A Pragmatic Investigation of the Translation of Swearwords in Arabic-English Film Subtitling

YASSER MUHAMMAD NAGUIB SABTAN
Department of English Language and Literature,
College of Arts and Applied Sciences,
Dhofar University, Oman
ysabtan@du.edu.om

ABSTRACT

Subtitling, which is a main type of Audiovisual translation (AVT), has only recently received considerable interest in the field of translation studies. As far as the Arabic language is concerned, most studies have been conducted to discuss several problems in subtitling English multimedia material including films into Arabic by amateur or professional subtitlers, while few studies have been carried out to investigate translation problems in subtitling Arabic films into English, especially the problem of translating Arabic swearwords on screen. Swearwords are culturally laden expressions and therefore pose a challenge to film subtitlers who deal with a variety of such expressions in different contexts. In an endeavour to address this gap in that area of AVT, this study attempts to investigate one of the culture-specific problems in Arabic-English film subtitling, namely swearwords. To achieve this goal, a corpus consisting of three Arabic films subtitled into English on an Egyptian TV channel was collected to investigate the translation of these culture-bound expressions. The analysis of the data was carried out utilising Baker's model of pragmatic equivalence. In this framework, the study sheds light on the strategies used by subtitlers to render the swearwords in Arabic films into English on the TV screen. The results of the analysis show that source language (SL) swearwords are either toned down using euphemistic expressions or completely omitted in the target language (TL) due to ideological and cultural considerations. Moreover, the study reveals that while some SL swearwords are pragmatically translated into their equivalents in the TL, some others do not have the same pragmatic equivalents.

Keywords: Arabic-English Subtitling; Audiovisual Translation; Swearwords; Pragmatics; Equivalence

INTRODUCTION

Translation is a human activity which enables people across the world to effectively communicate and understand each other's cultures. It, thus, paves the way for global interactions and builds bridges between cultures. Therefore, translation is a challenging task that requires translators to be qualified so as to deal with the cultural differences between the SL and TL. Translators should strive to overcome the hurdles they encounter when translating culture-specific expressions from one language to another.

Audiovisual translation (AVT), also referred to as screen translation, represents a growing sector in the translation market, and thus, there is a need for further research into this domain. AVT has only recently become a topic of interest within the discipline of translation studies. AVT is classified into three main types: subtitling, dubbing and voice-over. Subtitling, which is the main focus of this paper, is the written translation of the spoken source language (SL) of a TV program, film or series into the target language (TL) of the viewers. The translation usually appears in one or two lines at the foot of the screen simultaneously with the spoken utterances in the SL. Dubbing, on the other hand, involves the substitution of the original soundtrack by a version in the TL. Voice-over is another main type of AVT. It is somewhat similar to dubbing in that both types involve a sort of revoicing, but voice-over is less synchronous than dubbing. The present study

deals only with the mode of subtitling. By shedding light on this area of AVT, the researcher hopes to provide some helpful insights for further research in this area.

The medium of subtitling imposes major constraints that do not allow the translation of each utterance in full to be displayed synchronically with the spoken words on the screen. These constraints are basically related to the limitations of the screen space and the duration of a subtitle which depends on the complexity of the text and the reading speed of the average viewers (De Linde & Kay, 1999). Therefore, the SL dialogue is often subtitled in a condensed form.

The growing needs of a world where cultures increasingly interact with each other have brought to the fore the importance of film translation. Taking into account the growing needs of a multicultural world, this paper approaches the field of subtitling by investigating the culture-bound problem of swearing in Arabic. More specifically, the present study sets out to investigate the norms prevalent in subtitling this cultural phenomenon into English. With this goal in mind, the study examines the degree of success that is achieved in representative examples of subtitling. In particular, the quality and success of these common strategies will be judged according to their compliance with, or defiance of, the functional theories of translation.

Schwarz (2003) argues that despite the fact that many concepts are shared between different cultures, there are many terms and expressions which reflect the values of a particular culture and have no true equivalents in the TL. To translate these culture-specific terms and expressions successfully, she points out, "a translator has to be not only bilingual but also bi-cultural". In fact, the cultural differences are apparent in some terms and phrases, especially swearwords, in different fields and thus constitute some problems in translation.

The analysis and evaluation of the translation of swearwords in this study are based on the communicative approach to translation as discussed in Nida (1964), Nida and Taber (1982), Newmark (1988) and Baker (1992). The target text (TT) is judged acceptable or unacceptable according to a single broad criterion: its ability to convey the SL message to the TT viewer with the same effect. Thus, the study discusses the transfer of the message from Arabic into English and how far the screen translators have succeeded in giving a viewer-friendly TL text that is nonetheless faithful to the SL text. Therefore, a pragmatic approach is crucial to the translation of swearwords. Pragmatics as a linguistic discipline, according to Leech (1983, p. 6) is "the study of meaning in relation to speech situations". Thus, we may say that it is the study of how language is manipulated by language users in the different contexts.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study aims at exploring the translation of the culture-specific aspect of swearwords in Arabic-English film subtitling. To achieve this goal, the researcher collected some original utterances of Arabic swearing and their English subtitles shown on the Egyptian Nile TV channel. The study attempts a pragmatic analysis of the chosen data examples to see how the channel's subtitlers rendered the Arabic swearwords into English. The analysis is based on the communicative theories of translation that are discussed in the methodology and data description section.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is well-known that the recent advancements in technology have resulted in the production of a huge volume of audiovisual material in both English and Arabic. This led to an increasing demand on translating these media materials into the target language. These media translations (often referred to as AVT) are of different types, including subtitling, dubbing and voice-over. Subtitling, which is the main concern of the present study, is one of the main types of AVT and is widely used in different countries across the globe. In this regard, many researches have been conducted to study different linguistic aspects of subtitling.

Swearwords, which are culture-specific expressions, constitute a challenge for translators, especially subtitlers, since they deal with a variety of such expressions in different contexts. To the researcher's best knowledge, most studies on subtitling of swearwords have focused on investigating the translation of the English swearwords and taboo expressions into Arabic (Al-Adwan, 2015; Izwaini, 2017; Eldalees et al., 2017; Thawabteh, 2017; Abdelaal, 2019; Khalaf & Rashid, 2019; Al-Yasin & Rabab'ah 2019; Khalaf & Rashid, 2020; Ben Slamia, 2020; Debbas & Haider, 2020; Abdelaal & Al Sarhani, 2021). Very few studies (Thawabteh, 2012; Al-Kharabsheh & Yassin, 2017; Bou Fakhereddine, 2020) have been conducted on the other direction, i.e., from Arabic into English. Hence comes the significance of this study, as it investigates the subtitling of Arabic swearwords into English on an official Arabic TV screen.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

SUBTITLING

Subtitling is "one of the most visible forms of translation encountered in everyday life" (Jaskanen, 2001). It is one of the main types of audiovisual translation, which also includes dubbing and voice-over. However, dubbing and voice-over are not the concern of the current study, as it focuses on subtitling only.

Generally speaking, subtitling is much less expensive than dubbing and thus is preferable in small countries. It should be noted that subtitling is divided into two main types: intralingual subtitling and interlingual subtitling. Intralingual subtitling is mainly used for deaf and hard-of-hearing audience, while interlingual subtitling is used for non-native viewers. The current study is mainly concerned with interlingual subtitling, and so any mention of subtitling is actually referring to the interlingual type of subtitling. Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997, p. 161) define interlingual subtitling as the "process of providing synchronised captions for film and television dialogue." Gottlieb (1997) gives a rather detailed definition of subtitling. He defines it as a written, additive, synchronous type of translation of a fleeting and polysemiotic text type.

As a matter of fact, interlingual subtitling differs from text translation in a number of ways. Firstly, subtitling is characterised by visual and audio components that are lacking in text translation. Secondly, there is a switch from spoken to written language. Thirdly, there should be integration between subtitles and the image or action unfolding on the screen. Fourthly, there are spatial and temporal constraints that are imposed by the medium of audiovisual translation. As regards the limitations of the screen space, subtitles, which are positioned at the lower part of the screen, take up a maximum of one or two lines per subtitle (Al-Adwan, 2019). Another constraint

is the duration of a subtitle. The restriction on time derives from the need for synchronicity and the reading speeds of viewers. As De Linde and Kay (1999) suggest, the average viewer's reading speed has been proven to range between 150-180 words per minute. In this context, Karamitroglou (1998) points out that a full two-line subtitle should remain on the screen for a maximum of 6 seconds, and one line subtitle should appear on the screen for no more than 3.5 seconds to guarantee adequate reading time. However, the six-second rule is not always observed as noted by Al-Adwan (2019) in his discussion of the Arabic subtitling conventions on Dubai One and MBC 2 channels. The researcher agrees with Linde and Kay (1999) that it is the SL utterance that determines the length of the subtitle lines on screen. Thus, as noted in the subtitles displayed on the Nile TV screen, the time of a subtitle varies according to the nature of the translated utterance. Generally speaking, a subtitle line on Nile TV has been found to vary in time according to the length of utterance as well as the time taken between the utterance and the subsequent one or the turn-taking in dialogue between characters on screen. A simple utterance can last for 2 seconds, a more complex one between 4-8 seconds and sometimes a much more complex one can last 10 seconds or more.

Thus, subtitling involves a switch from spoken to written language and consequently a necessary reduction in the amount of dialogue. Due to the features of interlingual subtitling described above, the researcher agrees with Clements (1998) that the screen translator is not able to take liberties with the source material as can be done by the translator of written texts. Screen translators, as Georgitsi (2002) notes, should be able to recognize the linguistic and non-linguistic signs of both cultures.

<div align="center">SWEARING</div>

The word "swear" has two different meanings. The first sense means "to make a solemn declaration, invoking a deity or a sacred person or thing, in confirmation of and witness to the honesty or truth of such a declaration." The other meaning is to use abusive, violent, or blasphemous language against somebody or something (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1992). In fact, in our present study we are mainly concerned with the second meaning of the word 'swear'.

Montagu (1967, p. 105) defines swearing as "the act of verbally expressing the feeling of aggressiveness that follows upon frustration in words possessing strong emotional associations." Due to anger and frustration, one resorts to the use of swearwords as a sort of auto catharsis. A swearword is a verbal attack on someone. It is used to insult a certain person in a specific situation. For example, *son of a bitch* is a swearword that aims at insulting the targeted hearer. Swearing is, thus, a fundamental form of human behavior that occurs as a result of anger or frustration. Therefore, it is an effective means of producing relief and reducing stress.

However, swearwords are not always used as a result of frustration or aggression. On the contrary, they may be used as markers of friendliness or even as terms of endearment. For example, Allan and Burridge (1991) point out that the word *nigger* loses its offensive meaning and has a positive connotation when used among African-Americans, as they use it to show solidarity and common ground. However, when it is used by a speaker from a different group to a black or African American, it has an offensive connotation. By the same token, the word *bastard* can be used as a marker of friendliness in bantering remarks among friends. But when it is used between two persons who are not well acquainted with each other, it is considered offensive. A similar situation in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic can also be cited here. The researcher has noticed that the expression (يا روح أمك), literally "o' soul of your mother", which has no meaning but to

express anger, is used among some friends without any intent of obscenity. However, it is sometimes used between two quarrelling persons with the intent of obscenity and offensiveness.

To understand the nature of literal versus emotional reference of a swearword, one should look at such words in their relative contexts and not as individual words. Thus, a pragmatic analysis that tackles how words are used in a particular context is crucial in this regard. As a matter of fact, swearwords are influenced by context more than any other type of language (Jay, 1992). Therefore, their offensiveness relies on context. There are some influential variables that contribute to understanding the context of utterance. These are the 'physical setting' and 'speaker-listener variable'. According to Jay (1992), dirty words are very sensitive to the physical setting. Thus, *Jesus Christ* means one thing in a church but quite another when exclaimed in a locker room. 'The speaker-listener variable', on the other hand, is concerned with the relation between the speaker and the listener. There are some factors that influence this relation. These are gender, intimacy, age and status. The speaker-listener relation influences the use of swearwords. Thus, according to Jay (1992, p. 13) "the appropriate intonation can make 'son of a bitch' a term of endearment. Some words may be very offensive in one context but not offensive at all in another."

In actual fact, euphemism is used as a shield against all forms of obscene and offensive language. A euphemism, according to the online Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), is defined as "a word or phrase used to avoid saying unpleasant or offensive word'. Fromkin& Rodman (1993) define 'euphemism' as a word or phrase that replaces a taboo word or serves to avoid unpleasant subjects. Thus, the words *pass away* and *funeral director* are euphemistic for *die* and *undertaker* respectively. Allan and Burridge (1991, p. 3) describe euphemism as "an expression that seeks to avoid being offensive". They also refer to the term dysphemism which is, roughly speaking, the opposite of euphemism. This means that dysphemism is a verbal resource for being offensive, being abusive or just getting angry. As a matter of fact, we cannot properly judge something as euphemistic or dysphemistic without taking the contextual aspects into consideration.

PRAGMATICS

Several translation scholars have discussed the significance of considering the pragmatic/communicative approach to translation (e.g., Newmark, 1988; Hatim & Mason, 1990; Baker, 1992, Hatim & Mason, 1997, Hatim & Mason, 2000). Similarly, a number of studies have stressed the importance of integrating pragmatics in film subtitling, pointing out that the pragmatic transfer is as important as the linguistic one (Remael, 2001; Pavlović, 2004; Ben Slamia, 2015; Khalaf & Rashid, 2019; Ben Slamia, 2019).

In this section a number of key concepts in pragmatics that are of relevance to the current study will be discussed. In particular, the pragmatic concepts of implicature, politeness and speech acts will be highlighted. But before these concepts are discussed, it is expedient to illustrate what is meant by the linguistic discipline of pragmatics. Many definitions of pragmatics have been put forward. Broadly speaking, Hatim and Mason (1990, p. 59) refer to pragmatics as "the study of the relations between language and its context of utterance." Likewise, Leech (1983, p. 6) sees pragmatics as "the study of meaning in relation to speech situations." It is thus clear that pragmatics is, as Yule (1996) points out, concerned with the study of contextual meaning.

IMPLICATURE

Broadly speaking, implicature is based on the idea that more gets communicated than is said. In other words, the notion of implicature explores how a great deal of what is unsaid is recognized as part of what is communicated (Yule, 1996). Thus, we can say that implicature is the investigation of invisible meaning. Lyons (1977) refers to this when he says that implicature is based on a distinction between what is actually said and what is implied in a speech event.

Conversational implicature rests on a hearer's assumption that the speaker is following the Cooperative Principle (CP) and the conversational maxims. To retrieve a conversational implicature, a hearer depends on a process of inference to guess the implicit meaning in an utterance. So, implicature requires taking context into account to arrive at. The following talk exchange is a typical example of a conversational implicature (Levinson, 1983, p. 126):

(1)   A: What on the earth has happened to the roast beef?
        B: The dog is looking very happy.

B's response implicates that the dog has eaten the roast beef. In addition, this implicature is associated with the utterance in this particular context.

Based on the idea that the people involved in a conversational exchange will cooperate with each other, Grice has postulated the CP with its four maxims. These maxims are quantity, quality, relation and manner. As a matter of fact, it is generally assumed that people are normally expected to provide an appropriate amount of information, tell the truth, be relevant, and try to be as clear as they can. Thus, the basic idea behind Grice's maxims is that a hearer naturally believes that the speaker is abiding by the CP and the maxims in any instance of communication. However, speakers sometimes do not adhere to the CP and its maxims to convey a meaning that goes beyond the literal sense of an utterance.

POLITENESS

As a matter of fact, as shown above, people do not always tell the truth and say exactly what they mean (Levinson, 1983). This is where the Politeness Principle (PP) comes into play. Leech (1983, p. 79) expresses his belief that while the CP is indispensable, it is not sufficient. The PP is seen as a necessary complement that rescues the CP from serious trouble. Generally speaking, politeness phenomena are one manifestation of the wider concept of appropriate social behaviour or etiquette within a culture (Grundy, 2000). In other words, politeness is a way of using language to take account of the feelings of others within a particular culture. In order to describe politeness, we need to tackle the concept of 'face'.

Yule (1996, p. 60) points out that face is the public "self-image of a person." Thus, Politeness, Yule notes, is "the means employed to show awareness of another person's face." The concept of 'face' forms the core of politeness theory and plays a pivotal role in its analysis. There are, therefore, certain actions that threaten one's face. Brown and Levinson (1987) regard such actions as 'Face Threatening Acts' (FTAs). Since every speaker wants to maintain his own face, he is aware of others' faces and thus tries to maintain his hearer's faces. Accordingly, whenever a speaker has to perform an FTA, he attempts to minimise the face threat to his hearer; unless he has his own reasons for threatening his hearer's face.

SPEECH ACTS

By and large, speech acts constitute such a central topic in pragmatics that some argue that the whole pragmatic theory was built on it. The theory of speech acts was first proposed by John Austin in his monumental work *How to do things with words* (1962) and then developed by Searle (1979). To communicate with people, we must express propositions with a particular illocutionary force. In that way, we perform particular kinds of actions such as stating, warning and promising. Thus, an utterance has what Austin calls 'force'. A speaker performs three different kinds of actions when he produces an utterance.

Lyons (1977) points out that Austin drew a distinction between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts as follows:

A. Locutionary act: it is the production of a meaningful utterance.
B. Illocutionary act: the communicative force which accompanies the utterance, e.g., making a promise, issuing a command or request...etc.
C. Perlocutionary act: The effect of an utterance on the audience, e.g., persuading someone to do something, moving someone to laughter, etc.

So, it can be said that locution is what was said, illocution is what was done and perlocution is what happened as a result.

The following hypothetical example illustrates the three different kinds of action:

(2)   X says to Y 'open the door'.

The production of this meaningful utterance "open the door" is a locutionary act. The illocutionary force of this utterance depends on the speaker's intention, i.e., whether he intends it to be a request or command (and associating with it the appropriate prosodic and paralinguistic features). If X succeeds in getting Y to open the door, then this effect on the hearer is a perlocutionary act.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA DESCRIPTION

The current study, which is qualitative in nature, uses the descriptive analytical approach to carry out a pragmatic investigation of the subtitling of Arabic swearwords into English on the TV screen. The analysis of data in the present study utilises the pragmatic concepts discussed above to shed light on the way professional screen translators (subtitlers) render the Arabic swearwords into English. In addition, the quality and success of the subtitles will be judged according to their conformity to the communicative theories of translation (Nida, 1964; Newmark, 1988; Baker, 1992).

It goes without saying that the most difficult translation problem is to find the appropriate TL word or lexical item that best conveys the meanings of the SL one. The translator should seek to translate the meaning of the SL text in such a way that the TL wording will trigger the same effect on the TL audience (viewers in case of subtitling) as the SL wording did upon the SL audience. This is what Nida (1964, p. 159) calls 'dynamic equivalence'. This view is very similar

to the one given by Newmark (1988, p. 39) in what he calls communicative translation, stating that it "attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original." Similarly, Baker (1992, p. 217) refers to the same notion as pragmatic equivalence which pays attention not only to denotative meaning but also to "the way utterances are used in communicative situations and the way we interpret them in context." As stated by Baker (1992, p. 217), pragmatics is concerned with "the study of meaning, not as generated by the linguistic system but as conveyed and manipulated by participants in a communicative situation."

It seems that the three approaches, namely dynamic equivalence (Nida, 1964; Nida & Taber, 1982), communicative translation (Newmark, 1988) and pragmatic equivalence (Baker, 1992) aim at the same thing; having a translation equivalent with more or less the same meaning and the same communicative or pragmatic function provided that the SL message is conveyed to the TL readers (or viewers in translation of subtitles). This is clearly shown in the following diagram.
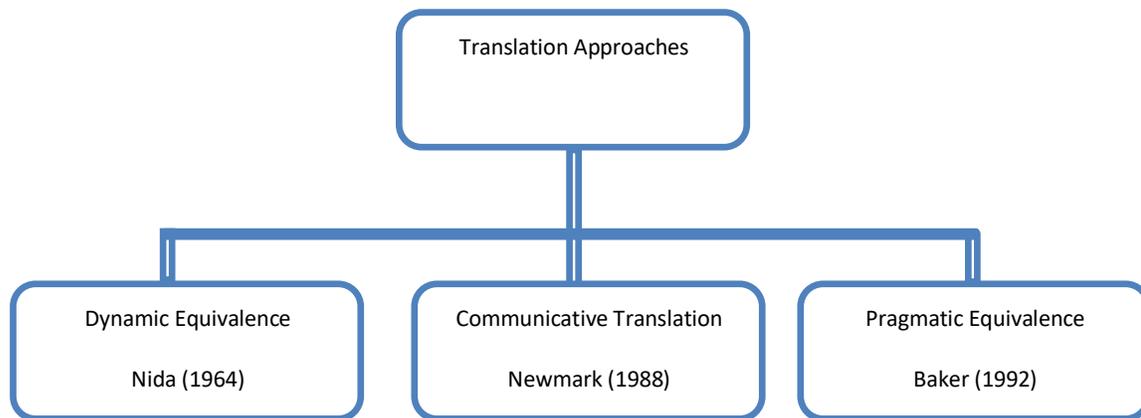

FIGURE 1. Communicative approaches to translation

These approaches are of vital importance to the process of translating, especially subtitling, which is a unique mode of translation.

The data of the study comprises a corpus consisting of three Arabic films that were aired with English subtitles on the Egyptian Nile TV International channel. It is a state-owned satellite channel that broadcasts its programs in English and French. The channel, which was launched in 1994, provides news, programs and entertainment including Arabic films with English subtitles. The basic criteria for selecting the films before choosing them randomly are concerned with the Arabic language variety used in such movies. The actors in these films use the Egyptian colloquial Arabic in their dialogues. The researcher first recorded three films at random and then watched them to collect examples of swearwords that show various pragmatic functions such as venting anger, frustration or showing solidarity. The original Arabic utterances that include swearwords and their English subtitles were then transcribed. The three recorded films are رجب فوق صفيح ساخن "Ragab on a Boiling Tin", الفتى الشرير "The Bad Guy" and حارة برجوان "The Alley of Bergwan". In the following section, the original Arabic utterances, as uttered by Arabic-speaking actors, and their English subtitles will be qualitatively analysed within a pragmatic framework.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, representative samples of the translation of swearwords on the Nile TV screen will be analysed. The analysis will be carried out within a pragmatic framework to see how swearwords have been translated on screen.

Example 1:

Contextual information: (رجب فوق صفيح ساخن ''Ragab on a Boiling Tin'')
In this scene, Ragab, the film's starring character, is talking to one of his fellow villagers. Ragab has been entrusted by the people in his village to travel to Cairo to buy a plough. On his way to the station, his fellow villager wants to give him the address of a woman in Cairo that can help him when he faces troubles. But at first sight, Ragab thinks that the address paper is a spell or an amulet. But his fellow is surprised and says to him:

Arabic Source Text: حجاب ايه يا بني آدم
English Subtitle: you're such an airhead.

The Arabic phrase بني آدم literally means "son of Adam". It refers to any human being. But it is used here as a term of insult. It is evident from the context of the situation that the addresser is surprised that the addressee thought the address paper to be an amulet or periapt. Thus, the addresser is implying that the addressee is a stupid person. This phrase can be analysed pragmatically in this way: the locution بني آدم is not an abusive term at its surface unintended meaning. But its deep intended meaning, i.e., 'illocutionary force', is an insult. Moreover, this locution violates the 'maxim of quantity'. As noted above, Grice's maxim of quantity states that one has to provide a sufficient amount of information without any redundancy in a speech event. In fact, all human beings are children of Adam. So, the addresser's description of the addressee as a son of Adam has no communicative import, except in terms of its pragmatic 'implicature', i.e., a term of insult. It is clear that this utterance does not convey any kind of information, when taken at its face value. However, the hearer, who assumes that the speaker is cooperative by being informative, retrieves the implicature intended; 'he is a stupid person.'

As regards the translation of the phrase بني آدم, the TL word "airhead" is an appropriate translation in this context. According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1992), the word *airhead* is used to refer to a silly, rather unintelligent person. Furthermore, Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture (1992) states that "airhead" is used, especially in American English, as a slang, derogatory term that denotes a foolish or stupid person. Thus, the translation conveys the pragmatic intended meaning of the SL utterance and also keeps the same register. A similar term that can convey the same pragmatic meaning and register is "fathead" which means 'a stupid person'. It should be noted that the translation provided here observes the PP and saves the viewers' face as other more offensive words (e.g., shithead, fuckhead, asshole) that are generally used as terms of abuse referring to someone who has behaved in a stupid way are not given as TL equivalents in the translation under analysis.

Example 2:

Contextual information: (رجب فوق صفيح ساخن ''Ragab on a Boiling Tin'')
In this shot, Ragab is speaking to a woman who gave him a helping hand when his money was stolen. He tells her that had he been an educated man, no one could have fooled him. But this woman replies to him and says that there are also educated people who are fooled by others. Ragab then expresses his opinion about such a person who is fooled by others and says:

Arabic Source Text: تلاقيه في الأصل حمار
English Subtitle: he must be a moron.

The Arabic word حمار is literally the equivalent of English "donkey". But it is used here as a swearword that is based on a reference to that animal. The word حمار is used disparagingly as a sort of comparison between the person in question and the donkey on the ground of stupidity involved in both cases. Pragmatically speaking, the swearword حمار in this context is a violation of the 'maxim of quality'. Grice's maxim of quality stipulates that a speaker has to desist from saying what they believe to be false, or that for which they lack adequate evidence. In the current example the speaker refers to a human being as a donkey. In fact, the speaker doesn't mean the literal meaning of describing the hearer as 'a donkey' but he intends the non-literal meaning of insulting the hearer as a "moron", "fool", ''idiot'' or other similar meanings. Depending on the CP, the addressee infers that the addresser aims at the non-literal meaning of the word in question. Moreover, the locutionary act refers to the animal in question. However, the illocutionary act is the communicative force which accompanies this utterance, namely insulting the addressee. The TL "moron", according to The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1992) refers to 'a person regarded as very stupid'. Therefore, using the TL word "moron" in such a context of the situation conveys the same pragmatic meaning of insulting. Moreover, the TL word maintains the same informal register in the SL word. It is thus an appropriate translation. In addition, the translation of the swearword حمار into the English word "moron" and not into another offensive word such as "shithead", which means a person regarded as inept or foolish, is an observation of the PP so as to save the face of the viewers who include Arabs as well as foreigners.

Example 3:

Contextual information: (الفتى الشرير '' The Bad Guy'')
In one of the scenes, Said is released from prison and goes to see his ex-prison inmate Salah. On seeing him, Salah is pleasantly amazed and says:

Arabic Source Text: يابن الكلب
English Subtitle: you son of a gun.

Prima facie, the swearword ابن الكلب in Arabic, which has the meaning of "son of a bitch" in English, is a term of abuse that is used to insult others. However, its 'illocutionary force' in this context is not meant to be a term of abuse, but rather is used with an affectionate overtone as a

term of endearment between friends. Accordingly, the translation should convey this affectionate overtone. The TL "son of a gun" conveys the same marker of friendliness. "Son of a gun" is used appreciatively in the informal language to mean a person or fellow. It is used by a man to a close male friend. Thus, it is an appropriate translation here. According to Collins Online Dictionary (n.d.), the phrase *son of a gun* is a euphemistic alternation of *son of a bitch*. Moreover, the utterance ابن الكلب in this context violates the 'maxim of quality'. It has two interpretations: the literal unintended meaning which is "son of that animal (i.e., dog)", and the non-literal intended meaning which is "son of a gun" in this context. This intended meaning is logically arrived at when taking the contextual aspects into consideration. Relying on the CP, the addressee infers that the addresser aims at the second non-literal meaning of the utterance in question. Remarkably, taking account of the PP, the translator used the TL expression "son of a gun" and not any of the corresponding obscene words such as "bastard", which is also used as a marker of friendliness among friends.

Example 4:

Contextual information: (الفتى الشرير '' The Bad Guy'')
In a shot in the film, we find that Salah, an ex-prisoner who is now working with a drug dealer, is talking to his former lover. Notably, she is now the wife of his boss Zohdi. But suddenly Zohdi shows up and threatens Salah. Enraged by Zohdi's threat, Salah addresses him with his first name without any title of 'Mr.' or 'sir'. Zohdi then responds furiously:

Arabic Source Text: زهدي بيه يا كلب
English Subtitle: Mr. Zohdi, scumbag.

The Arabic word كلب means literally "dog". However, the addresser's real intention is to insult the addressee. In fact, this utterance is a violation of the 'maxim of quality' since a human being should not be likened to an animal, namely a dog. However, on the basis of the CP and taking into account the context of utterance, this flouting of the 'maxim of quality' is an implicature that aims at indirectly conveying the addresser's insult of the addressee. So, the Arabic utterance has the illocutionary force of insulting and not asserting or describing a certain state of affairs.

As for the English translation of the swearword كلب, the word "scumbag" means 'a person regarded as despicable'. The translator has succeeded in conveying the intended meaning of the word in question, i.e., a term of insulting the addressee. But there is a downward tone shift in the translation. The context of situation shows that the addresser is very angry with the addressee, and thus utters this swearword with a loud voice. A stronger swearword, such as "bastard", could be used in such a situation as an equivalent to the swearword in question. However, on account of the PP, the translator did not use any of the TL obscene words.

Example 5:

Contextual information: (رجب فوق صفيح ساخن ''Ragab on a Boiling Tin'')
There is a shot in which Bolbol, a thief, tells Ragab that he has found him a good job. Notably, Bolbol had stolen Ragab's money when Ragab came for the first time to Cairo. Ragab does not know the nature of this job and accepts to go with Bolbol to see the job. The job is mainly to take a dog out. Ragab goes with Bolbol to the house where he will assume the new job. Then Bolbol

takes money from the landlord and leaves Ragab alone. Suddenly, Ragab knows the nature of the job and is frightened by a dog. Consequently, he bursts into anger and says:

Arabic Source Text: آه يا بلبل الكلب
English Subtitle: oh you, stupid Bolbol.

As with the previous example, the word كلب is not meant to be used in its literal meaning "i.e., dog" in this context, but it has the illocutionary force of insulting the hearer. Looking at the TL equivalent provided by the translator in this example, it is clear that it does not convey the meaning of the SL word. As the context shows, the English word "stupid" is not the pragmatic equivalent of the SL word. The translator has actually rendered the nonliteral meaning of the word in question, but has given a word with a different meaning which is not intended in this context. A suggested communicative translation that conveys the same 'illocutionary force' of insulting would be something as "villainous". There are also other words that express a similar state of offensiveness, namely "jerk", "scumbag" or "creep". These words can be used in other structures, since they are nouns that stand alone as swearwords, but the utterance here necessitates the use of an adjective such as "villainous". So, using any of these nouns, the structure of the TL can be changed into something as "You are really a jerk Bolbol". It is thus clear that focusing on the meaning of stupidity in the translation does not convey the actual pragmatic meaning in the SL utterance.

Example 6:

Contextual information: (حارة برجوان '' The Alley of Bergwan'')
In this film, Zinat, a female employee working in a dye house threatens her work supervisor Medhat to report the mess he is making in the workplace to their employer. Medhat shows that he does not fear her threat at all and says to her:

Arabic Source Text: لأ خوفتيني يا روح أمك
English Subtitle: oh, you frighten me.

Very often a swearword is omitted from subtitles because it is simply untranslatable due to the fact that no equivalent term exists in the target language which not only possesses obscene qualities but also expresses the important semantic information which is contained within the SL obscene term. This is clear in the current example. It is obvious that the swearword يا روح أمك has been omitted in the translation. This swearword means literally "o' soul of your mother", but it is used in this context with a provocative force to insult the addressee. In fact, this swearword, which is prone to tone-shifts within Egyptian colloquial Arabic depending upon when and where it is used, has no direct English equivalent. It has been noted before that this phrase is sometimes used among close friends with an affectionate overtone. In such a case, it is not considered an obscene word. It is rather a term of endearment. But in this context of the situation, it is used as a swearword. Moreover, it is used by a male addresser in his talk to a female addressee. Therefore, it is difficult to find an exact direct English equivalent that targets females. Sometimes the translator searches for an equivalent swearword but fails to convey the same provocative force.

Example 7:

Contextual information: (حارة برجوان ''The Alley of Bergwan'')
In a shot in this film Zinat discovers that her husband has married another woman. She shouts at him and says:

Arabic Source Text: بتجوز علي يا روح أمك
English Subtitle: you got married again, you jerk.

Here, the swearword يا روح أمك is translated as "jerk". The word "jerk" does not convey the same provocative force in the SL word. Furthermore, the addition of an extra obscene expression to retain a touch of obscenity doubles the length of the subtitle and thus almost doubles the length of time it has to remain on screen. This may be unavailable since the next few lines would have been spoken by the time it can safely disappear. The need for brevity and economy of language in the subtitles, therefore, very often requires that any obscenity be dropped if it cannot be rendered concisely.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The study concludes that a pragmatic approach is conclusive to understanding the culture-specific phenomenon of swearwords and consequently their translation. They are influenced by the context in which they are used, and so their offensiveness varies depending on the context. This pragmatic approach to translation in the form of subtitles is crucial, since a film is a combination of both dialogue and image, and thus it inevitably involves linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. Pragmatics, which generally studies meaning in relation to speech situations, takes into account linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. It, thus, has a major role to play in subtitling. When subtitlers take no account of the pragmatic aspects in an SL utterance, they do not give appropriate translations.

Based on the analysis of the translation of swearwords in the present study, it is obvious that Nile TV subtitlers work under certain cultural norms that prescribe a certain approach to the translation of swearwords. It seems that the channel imposes a kind of censorship on the translation of swearwords. So, the channel's subtitlers do not use any of the obscene four-letter words in English, such as *fuck, shit, shithead, bastard* and *son of a bitch*, to save the viewers' face or, in other words, to minimize the potential for causing offense to viewers, particularly Arabs, since the channel is targeting both English-speaking Arabs and foreigners. Consequently, some SL swearwords are not translated into their pragmatic equivalents that have the same offensiveness in the TL. Due to cultural constraints, as mentioned above, Nile TV subtitlers have been found to either tone down or omit the swearword in the English subtitles. Toning down swearwords is achieved through using euphemisms or less offensive words. Omission occurs because very often a swearword is simply untranslatable due to the fact that no equivalent term exists in the target language which not only possesses obscene qualities but also expresses the important semantic information which is contained within the SL obscene term. Another reason for the readiness of

screen translators to drop swearwords from their subtitles relates to the fact that very often swearing merely exists for its own sake and as such has no semantic purpose at all. In these circumstances, obscenity is totally redundant.

Further research needs to be conducted on other cultural aspects in Arabic-English film subtitling, including, for example, the translation of culture-specific references (names of celebrities, fictional characters and institutions). In such a study, one can see whether these culture-specific terms are foreignized or domesticated. Foreignization means that the translation is totally oriented to the SL norms and conventions, while domestication means that it is totally oriented toward the TL. Another area that also needs investigation in film subtitling is the translation of Arabic humour into English. Humour can be produced through a number of ways. This can be through jokes, wordplay or allusions.

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