

English Subtitling of Arabic Proverbs on TV Screen: Challenges and Strategies

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Abstract—Audiovisual translation (AVT), including subtitling and dubbing, has only recently received interest from researchers in translation studies. In the Arab world, several studies have discussed various aspects of subtitling English movies and series into Arabic. However, few studies have focused on investigating the English subtitling of Arabic movies or series on TV, especially the translation of Arabic fixed expressions including proverbs. Being culture-bound expressions, proverbs pose significant challenges for translators/subtitlers. In an attempt to address this gap in the AVT field, the present study investigates the English subtitles of Arabic proverbs broadcast on an Egyptian TV channel. Using a qualitative approach, a corpus consisting of three Egyptian subtitled series was collected to analyze the strategies employed by TV subtitlers as well as the challenges they face in their proverb translation. The subtitled proverbs were analyzed based on Baker's (1992) model for translating fixed expressions. The results of the analysis reveal that TV subtitlers employ various strategies to translate Arabic proverbs into English. These strategies include using equivalent proverbs, paraphrase, omission, compensation and literal translation. Though some of the analyzed examples are acceptable translations of the source language proverbs, some others are deemed inappropriate or mistranslated. The study concludes that subtitlers should be aware of the subtle cultural differences between the source and target languages to ensure an accurate translation of proverbs.

Index Terms—audiovisual translation, subtitling, proverbs, Arabic-English translation, translation strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

Audiovisual translation (AVT) constitutes a relatively uncharted research area in translation studies. It is only recently that scholarly research has been undertaken in this field (Sabtan, 2022). However, given that it is considerably growing in the translation market, more research is needed in this domain. In actual fact, AVT plays an effective role in the shaping of cultures as well as the relations between them (Delabastita, 1990).

AVT, whether subtitling or dubbing, is “governed by the respective constraints of text compression and lip synchronicity” (Delabastita, 1990, p. 97). This polysemiotic nature of AVT has led some translation theorists to qualify screen translation as a form of adaptation. As pointed out by Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997), adaptation refers to the process of making significant changes in the translated text to make it more suitable for a particular purpose. Thus, considerable changes are made in the subtitles of a film or series to meet the requirements of the audiovisual medium.

Subtitling is particularly characterized by time and space constraints which necessitate that the translation be concise to meet such requirements. The translation of an utterance appears mostly in two lines at the foot of the TV screen for seconds and then disappears when the subsequent utterance is spoken by one of the actors in the movie or series. Subtitling is preferable in small countries because it is much cheaper than dubbing (Gottlieb, 1992).

Screen translators or rather subtitlers have a number of choices (strategies) when they approach the task of translating for the screen. For instance, when a subtitler translates a proverb from a source language (SL) into a target language (TL), he can employ a number of strategies to translate such a proverb. He can translate it with a TL equivalent proverb, a paraphrase, or delete it completely. Therefore, their work depends on the so-called decision-making process. A good translator/subtitler is the one who makes good use of these choices in such a way as to take the media requirements into consideration as well. Accordingly, the present study investigates the strategies employed by TV subtitlers to translate Arabic proverbs into English. It also throws light on the challenges posed by the proverb translation.

Proverbs are culture-bound fixed expressions that pose significant challenges for translators, particularly TV translators, since they encounter many such expressions in various contexts. In order to deal with these culturally laden expressions successfully, “a translator has to be not only bilingual but also bi-cultural” (Schwarz, 2003). The cultural differences are actually vivid in some terms and expressions in different areas and thus are problematic for translators (Sabtan, 2022).

Therefore, it is worthwhile investigating the translation of proverbs on TV screen. The proverbial expressions are culture-specific and so they are challenging for translators. In this context, the current study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the strategies that TV subtitlers use to translate Arabic proverbs into English.
2. What are the problems that subtitlers face in their translation of proverbs on the TV screen.

To achieve the goal of the current study, some proverbial expressions in Arabic along with their English translation subtitled on Nile TV screen were collected from three Egyptian series. As will be shown later, the analysis of the examples bases its framework on the strategies suggested by Baker (1992) for translating fixed expressions including idioms and proverbs. The acceptability or not of the subtitled proverbs is based on the notion of dynamic equivalence set forth by Nida (1964) and the communicative translation approach discussed in Newmark (1988).

This research paper is organized as follows: Section II sheds light on the AVT mode of subtitling, the characteristics of proverbs and previous studies on their translation, and the theoretical framework that is used in the analysis of the subtitled proverbs. Section III discusses the methodology for the study and the adopted procedures for data collection and data analysis. Section IV presents the analysis and discussion of the data. Finally, in section V the paper is concluded with some recommendations for further research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Subtitling

Three main types of AVT are normally distinguished. These are subtitling, dubbing and voice-over. Dubbing is the process in which the foreign language dialogue is adjusted to the mouth movements of the actors in a movie or series in such a way that the audience is led to believe that the actors whom they watch are speaking in the TL (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997). Voice-over is another major type of AVT. In that AVT type original dialogue's voices are replaced by other voices in the TL. It is somewhat similar to dubbing, but dubbing is more synchronous. As for subtitling, which represents the primary focus of this study, it is defined as the "process of providing synchronized captions for film and television dialogue" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 161). Subtitling has until recently been very limited within translation studies. This is also due to the polysemiotic nature as well as the constraints imposed on this type of AVT. Subtitling is classified into two major types: intralingual subtitling and interlingual subtitling. The differences between them stem primarily from their intended audiences. Intralingual subtitling is basically used for people with hearing impairment and deafness, while interlingual subtitling, which is the main topic of this study, is used for non-native viewers.

Subtitling is characterized by audio and visual elements that are not present in text translation. So, translation for the screen using subtitles is extremely constricted by the requirements of the cinema or TV medium. There are constraints related to space and time that are imposed by the AVT medium. According to Al-Adwan (2019), subtitles are displayed at the lower part of the screen, occupying a maximum of two lines. In addition, time constraints are very vivid in subtitling, given that the audiovisual material is presented in a continuous flow over which viewers have no control. This, in turn, requires the viewers to maintain constant attention (Hajmohammadi, 2005).

B. Proverbs

(a). Definition and Characteristics

Many definitions of proverbs have been formulated. One all-inclusive, yet simple definition is given by the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1992). It defines proverb as "a short, pithy saying in frequent and widespread use that expresses a basic truth or practical precept." McArthur (1992) gives the following definition. A proverb is "a short traditional saying of a didactic or advisory nature, in which a generalization is given specific, often metaphorical expression" (p. 818). Similarly, Mieder (2002) defines proverbs as "complete thoughts expressing an apparent truth, and they can stand by themselves as independent pieces of wisdom based on common experiences and observations" (p. 1). In addition, Wahba and El-Mohandes (1979) point out that a proverb refers to a concise phrase that is frequently used, expressing a wise idea concerning human life and its ups and downs. For example, the expression *a stitch in time saves nine* is a proverb that means that prompt action can prevent a minor issue becoming more significant. In a similar vein, Attia et al. (2019) argues that a proverb is not considered a proverb unless it is used and recognized by a big number of native speakers of a particular language over a long period of time.

Linguists have specified certain characteristics of proverbs that distinguish them from other types of fixed expressions. Generally speaking, proverbs are described as "self-contained, pithy, traditional expressions with didactic content and fixed, poetic form" (Norrick, 1985, p. 31). These properties are discussed by Norrick (1985) in detail. They are highlighted in brief as follows:

1- Proverbs are self-contained

This property indicates that a proverb constitutes a form of free utterance in typical circumstances. They imply generality, because they can be used to give general statements. In other words, they are self-contained (independent) statements. Thus, the proverbial expression '*birds of a feather flock together*' can be used in a certain context to give a general statement without requiring a particular reference. Honeck and Kibler (1985) refer to this point when they say that "a proverb is a self-contained syntactic entity that is used as a speech act to prescribe, emphasize, or comment on the topic" (p. 394).

2- Proverbs are pithy

They have been described as pithy or precisely meaningful. Pithiness entails relative shortness. For example, the expression *'birds of a feather flock together'* contains a few words that are pregnant in meaning.

3- Proverbs are traditional

Proverbs are described as traditional because of their status as items of folklore. Norrick (1985) quotes Abrahams' definition of folklore as "traditional items of knowledge which arise in recurring performances" (p. 39). For instance, *'strike while the iron is hot'* employs an image that gives it a traditional quality.

4- Proverbs have didactic content

This didactic nature of proverbs may be shown in a direct manner, as a prescriptive rule or warning as exemplified by the admonition *'look before you leap'*. It may also manifest as an indirect observation or statement about experience as shown in *'the early bird catches the worm'*.

5- Proverbs have fixed form

One of the defining characteristics of proverbs is their rigidity of form. Norrick (1985) quotes Rohrich that the proverb is "a complete sentence in fixed and unchangeable form" (p. 43). Thus, linguists label proverbs as fixed expressions. However, this fixedness is relative and proverbs are not entirely frozen. So, this variation has been noticed, *'all is not gold that glitters'* and *'all that glitters is not gold'*. Similarly, *'no pleasure without pain'* and *'never pleasure without pain'*.

6- Proverbs have poetic features

Proverbs are distinguished by poetic features. Thus, we find that proverbs entail metaphors like *'a rolling stone gathers no moss'*.

(b). Translation of Proverbs

Despite the recent advancement in translation studies, translators still face several challenges in any language pair to produce accurate translations (Alhassan et al., 2021). Proverbs are culture-specific expressions and so their translation into another language is challenging. Several studies have been conducted with the objective of investigating the translation of proverbs between Arabic and English. Farghal and Al-Hamly (2015) discussed the translation procedures used by translators to render proverbs in Arabic fiction into English. They indicated that omission was the most used procedure for translating proverbs. Literal translation was the second used strategy and then was functional translation. Dealing also with fiction, Shehab (2023) explored the translation of Arabic proverbs in two well-known novels by Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz. He noted that some proverbs that encapsulate shared themes in Arabic and English cultures can be translated literally, while other proverbs that are culture-bound can be translated by other translation strategies. Fahmi (2016) examined the socio-cultural differences between Arabic proverbial expressions and their equivalents in English and concluded that translators should not attempt to translate proverbs literally as they are dealing with two distinct cultures. Fadhil (2018) investigated the cultural gaps that result from the translation of Arabic proverbs into English. He pointed out that these cultural gaps occur because of the cultural differences between both languages. In their study, Shehab and Daragmeh (2014) adopted a context-based approach to the translation of Arabic proverbs into English and suggested that the majority of Arabic proverbs are often used ironically to refer to the opposite meaning of what is being said. Dweik and Thalji (2016) focused on the procedures used by novice translators to render English proverbs into Arabic and pointed out that literal translation, cultural equivalent, paraphrasing and glossing were the most common strategies used by the novice translators to render English proverbs into Arabic.

Another line of research tackled the machine translation of proverbs and other fixed expressions. Al-khresheh and Almaaytah (2018) examined the linguistic challenges that face machine translation (MT) systems in rendering proverbs from English into Arabic, and noted that words with multiple meanings present many challenges to MT. Similarly, Jibreel (2023) tested the MT systems' effectiveness in proverb translation for the English-Arabic language pair and concluded that the MT systems made some errors in their translation including wrong synonym, meaning distortion, weakly structured translations and missing the implied meaning. In another related study, El-Saadany (2024) explored the differences between human translation and Chat GPT in rendering proverbs from English into Arabic. The study unveiled that the chatbots made some errors related to wrong lexical choice, literal translation and failure to translate the cultural aspect of the language. Hamdi et al. (2023) used artificial intelligence techniques applied to five English proverbs and their Arabic equivalents to explore the themes that construct their meanings. The findings of the study demonstrated that there are subtle differences between proverbs in English and their equivalents in Arabic due to cultural, social and religious factors. Consequently, translators are recommended to be aware of these differences in their meaning to communicate the intended meaning to the TL readers.

With regard to the AVT field, few studies have addressed the subtitling of Arabic proverbs, especially with respect to translation on the TV screen. Some studies were conducted on the translation of culture-specific items and included proverbs as part of the analysis (Saideen et al., 2024; Obeidat, 2023; Mehawesh & Neimneh, 2021). Some other studies focused on subtitling of both proverbs and idioms (Shuhaiber & Haider, 2023) and a third line of research examined the translation of idioms in particular (Haider & Shuhaiber, 2024; Salman, 2015). This study attempts to address this gap by discussing the strategies of subtitling proverbs on a TV Egyptian official channel.

C. Theoretical Framework

This section of the paper explains the theoretical framework on which the present study is based. As indicated above, this study is an attempt to examine the strategies used by TV translators to subtitle proverbs from Arabic into English. Baker's (1992) suggested strategies for translating idiomatic and fixed expressions are employed for analyzing the subtitled proverbs on the TV screen.

Baker's (1992) model for translating idioms and other fixed expressions proposes a number of strategies that translators can use to render these expressions in the TL.

1. Translating a SL idiom or fixed expression into an equivalent expression in the TL that has a similar meaning and form using equivalent lexical items. This type of translation is the happiest translation equivalent but is not always achieved.
2. Translating a SL idiomatic or fixed expression into an equivalent expression in the TL that has a similar meaning but different form. Notably, it is frequently possible to find a TL idiomatic or proverbial expression that has similar meaning to that of the SL expression but uses different lexical items.
3. Translating a SL idiom or fixed expression by paraphrase. This is the most frequently used strategy when there is no equivalent idiom or proverb in the TL.
4. Translation by omission where an idiomatic or proverbial expression is omitted in the TT. This may occur when there is no close equivalent in the TL or the meaning of the SL expression cannot be easily paraphrased or sometimes may be omitted for stylistic reasons.
5. Compensation strategy which means that a translator may omit the SL idiom or proverb at the point where it occurs and introduce it elsewhere in the TT. For instance, translators may be unable to translate specific SL idiomatic or proverbial expressions in a specific part of the text or dialogue and may resort to inserting TL idioms or proverbs in different parts of the text or dialogue. To put it in another way, a SL non-idiom or proverb may be translated into a TL idiom or proverb.

These are the strategies proposed by Baker (1992) for the translation of idiomatic and proverbial expressions. One more strategy that sometimes translators use is the literal translation strategy where the translator uses the same SL wording and style. This strategy does not always result in acceptable translations. The idioms or proverbs that are translated literally result in wrong or at least odd translation in the TL, as will be seen in the analysis of the data under discussion.

These strategies are made use of in analyzing the English subtitles of the Arabic proverbs in the study sample. In addition, the translated examples are judged acceptable or not based on their conformity to the communicative or pragmatic approach to translation (Nida, 1964; Newmark, 1988; Baker, 1992). Nida (1964) refers to the dynamic equivalence which attempts to produce the same effect on TL readers (or viewers) as has been done on the SL audience. This notion is emphasized in Newmark's (1988) communicative translation model, arguing that it "attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original." Likewise, Baker (1992) uses the term 'pragmatic equivalent' to refer to the same concept of communicative approach to translation, stating that translators should pay 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." Therefore, those subtitled examples that do not adhere to the above-mentioned concepts are deemed inappropriate or mistranslations. These unacceptable translations are basically due to a number of reasons, which are highlighted in the data analysis of the subtitled proverbs in section IV. These problems generally occur as a result of misinterpreting, omitting or literally translating the proverb in question.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study applies the descriptive analytical approach to discuss the strategies that TV professional subtitlers use to translate proverbs in Egyptian Arabic into English and the problems they encounter. Thus, it is a qualitative type of study that attempts to uncover the common techniques or procedures the TV subtitlers employ to render the Egyptian proverbial expressions into English. The data for the present study consist of three Egyptian series subtitled on the Nile TV channel as shown in the data collection subsection below.

A. Data Collection

The corpus of the present study consists of three series that were aired on the Nile TV screen. These chosen series are entitled "A Friend Indeed" (صاحبك من بختك), "Between Two Shores" (بين شطرين وميه) and "After the Hurricane" (بعد الطوفان). The rationale for recording these three series and using them as data lies in the fact that the chosen series exhibit different cultural settings in the Egyptian society. Thus, the series "A Friend Indeed" shows the cultural setting of Cairo and urban cities. The incidents of the series "Between Two Shores" take place in the coastal city of Alexandria. As for the series "After the Hurricane", its incidents take place in a village in Upper Egypt. This variety of cultural settings has a bearing on the language used in each setting. Therefore, the chosen data exhibit varieties of Egyptian Arabic.

B. Data Analysis

The data in the corpus of the present study were examined using Baker's (1992) model for translating idioms and other fixed expressions to unveil the strategies that TV subtitlers use to render Arabic proverbs into English. In addition,

the acceptability of English subtitles of such proverbs were determined based on their conformity to the pragmatic and communicative approaches to translation as discussed in Baker (1992), Newmark (1988) and Nida (1964).

The current study employs a number of procedures as outlined below: (1) watching the selected Egyptian series with their English subtitles, (2) comparing the subtitles with the original speech in Egyptian Arabic (3), identifying the proverbs in the original Egyptian speech and their English subtitles, (4) manually transcribing the utterances that include the identified proverbs in the series, and (5) finally analyzing the proverbial expressions in the selected data and comparing them with the English subtitles to investigate the strategies the TV subtitlers employ to translate the proverbs under analysis and the challenges they encounter in their translation.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The strategies of translating proverbs on Nile TV screen are outlined in this section. It should be noticed that the terminology and method of analysis in this section are mainly based on the classification proposed by Baker (1992). The success of these strategies is determined based on their compliance with the communicative and pragmatic translation theories (Nida, 1964; Newmark, 1988; Baker, 1992).

Representative samples of subtitling proverbs on the Nile TV screen are analyzed. In addition, those examples that are regarded as having translation problems, i.e. unacceptable, are also discussed. The analysis starts with the strategies that constitute the best solution for rendering proverbs, since they seek to render SL proverbs into TL proverbs. These strategies are concerned with using equivalent proverbs that have either similar or different forms. Most of the examples that use these strategies represent appropriate translations. Then, other strategies, where some of the examples using them involve unacceptable translations, are discussed. It should be observed that Nile TV translators sometimes use a strategy that does not convey the meaning appropriately. In other words, they employ a certain strategy which is not the appropriate one in a certain context, and this leads to problematic translations.

A. Using a Proverb That Has a Similar Meaning and Form

This strategy involves using a proverb in the TL that has the same meaning and equivalent lexical items. This means that the TL proverb contains a mirror image of the SL proverb. This strategy is the optimum choice for translating SL proverbs. However, it is not always possible to find a proverbial expression that has the same meaning and form like the SL one. The following examples are supposed to shed more light on this strategy.

Example 1:

Contextual Information: (صاحبك من بختك) "A Friend Indeed")

In episode 10, Zinat, who is one of lawyer Mohsen's clients, comes to his office while she is very angry because Mohsen has promised her marriage then broke his promise. She finds his assistant Sadeq who tries to calm her down, but she bursts into anger and describes both of them as having the same bad qualities saying:

Arabic Text: الطيور على أشكالها تقع

English Subtitle: Birds of a feather flock together.

It is noticeable that the SL proverb is translated into a TL proverb with the same meaning and image. The proverb means literally "birds fall on their shapes". However, it is used metaphorically to mean that "people of the same qualities tend to assemble together". In the current context the proverb is used to criticize or advise the addressee to give up his bad qualities. Similarly, using a TL equivalent proverb in this context conveys the same pragmatic meaning of criticism. The translator provides an equivalent TL proverb. This is thus the happiest translation equivalent.

Example 2:

Contextual Information: (صاحبك من بختك) "A Friend Indeed")

In episode 12, Sultan, who is imprisoned pending further investigations, is talking with his inmate Asfour about his friend Mohsen. Asfour inquires Sultan whether he will pay Mohsen the one million pounds that he has asked for to defend him in court. Sultan tells him that he has no other way but to pay so that he may help him be released from prison. He thus says:

Arabic Text: أنا يابني غرقان، والغريق بيتعلق في قشابة

English Subtitle: I'm like a drowning man clutching to a straw

Here the SL proverb is translated into a TL proverb with the same meaning and image. Both the SL and TL proverbs denote that the ordeal which Sultan suffers is similar to a drowning man who is ready to clutch to even a straw in order to save himself from drowning. One can observe that both the SL and TL proverbs have the same pragmatic meaning of asserting the speaker's current dilemma. Therefore, the translation is an appropriate one.

B. Using a Proverb That Has a Similar Meaning But Different Form

It is the strategy of using a different TL proverb for translating a SL proverb. The following example shows the translation of proverbs using this strategy.

Example 3:

Contextual Information: (صاحبك من بختك "A Friend Indeed")

In episode 8, lawyer Mohsen is talking to the imprisoned man El-Fayoumi and assures him that he will bring him an acquittal. However, El-Fayoumi, who knows it is not easy to be proven not guilty, doubts Mohsen's words and thus says to him:

Arabic Text: الميه تكذب الغطاس

English Subtitle: The proof of the pudding is in the eating!

The SL proverb means literally "water gives the lie to a diver". But it means idiomatically that "the real value of something can be judged only by practical experience or results and not by appearance or theory". Here the translator provides a TL proverb that conveys the idiomatic meaning of the SL proverb. It is a corresponding proverb that carries the same SL meaning, but with a different image. The only difference being in the image employed in both SL and TL proverbs. The SL proverb uses the image that water can test whether a certain person is capable of swimming or diving in particular. The TL proverb, on the other hand, uses the image of testing a pudding through eating. At first glance, this utterance seems to be a false one. This falsity arises from describing a [- animate] agent as water as having a [+ animate] quality, i.e. accusing others of lying. However, the addressee concludes that the addresser intends the metaphorical or nonliteral meaning of the proverb. Moreover, the SL proverb is used to warn the addressee against deceiving the addresser. The same pragmatic meaning can be applied to the TL proverb. Moreover, the register membership of the SL proverb, i.e. the casual tenor, is kept in the TL. Thus, the translated proverb appears to be the happiest equivalent as there seems to be no congruent proverb in the TL.

Example 4:

Contextual Information: (بعد الطوفان "After the Hurricane")

In episode 4, officer Samih is asking the mayor of El-Jibali village about his negligence to report an incident of killing in his village. The mayor's wife takes part in the dialogue as if she is the real chief of the village. The officer is surprised and inquires who is in actual charge of the village's affairs. The mayor's wife gets angry and says:

Arabic Text: صحيح الملائف سعد يا ولاد

English Subtitle: One should watch his tongue.

The SL proverb *صحيح الملائف سعد* is translated into an idiomatic expression in the TL. This is an acceptable translation. It is clear from the context of situation that the mayor's wife is angry at the officer's words and thus tells him to watch his words. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the TL expression "watch one's tongue" means "to not say rude or offensive things". So, it means to be cautious or mindful about what one says. In fact, the TL idiomatic expression is used in different forms (watch one's language/mouth/tongue) with the same meaning of being careful about the words one uses.

The previous example of translating a proverb by a correspondent proverb that is similar in meaning but uses different lexical items in the TL has been rendered appropriately. However, the TL proverbial or idiomatic expressions are not always the best equivalents to the SL expressions. Sometimes translators have strong unconscious urge to search hard for a fixed expression (a proverb or an idiom) in the TL, however inappropriate it may be. The following example shows that the translator sought to convey the SL proverb into a TL idiom, but unfortunately did not provide an acceptable translation.

Example 5:

Contextual Information: (بين شطين وميه "Between Two Shores")

In episode 8, Zonfol is asking his brother-in-law Moawwad to pay a sum of money as a sort of charity to help one of their neighbors overcome his financial crisis. Moawwad tells him that he has nothing but 100 Egyptian pounds. Zonfol is surprised, for his brother-in-law is a big merchant. Anyway, he accepts the sum saying:

Arabic Text: أهي نوايه تسند الزير

English Subtitle: It'll be a drop in the bucket.

It is obvious that the translator has misinterpreted the SL proverb. It means literally "it is a pit that upholds a vat". But its non-literal intended meaning signifies that something may be small but useful. The TL idiom, however, means a very small amount that does not help a lot. Notably, the idiomatic "a drop in the bucket/the ocean" means "a very small amount compared with a larger amount that is needed." Therefore, the sense of "helpfulness" in the SL proverb is lost

in the translation. Thus, the English translation does not express the positive meaning of the SL proverb. It thus seems that the translator has been deceived by a seemingly equivalent idiom in English. A suggested translation can be something as “every little (bit) helps”, “it is better than nothing” which are idiomatic, or a paraphrase such as “at least it'll do”. The suggested translations convey the SL contextual meaning and conform at the same time to subtitling requirements of brevity.

C. Translation by Paraphrase

The strategy of translating a SL proverb by paraphrasing in the TL seems to be one of the most common strategies that translators resort to whenever there is no ready formulaic English equivalent. The following examples illustrate this point:

Example 6:

Contextual Information: (صاحبك من بختك) “A Friend Indeed”)

In episode 4, Mohsen goes to visit his friend Asfour in prison after being sentenced to 7-year imprisonment. It should be noticed that Mohsen plotted a plan for stealing one of lawyer El-Dib's clients. He convinced his friend Asfour of a plan for swindling the woman and stealing her money. He then told Asfour that he cannot appear before her because she knows him. Thus, Asfour stole the money and threw them from the window to his friend Mohsen. Asfour was arrested and Mohsen took the money without being arrested. Mohsen then goes to visit Asfour to reassure him about his share in the stolen money so that he may not report Mohsen to the police. Asfour is complaining to Mohsen about the sufferings he faces in prison, but Mohsen tries to ease his sufferings. Asfour gets angry at Mohsen and says:

Arabic Text: اللي اختشوا ماتوا

English Subtitle: You should be ashamed of yourself

The current proverb means literally “those who were shy died”. But it is used metaphorically in a certain context to attack someone who has just said something insolent and impertinent. The proverb is translated appropriately. The translation communicatively conveys the meaning of the SL proverb into the TL. The translator must have searched for an equivalent proverbial expression in the TL, but did not find a ready one. Thus, he translated it with a paraphrase that conveys the same meaning into the TL. The context of situation shows that Mohsen tries to relieve his friend Asfour in prison, but Asfour is angry with him because Mohsen convinced him of stealing, while he never thought of committing such a crime. Now he is imprisoned while Mohsen is not. Therefore, the subtitled phrase conveys the pragmatic meaning of the message in the SL.

Example 7:

Contextual Information: (بعد الطوفان) “After the Hurricane”)

In episode 4, Narjis is complaining to her mother of the burdens and sufferings she goes through, since it is she who provides for her family. But her daughter tries to relieve her and tells her that things will become better. Then the grandmother says:

Arabic Text: خدوا فالكو من عيالكو

English Subtitle: Your kids may bring you good luck

The SL proverb means literally “take your omen from your children”. But it is used idiomatically to mean that wise, perceptive remarks can come from young children. The context of situation shows that Narjis's daughter tries to relieve her mother when she tells her that things will take a turn for the better soon. Then, the grandmother comments on her granddaughter's words with saying خدوا فالكو من عيالكو. One can say that the provided translation may be acceptable as it attempts to render the contextual meaning of the SL proverb. However, there is a TL saying with the same meaning that reads “out of the mouths of babes and sucklings”. It is a phrase from the Bible, used when a child has said something sensible or wise. This saying can be shortened to only “out of the mouths of babes”. This saying is a better translation of the SL proverb since it both conveys the contextual meaning and maintains the same fixedness of expression, which, in turn, maintains the same style.

Example 8:

Contextual Information: (صاحبك من بختك) “A Friend Indeed”)

In episode 19, Asfour is talking to his fiancée about his permanent bad luck. He is telling her that he was even fired from his college for helping one of his colleagues to cheat. He then quotes the following proverb:

Arabic Text: المنحوس منحوس حتى لو علقوا على دماغه فانوس

English Subtitle: I'm jinxed

It is noticeable that the SL proverb is translated into a small phrase in the TL. The main word in the phrase, i.e. “jinxed”, means “has continuing bad luck.” This is exactly what is expressed by the SL proverb. The translator has

rendered the SL proverb into a TL phrase that has the same pragmatic meaning, since both express the speaker's mental and emotional attitude toward deploring his bad luck. One should admit that it is difficult to find a similar TL proverb that has the same image as in the SL. In fact, there are other words that have the same meaning of "jinxed" such as ill-starred, star-crossed, unfortunate, unlucky...etc. Moreover, some idiomatic expressions such as "down on (one's) luck" and "out of luck" also convey the same communicative meaning. However, none of these expressions conveys the culture-specific image in the SL proverb. Perhaps the translator thought that the SL image might not make so big a difference, especially that the translation should be concise to meet the subtitling time and space constraints. Therefore, the image of continuous bad luck in the SL proverb is lost in the translation. Though the translation lacks an important SL image, there may not be any happier alternative.

D. Translation by Omission

It is the strategy of omitting the proverb in question. This may occur in subtitling for a number of reasons. Firstly, the proverb may have no similar equivalent in the TL. Secondly, the proverb's meaning cannot be easily paraphrased. Thirdly, the proverb may be omitted for the tempo-spatial constraints imposed by this mode of translation. The researchers highlight this strategy through the following example, exploring whether the omission strategy has been successful or not.

Example 9:

Contextual Information: "بين شطين وميه" (Between Two Shores)

In episode 11, a nomadic drug dealer is talking to two men who distribute drugs. The drug dealer tells Mimi, an old distributor, to let Morsi, the new distributor, taste the marijuana they sell so that he can value it. Then he ends his statement with this proverbial expression that is lost in translation:

Arabic Text: طباخ السم بيدوجه يولدي

English Subtitle: _____

It should be noted that the word "بيدوجه" in the SL proverb is pronounced as "بيدوقه" in Cairene Arabic but the hamzah or glottal stop consonant [ʔ] sound, which is originally [q] in Modern Standard Arabic, is changed to [g] in pronunciation by nomads as well as people in Upper Egypt. This proverbial expression has been omitted in translation. However, it is of a very important significance in this dialogue and thus omitting it in translation has deleted part of the meaning in the SL dialogue. It is noticeable from the context of situation that the drug dealer tells Mimi to let Morsi taste the marijuana to value it. In fact, the drug dealer's words do not aim at the actual action of tasting it, but he utters this expression as a sort of informing the new distributor that he has already embarked on the new illegal job and thus he laughs after saying this expression. Afterwards, Mimi, the old distributor, tells Morsi that he has to taste it anyway. Thus, the proverb should have been translated to contribute to the overall meaning that drugs are like poisons and that their dealers taste them anyway. This proverbial expression could have been translated by a corresponding proverb in the English language. Thus, one can translate it as "take a dose (or taste) of your own medicine", which indicates the same bad treatment that one has given to others. Thus, it refers to a sort of punishment as indicated by the SL proverb.

E. Compensation

This is the strategy of translating a SL non-proverb with a TL proverb. The following examples illustrate this point:

Example 10:

Contextual Information: "صاحبك من بختك" ("A Friend Indeed")

In episode 5, Asfour's prison inmates tell him to write a letter to his friend Mohsen to send him a sum of money to spend. But Asfour tells them that life is not that way and people living outside prison forget those who are inside. He thus says:

Arabic Text: اللي بره دايماً ينسى اللي جوه

English Subtitle: Out of sight, out of mind.

We can notice that the SL utterance does not contain any proverb. But the translator provides a TL proverb as a sort of compensation for the SL proverbs in other places in the text, which were omitted or translated into TL non-proverbs. The TL proverb conveys the meaning and also keeps the same informal register of the SL utterance.

It should be borne in mind that the strategy of compensation is not always the best one for translation. The translator may sometimes provide a TL fixed expression that has a different meaning from the SL words. The following example clarifies this point:

Example 11:

Contextual Information: "صاحبك من بختك" ("A Friend Indeed")

In episode 14, Asfour is complaining to Mansour that sergeant Makhlouf has deprived him of his food ration. Mansour tries to calm him down saying:

Arabic Text: الظالم ليه يوم

English Subtitle: Every dog has his day

It seems that the translator has been deceived by the TL proverb. In fact, the English expression “every dog has its day” is a saying that means “every person, no matter how unpleasant they are, has their period of success.” According to Cambridge Dictionary, this expression is “said to emphasize that everyone is successful or happy at some time in their life”. It is clear from the context of situation that Mansour tells Asfour that the one who wronged him will be punished one day. Thus, it is obvious that the translator has provided a wrong translation for the SL utterance. The TL proverb has a positive meaning, while the SL phrase has a negative meaning. An alternative translation may be something as “every oppressor must be punished one day” or “he must be duly punished”, referring to the person who wronged him as this is clear from the dialogue. It may also be translated with the proverbial expression “what goes around, comes around”.

F. *Literal Translation*

Literal translation is the strategy in which the translator uses the same SL wording and style. This strategy does not always result in acceptable translations, as shown in the following example:

Example 12:

Contextual Information: (بعد الطوفان “After the Hurricane”)

In episode 1, an Upper Egyptian housewife enters a room in her house and finds her two daughters chatting idly without doing anything at home. She thus addresses them with this saying:

Arabic Text: عجربتين على الحيط ولا بنتين في البيت

English Subtitle: Better have 2 scorpions on the wall than 2 girls at home.

As the case with example 9 above, the word “عجربتين” is pronounced as “عقربتين” in Cairene Arabic but the hamzah or glottal stop consonant [ʔ] sound, originally [q] in Modern Standard Arabic, is changed to [g] in pronunciation by Upper Egyptians. It is clear that the translator has provided a literal translation of the SL saying. The translation cannot be understood by English viewers. The SL saying is very culture-bound and English has no close equivalent. Moreover, such a literal translation does not give the pragmatic or communicative meaning of the SL proverb. As can be noticed from the context of situation, the mother gets angry with her two daughters because they are talking idly and at length. Pragmatically speaking, the SL proverb is used by the speaker to criticize the hearer. Thus, a better communicative alternative translation can be something as “what a mess to have two lazy girls at home”. This communicative translation conveys the pragmatic meaning and keeps also the same informal register. Indeed, the image of scorpion in the SL saying has been lost in this alternative translation. However, this image is culture-specific and has no equivalent image in the TL. Thus, the alternative translation lacks the SL image but gives the communicative meaning of the SL saying.

V. CONCLUSION

Proverbs are culture-specific expressions that pose significant challenges to translators who use various translation strategies to deal with them. Based on the data analysis of representative examples of proverb translation on Nile TV screen, one can conclude that TV translators/subtitlers employ a number of strategies to translate proverbs in Egyptian Arabic into English. These strategies are using proverbs that have similar meaning and equivalent lexical items, proverbs that have similar meaning but different lexical items, paraphrase, omission, compensation and literal translation.

Some of the discussed examples exhibit acceptable translations. However, some other examples are considered inappropriate translations. This may be due to the following problems. Firstly, the translator may misinterpret the SL proverb and consequently be deceived by a seemingly equivalent proverb in the TL, as shown in example 5. Secondly, the translator may render a SL proverb into a TL phrase with the same meaning, but miss a similar TL proverb, which is a better translation, as in example 7 or he may miss the image of the SL proverb due to its culture-specificity and so it is lost in the translation, as shown in example 8. Thirdly, the translator may omit a SL proverb. This omission may distort part of the speaker's utterance, as illustrated in example 9. However, this omission may be due to the tempo-spatial constraints in screen translation. Fourthly, the translator may render a SL non-proverb into a TL proverb, which is not unacceptable, as in example 11. However, the problem lies in that the TL proverb may have different meaning from the SL words. Perhaps the SL words have a negative connotation, while the TL proverb has a positive one. This amounts to wrong translation as it distorts the meaning of the SL words. Finally, the translator may translate a SL proverb literally, which cannot be easily understood by foreign viewers, as illustrated in example 12. All these problems have been

discussed in detail with their relevant examples. It can be concluded that translators should understand the nuances and subtleties of both the SL and TL cultures to correctly translate proverbs between both languages.

This research paper has one possible limitation related to the small number of the examples discussed. However, the study, being qualitative and descriptive in nature, is an attempt to explore the challenges that face professional subtitlers in TV channels when encountering proverbial expressions and the strategies they use to overcome such challenges. The study thus recommends further research on subtitling Arabic proverbs into English using big data to conduct a corpus-based statistical analysis of the strategies subtitlers use to translate them. Moreover, more research is needed to investigate the challenges facing screen translators in translating idioms as well as the strategies they employ to deal with them. Other studies can be conducted to explore the strategies subtitlers use to deal with the culture-bound references and items in AVT. As the present study discusses the subtitles produced by professional translators, further research is needed to examine the subtitles produced by amateur translators or the so-called fansubbers.

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