the Beast</i>	1991	Netflix
4	<i>All that Jazz</i>	1979	Netflix
5	<i>Monsters vs Aliens</i>	2009	Netflix
6	<i>Eternal Sunshine on the Spotless Mind</i>	2004	Netflix
7	<i>Good Fellas</i>	1990	Netflix
8	<i>The Hunger Games</i>	2012	Netflix
9	<i>Kingdom of Heaven</i>	2005	Netflix
10	<i>The Little Mermaid</i>	1989	Netflix
11	<i>Air Force One</i>	1997	Netflix
12	<i>The Purge</i>	2013	Netflix
13	<i>Knives Out</i>	2019	Netflix
14	<i>Back to the Future</i>	1985	Netflix
15	<i>Corpse Bride</i>	2005	Netflix
16	<i>Get Out</i>	2017	Netflix
17	<i>Hocus Pocus</i>	1993	Netflix
18	<i>Home Alone</i>	1990	Netflix
19	<i>The Prestige</i>	2006	Netflix
20	<i>Onward</i>	2020	Netflix
21	<i>Ratatouille</i>	2007	Netflix
22	<i>E.T. the extraterrestrial</i>	1982	Netflix
23	<i>Flushed Away</i>	2006	Netflix
24	<i>Inception</i>	2010	Netflix
25	<i>Frozen</i>	2013	Netflix

Procedures

The study began with the search for films and series in which the title appeared in the dialogue. After a list of twenty-five films and series that fit this criterion was compiled, the official Arabic titles and the subtitles of the title references were collected and tabulated. The strategies used in the two forms of rendition were analysed and

compared. The analysis emphasized the role of function and micro and macro contexts on equivalence and translation choices.

IV. RESULTS

This section includes the analysis of the selected data and showcases the many examples extracted from the different works. The analysis highlights the nuance of word choice and its effects on the target audience. Furthermore, it emphasises the role of the translation mode on the target text and its contents. The comparative approach provides a ground for understanding the choices made in the translations and their motivations. Table 2 showcases examples in which the title translations and the subtitles align.

Table 2: *Titles and subtitles that employed literal/direct translation.*

No.	Source Text	Title	Literal Translation	In-text	Literal Translation
1	All Dogs Go to Heaven	جميع الكلاب تذهب الى الجنة	All dogs go to heaven	جميع الكلاب تذهب الى الجنة	All dogs go to heaven.
2	Strange Magic	سحر غريب	Strange Magic	سحر غريب	Strange Magic
3	Beauty and the Beast	الجميلة والوحش	The beautiful one "feminine" and the beast "masculine"	الجميلة والوحش	The beautiful one "feminine" and the beast "masculine"
4	All that Jazz	كل هذا الجاز	All this Jazz	كل ذاك الجاز	All that Jazz

Examples 1 and 2 are two illustrations of titles that were translated literally and directly in both the title and dialogue forms. The title in Example 1 is a complete clause or sentence. As all lexical and syntactic components were present, there was no ambiguity that could complicate the translation process. Furthermore, the existence of the title in a complete sentence form results in an alignment between its presence as a standalone item and a piece of dialogue. This indicates that it could exist in the dialogue without being modified or recontextualised. This allowed for the intext translation to align with the title translation. While example 2 is not a complete sentence, it is a simple noun

phrase made up of a noun and an adjective. Such a phrase can be treated as a single meaningful unit with distinct syntactic placements. It is, therefore, possible for the phrase to exist with no to minimal alterations from context. Hence, literal translation with grammatic transposition as a form of intrinsic management was possible for both the title and in-text forms.

Example 3 followed a similar pattern and was thus translated directly, with the only difference between the source and target text being that the target text is gendered due to the grammatical gender of Arabic. The gendering is done based on the contents of the film, with the two nouns referring to the film's two leads. This shows how macro context influences the translation of the title and not just the text. The context also influenced how the noun "beauty" was rendered based on referent. As a standalone noun, the word "beauty" may refer to a person, as was the case with the film, or the concept of beauty itself. While these notions are expressed with the same word in English, in Arabic, the two share a root but are each different derivations, with beauty "person" being "Jamil/a" and beauty "concept" being "Jamal". This, however, implies that translating a title may limit its potential interpretations, although the original title may intentionally evoke more than one meaning.

Example 4 is an illustration of a phrase representing more than one layer of meaning and one getting lost in translation. The phrase "all that jazz" was translated literally for both the title and dialogue. While in the context of this film, the word jazz refers to the musical genre, the phrase itself is an idiomatic expression. The literal rendition removes the idiomatic nature of the line, resulting in the loss of nuance in both meaning and cultural expression.

Table 3 shows how employing the same strategy does not necessarily result in aligning renditions.

Table 3: Titles and subtitles that employed literal/direct translations but did not align.

No.	Source Text	Title	Literal Translation	In-text	Literal Translation
5	Monsters vs Aliens	الوحوش ضد الفضائيين	Monsters vs aliens	الوحوش ضد المخلوقات الفضائية	Monsters vs aliens "space creatures"
6	Eternal Sunshine on the Spotless Mind	إشراقة أبدية لعقل نظيف	Eternal sunrise for a clean mind	إشراقة أبدية لعقل صاف	Eternal sunrise for a pure mind
7	Good Fellas	الأصدقاء الطيبون	The good friends	الرفاق الطيبين	The good mates
8	The Hunger Games	مباريات الجوع	The hunger tournaments	ألعاب جوع ألعاب الجوع مسابقة ألعاب الجوع	hunger games the hunger games The Hunger Games competition
9	Kingdom of Heaven	ملكوت السماء	Sky kingdom	عامسلا ةكل مم	Sky kingdom

Examples 5 and 6 show that using literal or direct renditions for both the title and dialogue translations does not ensure that the two align. This is due to the availability of multiple equivalents for the same referents. For instance, the word “aliens”, which refers to creatures from space and appears in this example, has two slightly different equivalents in Arabic. These are “makhluk fada’i” “space creature”, a phrase which is comprised of a noun and adjective, and “fada’i” where “fada’” means space and “i” is a suffix that changes category to a personified form. Thus, the word means “space person”. Both terms are equally valid equivalents and can be used interchangeably. This example indicates that the translator, in some cases, can choose whether the title and dialogue align.

In example 6, the rendition of the word “spotless” causes a similar mismatch between the title and dialogue. A somewhat literal translation of spotless could be “الب” “without blemishes”, but instead, both renditions rely on the rendition of its sense related to cleanliness. The title employs the adjective clean, while the dialogue translation employs the adjective pure. While the two equivalents are acceptable renditions, the second better carries the sense of innocence connotated with the word

spotless. This shows how similar renditions are not necessarily equal. The title of this film is taken from a poem by Alexander Pope, which is recited in the film. Hence, when the line is uttered in the film, it is within the context of the poem. This gave the subtitlers an understanding of the poem's themes, which could have influenced their translation choices. This emphasises the role of micro context on nuance.

In example 7, the word "fella" is translated as "friend" in the title and "mate" in the dialogue. The word "fella" is a dialectal variant of the word fellow which is slang for "man" but can also refer to a bond between people. Thus, neither rendition is entirely accurate as they do not capture both meanings. Furthermore, since both renditions use Modern Standard Arabic, neither rendition reflects the dialectal pronunciation "fella" in place of "fellow" that is used to add characterisation. Additionally, the word "good" is translated as "بيط"; while this is technically an equivalent for the source text word, it is not the most accurate. This Arabic term connotes kindness, which is not an accurate descriptor of the gangster characters. A more generic equivalent of good like "ديج" may be better suited.

In example 8, the rendition of the word "games" highlights the issue of nuance again. In the title, the word "games" is translated as "the matches" "تاي رابم", unlike the in-text renditions, which translate "games" literally as "باع لأ". This example is an adaptation of a popular book trilogy that was translated into Arabic before the film's release. The official translation of the books' titles used the word "matches". Therefore, this rendition became the accepted and known title among Arabic speakers. The films thusly retained this title upon release and promotion. The subtitles, however, were not bound to this rendition and were able to choose more suitable equivalents.

In example 9, the two translations rendered the phrase "kingdom of heaven" as "the kingdom of the sky". While the term "heaven" is sometimes used interchangeably with sky, the two are not always synonymous. Instead, the word "heaven" is polysemous and may refer to heaven, which has a religious meaning related to the afterlife or the sky. In this case, it is the first meaning that is evoked as a metaphor for its perfectly positive nature. The themes of the film surrounding religion and the Holyland further

suggest that the term refers to the spiritual rather than Earthly connotation. There is also a possibility such a rendition may have been avoided due to its religious nature and the religious background of Arabs. Since most Arabs are Muslims, they may not accept the notion of a man-made heaven on Earth, even perceiving it as blasphemy. Yet, the word “سَمَاءُ” “heaven” could have been replaced with “سَعَادَة” “bliss” to avoid religious connotations but reflect the utopian hopes which are meant to be evoked. This shows that both those suggesting foreign language titles and subtitles are susceptible to errors despite the availability of context. Furthermore, while both renditions mean “kingdom of the sky”, the word employed for kingdom differs between the title and subtitle. The title uses the term “مَلَكُوتُ” while the subtitle uses the term “دَوْلَة”. The subtitle’s equivalent is a more generic term and is what the majority of Arabic speakers default to. This increases the readability and accessibility desired in a subtitle. The equivalent in the title is less common, which gives the phrase an additional appeal. This is useful in the promotion and marketing of the film by making it more alluring and more memorable. This highlights how the choice of equivalent, even among synonyms, can empower the desired function.

While direct translation is common, it is not the only strategy used in the translation of titles and subtitles. Table 4 includes translations with some of these strategies.

Table 4: Titles where reduction or addition were involved in their translation.

No.	Source Text	Title	Literal Translation	In-text	Literal Translation
10	The Little Mermaid	حورية البحر	The “sea” mermaid	الحورية الصغيرة	The little / mermaid
11	Air Force One	اختطاف طائرة الرئيس	The hijacking of Air Force One “the president’s plane”	“ الطائرة الرئاسية ” طائرة “الولايات المتحدة” الرئاسية	The presidential plane The United States presidential plane

Examples 10 and 11 show common translation strategies often found in subtitles used in the translation of titles. Specifically, these are reduction and addition. In Example 10, a reduction can be found in both the subtitle and the title. In the title, this is done in the form of omission, where the adjective “little” is left out. In English, a title like

“The Mermaid” is an ineffective one as mermaids are popular fairy tale creatures with an everyday presence. The presence of mermaids is less tangible in Arab cultures, which makes their mention interesting. Despite this, the omission of the adjective is not without its consequences, as it removes the indications of whimsy and innocence associated with the titular character. In the subtitles, what is reduced is the word “sea”, as the Arabic equivalent of mermaid is literally “sea nymph”. Thus, the phrase is translated as “the little nymph” instead of “the little sea nymph”. This rendition is acceptable, however, as the film already established the characters as mermaids. Moreover, the Arabic word for nymph has mostly become associated with mermaids, further reducing the need for further clarification. Therefore, such a rendition does not lead to any tangible loss and increases the translation’s ability to conform to the spatial and temporal limitations and guidelines of subtitling. This example highlights that the different functions of titles and dialogue call for different translation strategies and shows how the same strategy may achieve different effects based on usage.

In example 10, the title employs addition while the subtitles suffice with a literal or functional approach. “Air Force One” is translated along the lines of “the presidential plane” in both the subtitle and title; however, the title is preceded by the term “the hijacking of”. Typically, addition is used in subtitles for clarification purposes; in this case, it was used to add value in a manner unrelated to meaning and equivalence. This shows how these basic strategies can be used in nontraditional manners when dealing with translating titles.

These examples also indicate that the new titles may be derived from the original without being exact translations.

In some cases, alterations are necessary or come naturally in the translation process. For instance, table 5 contains examples of titles with ambiguous phrases that complicated the equivalence of the texts. These examples show techniques like transposition, addition, and explication are influenced by context and in turn effect meaning.

Table 5: Titles with ambiguous phrasing.

No.	Source Text	Title	Literal Translation	In-text	Literal Translation
12	The Purge	التطهير	The cleansing	التطهير	The cleansing
13	Knives Out	أخرجوا السكاكين	Bring the knives out	تظلمون ضحية	You wrong a victim
14	Back to the Future	العودة إلى المستقبل	The return to the future	سنعيدك إلى المستقبل سنعود إلى المستقبل	We'll return you to the future We'll return to the future
15	Corpse Bride	جثة العروس	The corpse of the bride	عروستنا الجثة لديه عروس جثة	"Our" bride the corpse A corpse bride
16	Get Out	اخرج	Get out	اهرب ارحل من هنا	Escape Get away from here

In example 12, the definite article “the” indicates that the word “purge” is a noun and not a verb. Since the title and in-text instance are both nouns, the translation is straightforward and can be used in both forms. This can be contrasted with the syntactically ambiguous phrase “knives out” in example 13. The title translation interprets the phrase as an instructive verb phrase along the lines of “take your” knives out. Hence, the Arabic title became *take out the knives*. When the phrase is uttered in the film, it is not used as an order but as a descriptor: “with your” knives out. This line is used metaphorically to describe the characters as being on offence. The subtitles use functional equivalence, employ more generic language, and state the characters “wrong a victim”. This shows that subtitles are less concerned with form than titles and are instead more concerned with sense. Literal translations along the lines of “عجركم نيكاكسب” “with knives out” or “عجركم مكنيكاكس و” “with your knives out” were possible, but were not considered since the form was not prioritised. However, had the title translators resorted to the dialogue “عجركم نيكاكس” could have been provided as an equivalent for the title that better represented the film and its events and themes. In such a case, the micro context could have provided a better understanding of the macro context.

Example 14 is another case with syntactic ambiguity that caused a difference between the subtitle and the title translation. The title, “Back to the Future”, is translated literally, which can also be said about its translation in the dialogue. Despite this, the renditions contain variations as the phrase underwent changes in the subtitles and became a part of a larger sentence. This linguistic context necessitated linguistic adaptation. While the phrase was able to appear in the same form in context in English, linguistic differences between the source language and the Arabic target language blocked this possibility in the translated form. In Arabic, it is common for subjects and objects to appear in the derivation of the verb or as attached pronouns. Furthermore, “back” is an adverb in the source text, however, grammatical transposition makes it the main verb in the target text. Thus, when a subject and object were added to form a sentence in the film, the phrase “back” went through changes in form. This indicates that grammatic transposition is influenced by context and not linguistic variation alone.

Example 15 shows how a failure to apply the necessary transposition could result in mistranslation and a title that misrepresents the film. Since the words “corpse” and “bride” were translated literally without changing their order, the Arabic title came to state “the bride’s corpse”. This highlights the syntactic differences between the two languages and the role of word order in semantics. Such a phrase indicates that the story involves the unanimated body of a bride rather than a bride who is living as a corpse. The subtitles do not make such errors, and instead, the term is rendered as both “the bride the corpse” and “corpse bride”, two acceptable renditions that align with the contents of the film.

Example 16 shows the complexity of translating verb phrases through the different translations of the phrase “get out”. The referents of this phrase are more influenced by context than noun phrases. Thus, the term was translated through different near synonyms depending on the context. As a title, it was translated with the general term “جُخَا” “get out”. In the context of the film, “Escape” and “Leave “getaway” from here” were seen as better fitting renditions. As these words were chosen to work inside certain sentences, they represent more specific meanings. The specificity of the Arabic verbs reduces the possibility of various interpretations like those that may

be interpreted from the source text. This indicates that incomplete sentences in the form of verb phrases are more complex than those in the form of noun phrases, as actions are more influenced by context and performer than the objects and notions represented by nouns.

Table 6 contains examples of various translation strategies that do not necessarily follow the sense of the source text components.

Table 6: Examples of substitution, paraphrase, creation, and transliteration.

No.	Source Text	Target Text	Literal Translation	Target Text	Literal Translation
17	Hocus Pocus	الخزعبلات	Nonsense/ tall tales	هيا، هذا مجرد القليل من "هوكس بوكس" إنها مجموعة من "هوكس بوكس" A bunch of hocus pocus	"hocus pocus"
18	Home Alone	وحيد في المنزل هوم ألون	Alone at the house "home alone"	في البيت بمفرده. في منزلنا بمفرده في المنزل بمفرده	In the home by himself In our house by himself In the house by himself
19	The Prestige	ذا بريستيج العظمة	"The Prestige" The greatness	الهيبة	The Prestige
20	Onward	أونورد أو الشقيقان: رحلة خيالية	"Onward" Or The two brothers: the magical journey	ضع ذراع السرعة على "أ" للسير إلى الأمام	Put the gear on "a" for moving forward

No.	Source Text	Target Text	Literal Translation	Target Text	Literal Translation
21	Ratatouille	خلطة بيطلة بالصلصة أو الطباخ الصغير	Beet salad with sauce or the little chef	راتاتوي «راتاتوي» لا يبدو شهياً، إنه يبدو مثل «رات» أي جرد، و«باتوتي» أي مؤخرة. يذكرنا الاسم «مؤخرة الجرذ» وهذه الأخيرة لا تبدو لذيذة يخنة «راتاتوي»؟ يخنة الخضار؟	“Ratatouille” “Ratatouille” doesn’t sound appetising; it sounds like “rat” and “patootie,” which means “rat’s behind.” The name reminds us of a rat’s behind, and that doesn’t sound delicious. Is ratatouille a vegetable stew?
22	E.T. the extraterrestrial	إي تي	“ee tee”	- “إي تي” من خارج كوكب الأرض	“ee tee” From outside planet Earth

Example 17 shows the effects of connotations on equivalence. The phrase “hocus pocus” represents well-known “magic words” or enchantments. Since magic is a fictitious matter, the phrase “it’s just “a bunch of” hocus pocus” has been used to describe things as nonsensical or superstitious. The Arabic term “تالبعزخ”, which is the Arabic title for the film, is used to express a similar notion. Moreover, it is generally seen as a literal translation of the phrase. However, the Arabic and English terms are not exact equivalents as the Arabic term lacks connotations with magic. Typically, this is a non-issue, but since the film’s story involves magic and witches, the relevance of the reference to magic becomes apparent. The subtitles employ transliteration. This decreases the readability and natural flow of the text. This case once again highlights that different strategies are better suited for each type of translation, as switching the translations would have resulted in better-functioning renditions.

Like previously discussed examples, example 18 employs literal translation in the title translation and subtitles but uses different equivalents for the same terms. For instance, the title translation employs the term “house” while the subtitles employ the term “home”. The term home connotes a sense of belonging and ownership more than

the term house, which represents the building one inhabits. Another difference is in the renditions of the descriptor alone as alone and by himself. The term alone better represents the solitude the character is left in. However, what truly differentiates this example is that it was provided with two Arabic titles, a literal translation and a transliteration. The transliteration allows for the retention of the assonance of the repeated o sound, which was lost in the literal rendition.

Example 19 is similarly provided with two alternates as titles, a transliteration and a translation. During the transliteration, modifications were made due to the differences between the phonetics of the source and target languages. The voiceless /p/, which is not available in Arabic, was flipped into a voiced /b/. This shows that transliteration does not exactly retain the original title. In the translated version, the word prestige was translated as “greatness”, a literal translation of the commonly known sense of the word. This is similar to the translation of the subtitles, which renders the word as “ةب يهل”. Yet, in the film, the word is employed in an unconventional manner based on the word’s etymology. The word is derived from French and has meanings related to illusions, as the word is used to label the final part of a magician’s act. Therefore, these straightforward renditions are not adequate equivalents as they ignore key contexts.

Example 20 contains two titles, one of which relies on transliteration. The non-transliterated Arabic title, in this case, was not a translation of the title but instead was a new original title. This title is more informative than the source text. The source title is somewhat ambiguous and does not tell much about the story. Since this film is a product of one of the most popular and beloved animation companies, Pixar, it was possible for the film to gain interest and intrigue on that basis alone. Valette-Florence, Becheur, de Barnier, and Valette-Florence (2011) found a link between emotions, attitudes towards media and brand familiarity and attachment. This transforms the uninformative nature of the title into a source of curiosity. In a foreign context, the brand name alone may not be enough to secure an audience. Hence, *Onward* became “the two brothers: a fantastical journey”. This title informs the audience about the main characters and the relationship that connects them. The tagline informs the

audience of the genre of the film and incites them towards a fantasy adventure. This example highlights how reception is prioritised over fidelity and even the notion of translation.

Example 21 is a similar case where two titles are provided, one of which is an original. The original title is “The Little Chef,” and it references one of the main characters, who is a rat that cooks. The second title is “Beet Salad with Sauce or the Little Chef”. This title employs lexical creation, which is technically a translation strategy to render the word “Ratatouille”, which is a dish that plays a crucial role in the film. Although the original title is a single word, both these concepts of the character and the dish were alluded to through wordplay as “rat” is the first syllable of the word “ratatouille”. This example shows that translation can be limiting as linguistic differences may not allow for the transfer of double meaning. Translating food names is a difficult area as these expressions are bound to culture, but this dish is typically transliterated. The subtitles employ a combination of transliteration and this lexical creation to represent the dish. Since the dialogue does not invoke the pun in the title, conveying this meaning is not a concern. This again emphasises that titles function in a unique manner and, therefore, require different rendition strategies.

Example 22 employs transliteration and reduction. The original title contains an abbreviation and its full word form. The Arabic title transliterates the two letters phonetically as *يت إي*. Thus, the Arabic title is not an abbreviation neither of the source title or its translation. Such a rendition does not convey the sense of the source text and does not provide potential audiences with any insight into the contents of the film. This transliteration is used for the abbreviation in the subtitles as well, but the full words are translated literally. The literal translation conveys the sense of the source text, but the connection between this word and the abbreviation, which becomes a character’s name, is not made clear.

In some cases, paraphrase becomes necessary as some terms may be unfamiliar or non-existent in the target language. Such examples are highlighted in table 7.

Table 7: *paraphrased and original target text titles*

No.	Source Text	Target Text	Literal Translation	Target Text	Literal Translation
23	Flushed Away	التدفق البعيد	The far flow	غسلك بالماء الدافق ستغرق المدينة! يغرق	Washed with flowing water. Will be drowned/flooded. Drowned/flooded.
24	Inception	استِهْلَال أو إزْدِرَاع	Initiation or transplantation	زراعة الفكرة زراعة فكرة تزرع فكرة عملية زراعة الأفكار	Planting the idea Planting an idea Plant an idea The procedure of idea planting
25	Frozen	ملكة الثلج	The snow queen	مجلد تجول روجي في الكتل الجليدية إنها مثلجة بالكامل الأشياء المثلجة القلب الجليدي من كثرة الجليد	Iced Ice Frozen Icy Ice

Example 23 is a case that showed the challenges caused by linguistic gaps and differences. This case, therefore, required that the translators resort to compensation to provide a translation regardless of quality. In the subtitles, the renditions were greatly affected by the context of the dialogue, which resulted in specificity. The title required a more general rendition, which resulted in a misalignment between the title translation and the subtitles.

In Example 24, the term inception refers to a starting point. It was thus used in this film to describe the starting point of the ideas which the characters plant in other people's minds. This process was paraphrased in the subtitles as "idea planting". This rendition is acceptable in subtitle form as it conveys the sense in a simple, understandable way. Yet, it is not an alluring title, hence the differences between the renditions. The Arabic title is hence "الْهَبْتِ سُنَا" "initiation/inception" or "عَزْدِرَا" "transplantation". The

first rendition is an accurate equivalent of the sense of the source text, while the second rendition accurately represents the fictional operation. However, these terms are uncommon and may thus confuse audiences who are reading the subtitles. This example again highlights the different priorities of each type of translation.

Example 25 is another instance of non-translation in the title despite the provision of multiple literal translations in the subtitles. This is another case where a different title is more appealing than a translation. In this example, though, the target title is not original; instead, it is a translation of the working title that was based on the story the film loosely adapted. This example brings forth that the creation of a title is a complex process, and the same title may be deemed subpar for one audience but may also be the best option for another, surpassing the final decision of the source text.

V. DISCUSSION

The mischaracterisation of translation as a process of a one-to-one replacement of counterparts has long been replaced with different notions of equivalence (Farghal, 1995). Functional equivalence specifically has dominated in both practice and studies. Functional equivalence aims to recreate the experience of the source audience for the target audience. Thus, it is often related to sense in place of form. As evident from the analysis, sense-based renditions are a manifestation of functional equivalence in subtitling. However, the function of a title exceeds the semantics of its wording. Titles blend form and sense to create a compelling representation of the work (Farghal & Bazzi, 2017). Thus, even a nonliteral sense-based rendition would fall flat as a functional equivalent of a title. Therefore, adaptation and paraphrase are common strategies in the rendition of titles. Additionally, some target text titles may diverge greatly from their source text counterparts. This creation prioritises the functions of a title of any sense of linguistic equivalence or correspondence. These strategies imply that the rendition of titles is often a process of localisation rather than translation. Yet, not all titles are fundamentally changed to appear natural to the target culture. For

instance, transliteration is common in the translation of titles. This transliteration may be based on the typical motivations for this strategy, such as linguistic and cultural gaps. However, it may also be a way to preserve the stylistic features present in its original form. This is evident in examples where terms that were translated in a simple, straightforward manner in the subtitles were transliterated in their title form. While many strategies are applied to retain the stylistic and functional features of titles, it is not uncommon for titles to be translated literally. The effectiveness of this strategy, however, depends on the nature of the title. Thus, it may be acceptable in some cases, but it may lead to significant translation loss in others.

While this may make it seem that subtitling phrases is simpler than translating them as titles, this is not entirely true. Texts in subtitles may not have the same appealing function that is associated with the marketability of titles, but as with any form of language, they have their own functions depending on context. Furthermore, the context of the phrases among the dialogue may constrain their renditions both regarding sense and linguistic qualities. The context may also necessitate that the text is modified and adapted to produce natural readable lines.

These examples highlight the complex nature of equivalence and acceptability in translation while emphasising that translation is intertwined with communication. Furthermore, the relevance of nuance in the decoding and recoding process is emphasised and linked to both micro and macro contexts both in text and relating to audiences.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Translation is the act of transferring meaning in a way that can replicate the function of the source text (Al-Mahadin, 2014). Since titles and dialogues have different functions, the same phrase may be translated differently depending on its location. The renditions of the titles tend to be general to encapsulate the film in its entirety, while the renditions in the subtitles tend to be more specific to fit between the context of the dialogue

and surrounding language. Moreover, the different functions of the title and dialogue influence the type of equivalence as well. For instance, title translations may prioritise form while subtitles prioritise sense. Furthermore, the analysis showed that the choice of translation strategies can emphasise or lessen the desired function. Thus, different strategies are better suited for the title and subtitle translations. The same can be said about the choice of equivalent among the many options and near-synonyms. This also indicates that employing the same strategy in both renditions does not necessitate that the two align. This highlights that the quality of a translation and the effectiveness of a certain strategy is based on more than just linguistic content.

Context played an important role in how the phrases were rendered in both the title and subtitle form. The macro context had a stronger influence on the title, while the subtitles were shaped more by the micro context. Both micro and macro context informed how the sense of the phrases was rendered, while micro context influenced the grammatical qualities of the renditions. Furthermore, accessing micro contexts such as dialogue can aid translators in their understanding of the text, which can improve the accuracy and nuance of their renditions. This means that the requirements of subtitling provide an advantage in this area. This indicates that the quality of title translations could be improved by resorting to the dialogue to better understand the themes and stories. However, this does not automatically result in an impeccable translation, as all translators are susceptible to mistakes and errors.

Context also influences the grammatical category of a phrase. Thus, subtitles are more prone to making grammatical modifications to a phrase than titles. Furthermore, syntactic ambiguity and complexity also influence the renditions of phrases in both subtitle and title forms.

Moreover, there are terms that can have multiple meanings. In some cases, context can help pin down the desired sense of a polysemic word or differentiate between homophones. This is another example of the role of context on specificity, which has been associated with subtitles. However, there are cases where the evocation of multiple senses is intentional. This is common in titles. Linguistic differences hinder the

retention of both senses, and thus, the translations may be limiting. To compensate for this, some films were provided with alternate official titles.

Furthermore, titles have unique features that enable them to perform their function. Such features are not always transferable through direct translation. Hence, other strategies may be relied upon. For instance, transliteration may be used to retain sonic features such as rhyme or assonance. Another feature that may be lost in translation is cultural context such as the case with idiomatic and dialectical expressions.

In some cases, marketability and audience reception play a role in altering the title and fidelity is put on the back burner. An example of this is the creation of new titles or relying on alternative titles. Branding also influences how titles are rendered. For instance, popularity and audience familiarity play a role in reception, which can either allow for leniency in the assignment of titles or restrict it.

Comparing the rendition of the same phrases as titles and dialogues emphasised the role of function and audience reception in translation choices, highlighting the complexity of translation and the concept of equivalence.

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