

Film Subtitling's Challenges and Solutions: An Empirical Study of Saudi Translation Learners' Perceptions and Attitudes

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Abstract—The growing cultural consciousness and other needs emerging due to rapid globalization in contemporary times have led to an addition to the available literature in the translation subfield of film subtitling. This has created new challenges for the learners enrolled in translation courses. However, the problem specific to the subtitling of films is relatively less researched, especially concerning learners' perceptions and attitudes towards it. This study aimed to bridge this gap, investigate the problems encountered by Saudi EFL learners in subtitling film content, and chronicle their suggestions for dealing with them. The study used a validated questionnaire to gather perceptions and attitude data from a large sample of 583 translation students across four Saudi universities in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022. This phase lasted for almost four months. All the items in the questionnaire were loaded onto five factors. The findings showed a significant positive correlation between the number of translation courses/credited hours and participants' knowledge, attitudes, applied practice, and suggestions for improving learning outcomes in their universities. The findings also established that Saudi EFL students face several challenges in subtitling, including linguistic, cultural, and technical problems, of which technical issues, followed by cultural issues, were perceived to top the list. Finally, there were no significant differences in the participants' perceptions attributable to the alma mater, indicating that the challenges are universal and that changes in policy, curricular, and pedagogical levels are needed in all participating universities.

Index Terms—subtitling, Saudi students, translation, attitudes, practice

I. INTRODUCTION

In a world with over 7000 spoken languages and increasing globalization and technological advancements, translation has paved the way for intercultural communication. According to Ghazala (1995), "translation generally refers to all processes and methods used to render and/or transfer the meaning of the source language [SL] to the target language [TL] as closely, completely, and accurately as possible" (p. 1). There are many types of translation, but generally, they fall into three categories: written translation, oral translation, and subtitling. Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997, p. 161) define subtitling as "the process of providing synchronized captions for film and television dialogue". In today's globalized world, where audio-visual content is widely distributed across various platforms, subtitling is crucial for ensuring that content is accessible to everyone. It is a powerful tool for breaking down language barriers and promoting cultural exchange, allowing viewers to access content in the language that they understand. Moreover, subtitling can provide additional information, such as sound effects or music lyrics, and enhance the viewing experience.

Teaching subtitling at universities is crucial for several reasons. First, it provides students with the skills and knowledge needed to create high-quality, accurate, timely, and culturally appropriate subtitles. Second, teaching subtitling at universities can help students develop their language skills, especially in languages other than their native languages. This is particularly valuable for students pursuing careers in translation, interpretation, and localization, as subtitling is a crucial element in these fields. Third, teaching subtitling at universities can help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills and deep understanding, proficiency, and fluency in both the SL and TL. Subtitling requires students to make decisions about timing, length, and formatting, among other things, which requires them to develop analytical and creative skills. It also requires students to work collaboratively and communicate effectively, with essential skills in many professions. Finally, teaching subtitling at universities can help students understand audiovisual content's cultural and social implications. Subtitles can significantly affect how a film or video is perceived by different audiences, and

understanding the cultural nuances and sensitivities involved in subtitling is essential for creating accurate and appropriate subtitles.

Universities that provide subtitling courses help students develop both practical skills and a broader understanding of the challenges of intercultural communication and the importance of translation in today's globalized world. The following are some further arguments for the need to teach subtitles:

Cultural Sensitivity: When subtitling, pupils must understand the subtleties of many cultures, including idioms, humor, and sociocultural allusions. As a result of this process, students develop greater cultural awareness, which is crucial for promoting respect and understanding across cultures.

Teaching subtitling allows students to become critical consumers of audio-visual content when the media is oversaturated. To promote media literacy and a critical attitude toward material consumption, they studied how subtitles could affect audience perception and interpretation.

multimodal communication

Subtitling combines text with visual and audible aspects beyond simple linguistic translations. University courses in subtitling aid students in understanding the complexities of multimodal communication and preparing them for employment in which efficient communication across many media is crucial.

opportunities for employment abroad

Subtitlers are in high demand because of the global expansion of entertainment and media industries. Offering subtitling courses can give students access to a wide range of job options, including localization, foreign marketing, cinema, and television.

cultural exchange and diversity

Subtitling exchanges multiple narratives, enabling viewers from various linguistic backgrounds to access and enjoy worldwide content. Universities actively support the promotion of cultural diversity and inclusiveness through teaching subtitles.

Universities that teach subtitling foster a broader perspective on language, culture, and communication in addition to teaching students practical skills. This prepares students to meet the demands of a globalized world, where successful communication and meaningful cross-cultural discourse depend on good translation and intercultural understanding.

problem statement

In a more globalized world, translation education is crucial for overcoming linguistic and cultural divides. Saudi Arabia has increasingly emphasized developing translation abilities due to the growing need for efficient communication with other countries. However, the efficiency of translation education in Saudi Arabia is hampered by several issues that affect Saudi translation students' learning processes and results (Al-Ghurbani et al., 2022). Understanding the unique challenges Saudi translation learners face and looking into potential solutions that fit their perceptions and attitudes are essential for ensuring the quality of translation education and learners' readiness for the demands of a diverse and interconnected world.

Despite the enormous investments made in language education programs throughout Saudi Arabia, little is known about the complex difficulties and obstacles translation learners face while pursuing their education. Numerous elements, including teaching strategies, curriculum layout, linguistic skill levels, and sociocultural settings, may affect these difficulties (Al-Ghurbani et al., 2022). Furthermore, nothing is known about the attitudes and perspectives of Saudi translation students towards these issues and the suggested fixes.

To address these problems, a thorough analysis of Saudi Arabia's barriers to effective translation learning and an investigation into Saudi language learners' attitudes and views of potential remedies is necessary. We hope this study will help improve educational practices and policies in this sector by addressing the crucial facets of translation education in Saudi Arabia. The study's conclusions will ultimately offer insightful information to educators, decision-makers, and other stakeholders involved in creating translation education programs, promoting the development of qualified translators who can effectively support Saudi Arabia's engagement with the rest of the world.

significance of the study

This study aims to embark on the demands and suggestions of many researchers (e.g., Al-Jarf, 2021; Alotaibi & Salamah, 2023) to improve the translation industry in Saudi Arabia and mainly shed light on subtitling by understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by students and their attitudes towards these difficulties. It provides valuable insights for policymakers, students, and educational programs to enhance the quality of translation education programs, improve learner results, and create competent translators for international trade, diplomacy, tourism, and cultural exchanges. This study also helps Saudi Arabian policymakers make informed decisions about spending on translation education, allocate resources, and create relevant policies. Effective translation is crucial for promoting cross-cultural understanding and diplomacy. Saudi Arabia could benefit significantly from a team of qualified translators to improve its intercultural communication. Ultimately, the study has great potential to improve Saudi Arabia's translation education system, empower students, and strengthen the nation's international interactions.

research questions

Given the gap in the literature available on the subtitling and statement of the problem, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a correlation between participants' amount of exposure to subtitling and their attitudes, knowledge, practices, and suggestions toward it?

2. Is there a correlation between the scope of translation courses taught at universities and participants' attitudes, knowledge, practice, and suggestions?
3. Is there a correlation between the duration of translation programs/track total hours and participants' attitudes, knowledge, practice, and suggestions towards it?
4. Are there differences between participants' attitudes, practices, problems, and suggestions regarding subtitling across the four universities included in this study?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

defining subtitling

Subtitling has been defined by various scholars in a relatively similar manner. Gambier (1993) explained it as 'one of two possible methods for providing the translation of a movie dialogue, where the original dialogue soundtrack is left in place, and the translation is printed along the bottom of the film' (p. 276). On the other hand, Gottlieb (2004) defined subtitling as "a process that entails technically transferring an SL movie or audio-visual media to a TL movie or audio-visual media, synchronized with the original verbal message" (cited in Abdelaal, 2019). Similarly, O'Connell (2007) viewed subtitling as "supplementing the original voice soundtrack by adding written text on screen" (p. 169). In a detailed manner, Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007) explained it as "a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavors to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards, and the like), and the information that is contained in the soundtrack (songs, voices off)" (p. 8). According to Gottlieb's (1997) classification, subtitling falls into two categories: interlingual and intralingual. Gottlieb (1997) defined interlingual subtitling as "the subtitling between two languages" (as cited in Dayan, 2014, p. 1105) and defined intralingual subtitling as "the subtitling within the same language" (cited in Dayan, 2014, p. 1105).

The definitions of subtitling offered by various academics demonstrate their fundamental attributes and functions, illuminating the complexity of this translation practice. These definitions provide a basic grasp of subtitling and help it grow as an academic topic of study and a valuable area of specialization. Gambier (1993) defined subtitling as a technique that keeps the original music while offering a written translation. This definition strongly emphasizes maintaining a conversation in the original language (SL), which is crucial for capturing sincerity and feelings of performance. Like Gottlieb (2004), who emphasized the synchronization of the translated text with the original spoken message, other authors have also drawn attention to the technical aspects of subtitling. A crucial component of subtitles is synchronization, which ensures that viewers can read the translated dialogue while watching audio-visual material.

A further dimension is added by O'Connell's (2007) definition, which describes subtitles as additions to the original soundtrack. This emphasizes the usefulness of subtitles, which improve the viewing experience by conveying dialogue and extra information, such as sound effects or song lyrics. In their thorough explanation from 2007, Daz Cintas and Remael broadened the definition of subtitles to include various extraneous visual and aural features, such as letters, inserts, tunes, and voices. This definition highlights the difficulty of subtitling and the requirement that translators consider many layers of information when producing subtitles. Our comprehension of subtitling practices is further supported by Gottlieb's (1997) classification of subtitling into intralingual and interlingual subtitling. Translation between two languages is a part of interlingual subtitling, highlighting the cross-cultural and linguistic difficulties subtitlers must overcome. Intralingual subtitling, however, concentrates on subtitling within the same language and is sometimes employed for accessibility or instructional objectives.

Together, these definitions highlight the significance of subtitling in audio-visual translation and its function in opening content to a global audience. They also draw attention to various abilities and factors translators must possess, from language precision to cultural sensitivity and technical competence. These fundamental concepts will continue to be essential for directing both practitioners and academics in the field of subtitling as subtitling continues to change in response to technological developments and the rising demand for multilingual materials.

related studies

The theme of worldwide subtitling has incited immense research interest in the contemporary world. Given its importance, we can classify the studies that were conducted in the field of subtitling into those that discussed the definition of subtitling (Matkivska, 2014); those that discussed the types of subtitling (Gottlieb, 1997; Dayan, 2014); those that discussed the teaching of subtitling (Al-Dabbagh, 2017; Batrina, 2009; Cintas & Diaz, 2001), and those that discussed students' attitudes toward subtitling (Al-Dabbagh, 2017; Kendenan, 2019; McKenzie, 2018; Rundle, 2008; Talaván & Rodríguez-Arancón, 2014). However, subtitling has not received adequate attention at most universities worldwide, where it is taught per se or under translation courses. According to Cintas and Diaz (2001), "Very few educational institutions in the UK have taken up the challenge to teach dedicated modules on any of the translation modes implemented generally in the world of audio-visual products, be it subtitling, dubbing or voice-over," (p. 3). Al-Dabbagh (2017) is one of the few studies investigating subtitling teaching at Jordanian universities. This study examined the importance of integrating subtitling courses in translation curricula at Jordanian universities by giving 20 undergraduate students a brief introduction to the technicalities of subtitling and practical subtitling activities. After completing the theoretical and practical sections, the students were asked to answer a questionnaire consisting of 12 statements. The results showed that 20 students (100%) agreed that subtitling improved language and listening skills and enhanced cultural

awareness and vocabulary acquisition. Eighteen students (90%) agreed that subtitling exercises could help "fine-tune" their translation skills; the remaining two students (10%) said that they did not know whether this mode of translation was rewarding (Al-Dabbagh, 2017, pp. 2, 21). Conversely, 15 students (75%) supported integrating subtitling courses into translation curricula at Jordanian universities.

McKenzie (2018) conducted a study on a subtitling project by 23 second-year Italian students at the Victoria University of Wellington. The students were tasked with subtitling the Italian comedy classic, *Il Secondo Tragico Fantozzi*, into English. After completing the project, students were asked to answer a questionnaire on their overall benefits. The questionnaire's results were generally positive and showed that all participants found the project interesting. The results also indicated that 88% of students found the project efficient in enhancing their translation ability. Most importantly, most students viewed subtitling as a valuable tool for language learning.

Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón (2014) investigated the potential usefulness of collaborative reverse subtitling in foreign language education to determine whether using reverse subtitling as a collaborative language learning tool could develop general translation and writing skills. The study was conducted with 20 Spanish undergraduate students who worked together online and within a distance learning framework on subtitling two brief Spanish film clips of nearly two minutes each in English. All students were enrolled at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED). The participants were divided into four groups of five students each. All participants answered two questionnaires: one before and one after the project. The most important results "were obtained from the average mark distribution (from skills assessment tests) and analysis of the responses given to the questionnaires" (Talaván & Rodríguez-Arancón, 2014, p. 90). The students' answers to the post-questionnaire showed that collaborative reverse subtitling was valuable in enhancing writing skills, vocabulary acquisition, grammar development, and raising confidence in using a foreign language. The final marks obtained by the students in writing were 7/10 in the pre-tests as opposed to 7,7/10 in the post-tests, improving by 0.7 in only two-and-a-half months. The improvement in translation was 1.2, increasing from 6.4/10 on the pre-test to 7.6/10 on the post-test. The results suggest a positive development of students' subtitling abilities after the project.

Diaz Cintas and Remael (2020) rightly observed subtitling challenges in films that a plethora of verbal and visual sign systems together create semiotics that convey the meaning or story in a film, a complex phenomenon indeed. This was borne out by Barrera-Rioja (2023), who reported that swearwords are often dropped in Spanish-English subtitling because of "the interaction between swearwords and non-verbal elements. Alfaiy and Pinto (2022) noted in the specific context of subtitling into Arabic that "when the domestication method is used, participants not only seem to have a higher level of understanding of the cultural reference, but they also seem to be more aware of that understanding as there is a higher level of correspondence between participants' perceived understanding and actual understanding of the cultural references" (p. 122), thus bursting the belief that the complexity of the film material directly affects viewers' understanding when subtitling or dubbing is employed.

III. METHODOLOGY

research design and settings

Given the large sample in this study, it takes a quantitative research approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), adopting the theoretical framework of creative subtitles (Foerster, 2010) and the notion of creativity proposed by Bruner's (1962) and Boden's (1994) framework. This was deemed appropriate, as subtitling is a creative endeavor; therefore, beginning with the notion of creativity itself is natural. The study was conducted across four Saudi universities in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022 and lasted almost four months.

participants

The population of EFL learners who graduated from translation programs/tracks in Saudi universities is heterogeneous. Therefore, a stratified sampling method (Parsons, 2017) based on the following inclusion criteria was used to prevent extra variables from distorting the results: a) graduate student a) had to be a female who graduated recently (no more than a year ago) from a translation program in one of the four Saudi universities included here; b) had to be of an age range between 21 and 26 years; and c) did not fail in any translation courses or drop any semester during her bachelor's degree duration. The number of respondents and credited hours for the prevalent program and translation course are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
PARTICIPANTS' NUMBERS, PREVALENT PROGRAM AND TRANSLATION COURSE CREDITED HOURS

University	Translation Courses Number and Credited Hours	Subtitling Courses' Credited Hours	Translation Program Credited Hours	Number of Respondents
Qassim University	Eight courses (24 hours)	2	133	153
King Saud University	18 courses (47 hours)	4	137	111
Electronic University	11 course (33 hours)	3	127	116
Princess Nourah University	18 course (63 hours)	7	186	203

instruments

This study used a single instrument, a questionnaire, to gather data. The questionnaire (see Appendix) consisted of six sections: practice (three evaluation tasks on subtitled videos by famous Arab translators to be watched and statements to be responded to), knowledge (four statements), attitudes (15 statements), problems (seven statements), and suggestions (five statements). A Likert scale gradient (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) was used to elicit the responses. Apart from these multiple-choice statements, one question was included at the end for participants to share any other relevant information.

data collection procedures and analysis

Once the questionnaire was prepared using previous literature and the research questions in mind, it was sent to three Assistant Professors of Translation to ensure the face validity of the tool. The corrections, comments, and suggestions have been incorporated. The questionnaire was posted on Google Forms and piloted with a participant group (n=20), similar to the survey respondents, but was not included in the final study. The results showed that the alpha value of the overall scale (34 items) was 0.948, and Cronbach's alpha (Feldt, 1980) values for the five constructs ranged from 0.820 to 0.931, suggesting high internal consistency of the questionnaire items. After that, the link to the questionnaire was sent to the respondent group, which had open access for four months. Data were statistically analyzed using professional assistance.

IV. RESULTS

The first research question was, **is there a correlation between participants' amount of exposure to subtitling and their attitudes, knowledge, practices, and suggestions toward it?** To answer this question, Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was computed, and the results are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN (KN, AT, PC, AND SG) AND TRANSLATION COURSE NUMBER AND CREDITED HOURS

Pearson Correlation Coefficients			
	TCCH (Translation Course Number & Credited Hours)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Supported
KN: Knowledge	0.16**	.000	Significant
AT: Attitudes	0.35**	.000	Significant
PC: Practice	0.12**	.006	Significant
SG: Suggestions	0.22**	.000	Significant

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 Level (2-tailed)

The results presented above indicate a significant positive correlation between Knowledge (KN) and Translation Courses Number and Credited Hours (TCCH) as per the value (r) at 0.16; between AT toward subtitling and TCCH as per the value (r) at 0.35; subtitling PC and TCCH as per the value (r) at 0.12; and finally, between SG and TCCH as per the value (r) at 0.22.

The second research question was: **Is there a correlation between the scope of translation courses taught at universities and participants' attitudes, knowledge, practices, and suggestions?** To answer this question, correlation analysis was performed to identify the relationships among these dimensions, and the results are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN KN, AT, PC, AND SG AND SUBTITLING HOURS

Pearson Correlation Coefficients			
	SBTH (Subtitling Hours)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Supported
KN: Knowledge	0.16**	.000	Significant
AT: Attitudes	0.32**	.000	Significant
PC: Practice	0.15**	.000	Significant
SG: Suggestions	0.20**	.000	Significant

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 Level (2-tailed)

The results presented above indicate a significant positive correlation between the KN of subtitling and titling hours (SBTH) as per the value (r) at 0.16, between AT toward subtitling and SBTH as per the value (r) at 0.32, between PC and SBTH as per the value (r) at 0.15, and finally, between SG and SBTH as per the value (r) at 0.20.

The third research question was: **Is there a correlation between the duration of translation programs/track total hours and participants' attitudes, knowledge, practice, and suggestions towards it?** To answer this question, correlation analysis was performed to identify the aspects of the relationships among these dimensions, and the results are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN KN, AT, PC, AND SG AND TRANSLATION PROGRAM CREDITED HOURS

	Pearson Correlation Coefficients		
	TPCH (Translation Program Credited Hours)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Supported
KN: Knowledge	0.07	.095	Not Significant
AT: Attitudes	0.26**	.000	Significant
PC: Practice	0.19**	.000	Significant
SG: Suggestions	0.10*	.019	Significant

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 Level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 Level (2-tailed)

Results, as presented above, indicate a 'not significant' or slight positive correlation between KN and TPCH as per the value (r) at 0.07; a significant positive correlation between AT and TPCH as per the value (r) at 0.26; between PC and TPCH as per the value (r) at 0.19; between SG and TPCH as per the value (r) at 0.10.

The fourth and final research question was: **Are there differences between participants' attitudes, practices, problems, and suggestions regarding subtitling across the four universities included in this study?** To answer this question, the overall mean, standard deviation, and percentage were calculated, and the results are presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES IN THE FOUR UNIVERSITIES IN TERMS OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, PROBLEMS, PRACTICE, AND SUGGESTIONS TOWARD SUBTITLING

Construct	Overall Mean	Std. Deviation	Percent (%)	Response
Knowledge				
Qassim University	3.34	1.325	66.9%	Neutral
King Saud University	3.22	1.361	64.3%	Neutral
Electronic University	3.45	1.261	69.0%	Neutral
Princess Nourah University	3.33	1.250	66.5%	Neutral
Attitudes				
Qassim University	3.74	0.950	74.8%	Agree
King Saud University	3.73	0.920	74.7%	Agree
Electronic University	3.83	0.870	76.6%	Agree
Princess Nourah University	3.79	0.932	75.8%	Agree
Subtitling problems				
Qassim University	3.69	1.080	73.8%	Agree
King Saud University	3.69	1.085	73.9%	Agree
Electronic University	3.81	1.034	76.2%	Agree
Princess Nourah University	3.74	1.058	74.9%	Agree
Practice				
Qassim University	4.19	0.671	83.8%	Excellent
King Saud University	4.03	0.701	80.6%	Excellent
Electronic University	4.21	0.728	84.2%	Excellent
Princess Nourah University	4.23	0.670	84.5%	Excellent
Suggestions				
Qassim University	3.46	1.142	69.2%	Agree
King Saud University	3.39	1.179	67.9%	Agree
Electronic University	3.52	1.107	70.4%	Agree
Princess Nourah University	3.46	1.095	69.1%	Agree

The results above show no differences between participants' attitudes, practices, problems, and suggestions regarding subtitling across the four universities. These findings are graphically depicted in Figure 1.

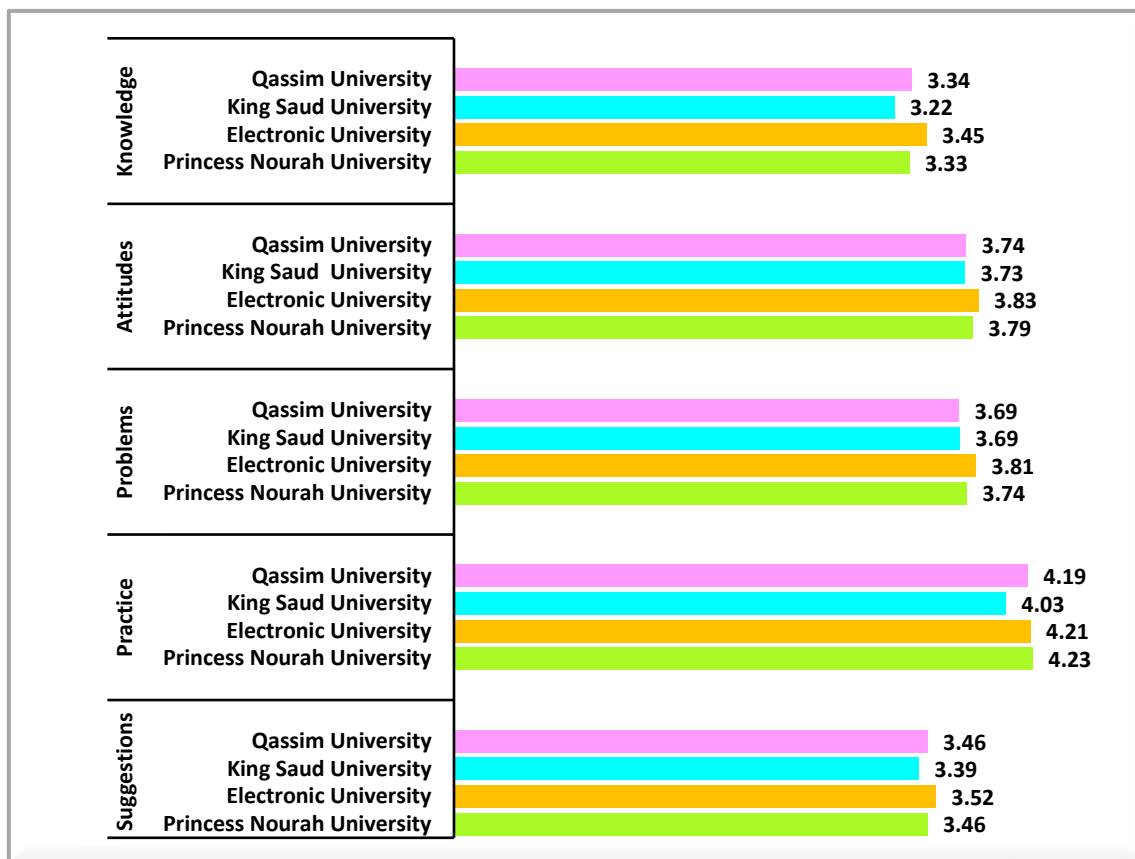


Figure 1. Comparison Between the Means of Responses of the Participants in the Four Universities in Terms of Their Knowledge, Attitudes, Problems, Practice, and Suggestions Toward Subtitling

V. DISCUSSION

The field of subtitling has gained traction in recent years due to shifting geopolitical dynamics. However, the literature on subtitling available thus far is fragmented, unfocused, and limited in scope. Therefore, some may argue that there is still some ambiguity surrounding the theory and practice of subtitling. Many foreign programs and films use subtitles to make dialogue accessible to speakers of other languages. Hence, the quality of subtitles has become increasingly necessary to comprehend foreign language audio-visual programs and bridge the gap between different languages and cultures.

This firmly establishes the relevance of the current study and the results it arrived at. The first aim of this study was to assess Saudi EFL learners' subtitling knowledge. This included their understanding of its meaning, its elements, the software utilized, and the differences between translation, subtitling, and localization. Our first finding relates to the differences among Saudi EFL learners chosen from four specific Saudi universities regarding the subtitling knowledge level.

The responses on the Likert scale showed that two-thirds of the students in the study (66.7%) did not know enough about subtitling, its elements, and software and were unsure that they could distinguish between translation, subtitling, and localization, with an overall average response of 3.34 and a difference in opinions estimated at 1.292 (see Table 4.4). The results also showed that the general average responses from students in the four Saudi universities (Al-Qassim, King Saud, Electronic, and Princess Nourah) were similar, where M= 3.34, 3.22, 3.45, and 3.33, respectively (see Table 4.16). In brief, this finding suggests no notable differences between the participants from the four Saudi universities regarding their knowledge of subtitling.

Our second research aim was to explore Saudi EFL learners' views on subtitling and its potential impact on their reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills. The micro-investigations focused on whether subtitling could improve their vocabulary and grammar, assist them in translation and critique, and enhance their understanding of specialized programs. Additionally, we examined whether subtitling could help learners comprehend the differences between the SL and TL and increase their awareness of audience identification and cultural diversity. We also investigated whether subtitling could boost learners' motivation to learn a language, provide initial workplace training, and increase their confidence in their mother tongue and second language.

The responses on the Likert scale showed that three-quarters of the students (75.5%) in the study sample believed that subtitling had a positive impact on improving their overall English language skills and developing their translation skills

and critical skills in particular, as well as helping their understanding of specialized programs/software, with an average response of 3.77, and a slight difference in opinions ($SD = 0.924$). The results also showed that students in the four Saudi universities (74.8% in Al-Qassim University, 74.7% in King Saud University, 76.6%, and 75.8% in Princess Nourah University) had similar positive attitudes toward subtitling, with convergent general average responses of 3.74, 3.73, 3.83, and 3.79, respectively. These findings indicate no marked differences in learners' attitudes toward the importance of subtitling among the participants of the four Saudi universities.

Subtitling is a form of audio-visual translation requiring specialized skills to tackle the translator's complex challenges. These challenges can be verbal or nonverbal and may involve semantic, lexical, and structural obstacles. The challenges encountered can vary depending on the medium and nature of the film or TV program being subtitled. Moreover, subtitling caters to a wide range of viewers with varying levels of linguistic proficiency, from those who may be fluent in the SL but prefer to read subtitles to those unfamiliar with the language. Additionally, some may require additional support to understand the narrative. The translators' responsibility is to ensure that the film or program's core message and meaning are preserved while still meeting the needs of all viewers. Therefore, subtitling is a complex and vital task that requires a deep understanding of both language and cultural nuances and a commitment to ensuring that every viewer has an equally rich and fulfilling experience.

In this study, our third aim pertained to the problems/challenges Saudi translators may encounter when it comes to film translation. The analysis showed that students (EFL learners/Saudi translators) face several linguistic, cultural, and technical problems/obstacles while subtitling. These include selecting the appropriate material or content, knowledge of suitable programs, and difficulties in their usage. In addition, cultural differences between the two languages, differences in the levels of the two languages, and the time and effort required are involved.

The responses on the Likert scale show a convergence among Saudi students concerning their level of agreement with the seven subtitling-determined problems, where the average responses ranged from 3.63 to 3.90, with a slight difference in opinions from 0.901 to 1.204. The results also showed that the majority of Saudi translators (78.1%) in the study sample agreed that technical issues are the most problematic of difficulties, including the difficulty of using subtitling programs and knowledge of suitable programs (75%), followed by cultural issues including cultural differences between the two languages (75%). Furthermore, the time and effort requirements (72% and 75%, respectively) were considered third among the obstacles. Finally, linguistic issues, including the difference in language levels between the two languages (nearly 73%), came in fourth place regarding obstacles.

Most Saudi translators in the study sample agreed on all seven proposed subtitling problems they may face when translating the films. On the other hand, the results also showed that there were similar approval percentages of students in the four Saudi universities (73.8% in Al-Qassim University, 73.9% in King Saud University, 76.2%, and 74.9% in Princess Nourah University), with convergent general averages of students' responses ranging between 3.69% and 3.81%. The difficulty of subtitling programs was the biggest obstacle faced when translating the films, followed by the cultural differences between the two languages. These results suggest no significant differences in participants' perceptions of the alma mater factors.

Various explanations support these findings. First, the practicality and simplicity of the tool and software in the subtitling task are principal considerations for Saudi EFL translators, and students often avoid subtitling programs that are difficult to use. Second, English and Arabic are two distinct languages with diverse cultural expressions; hence, what has a particular meaning in the source language (SL) does not necessarily have an equivalent in the TL, making cultural expressions a difficult task for EFL translators. Another reason is the lack of research skills of Saudi EFL translators, which impedes their access to the needed information and knowledge of suitable subtitling programs, appropriate material, and expression. Shunnaq (1993) also noted that Arabic and English are languages that may be said to have sharply contrasting cultural backgrounds. Hence, translators dealing with these languages should be bilingual and bicultural. Furthermore, finding an appropriate equivalence, or even any equivalence, can be incredibly challenging in many cases. The current results are consistent with those of Newmark (1988), who stated that most cultural expressions are complex to detect because they are associated with a particular language and cannot be translated literally.

Our fourth aim was to investigate Saudi EFL students' feedback on three videos after watching them and assess the subtitling quality. The videos are titled "Enjoy the Journey, not the Destination," "Fall Forward," and "How Do You Become a Critical Thinker?" Responses on the Likert scale showed that most of the participants (83.6%) in the study agreed that the subtitling of the three videos met the desired level of quality and was excellent, with almost identical average responses, where $M = 4.30, 4.17, \text{ and } 4.07$, respectively. On the other hand, the results also showed that Saudi EFL students' feedback was overwhelmingly positive regarding subtitling. The four Saudi universities had convergent percentages of participants' approval that the subtitling of the three videos was excellent and met their expectations (83.8% at Al-Qassim University, 80.6% at King Saud University, and 84.2% and 84.5% at Princess Nourah University), with almost identical averages of responses ranged from 4.03 to 4.23, and a slight difference in their opinions ($SD = 0.671, 0.701, 0.728, \text{ and } 0.670$, respectively). These findings suggest that feedback from Saudi EFL translators (EFL learners) in all four universities was similar and positive, indicating no significant differences in their opinions on the three videos.

One explanation for this finding is that the accuracy of the subtitles in the three movies could be due to the effective methods and subtitling strategies used by the subtitlers/translators. These strategies likely helped to retain the original language SL features in the TL while preserving the sense of humor and thematic significance of these movies for a wider

audience (i.e., with a general audience, not specialized or specific in mind). However, this is a difficult task that requires considerable care and attention.

Our fifth aim was to understand the perceptions of Saudi EFL translators regarding suggestions for improving subtitling at Saudi universities. The findings showed that more than two-thirds of Saudi EFL subtitling students (69.2%) agreed with the suggested measures for improving the subtitling course in Saudi universities, with an overall average response of 3.46 and a slight variation in opinions ($SD = 1.125$) that did not affect the results.

The responses on the Likert scale showed that 78.4% of the participants believed that competitions organized by the Literature, Publishing, and Translation Commission for subtitling and placing awards for it would be beneficial. This could make the learning of subtitling more enjoyable and more engaging. Additionally, 73.3% of the translators saw the importance of adding independent subtitling courses at more than one level in undergraduate programs at Saudi universities. This would help EFL student translators enhance their subtitling skills and competence. However, more than two-thirds of the translators (69.8%) preferred holding live meetings with subtitling pioneers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Arab world to avail the opportunity to learn from their peers' experiences and be in touch with different cultures (as a source language), as well as to work as a team. It is important to note that the quality of translation is a teamwork effort rather than individual accomplishment.

In addition, the results also showed that the Saudi EFL subtitling students in the four Saudi universities agreed with the suggested improvement for the subtitling course, with similar approval percentages (69.2% in Al-Qassim University, 67.9% in King Saud University, 70.4%, and 69.1% in Princess Nourah University), and almost identical averages of responses ranged from 3.39 to 3.52. According to the alma mater, these results suggest no significant differences in the participants' perceptions.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This investigation helped to conclude that Saudi EFL subtitling students face several challenges, including linguistic, cultural, and technical problems, with technical issues representing the most problematic, followed by cultural issues.

Furthermore, the study also established that the exposure of Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to subtitling, the number of translation courses they take, and the total duration of hours they spend on translation programs/tracks have a direct impact on their attitudes toward film translation, level of knowledge about subtitling, their practical abilities, and suggestions they provide to enhance and improve subtitling courses in their respective universities. The current study findings also suggest no significant differences between participants from the four Saudi universities regarding their knowledge level of subtitling, attitudes toward subtitling importance, the type of problems they face, their opinion on the quality of the three videos, and their suggestions to develop subtitling courses in their universities.

recommendations

This study addressed EFL students' perceptions of subtitling and the problems they faced when submitting their films. Based on our research results, the following recommendations are made:

1. More in-depth research is needed to expand the literature on subtitling to bring forth the challenges subtitling course learners in different settings.
2. Policies should be directed toward establishing standardized translation programs across all universities and translation training centers.
3. Teachers should encourage undergraduate students to watch documentaries and read books on other cultures. Additionally, they should receive training to be aware of the different cultural expressions and strategies used to convey them.
4. Translation methods and techniques should be the primary part of any subtitling training and should be updated with technological advancements.
5. Subtitlers need to become familiar with the content they will be subtitling by watching the films rather than relying solely on transcripts.

limitations

Although this was a unique study in terms of its aims and scope, we hope that future research in this field overcomes certain limitations. The questionnaire used in the study focused solely on the students' perceptions of the seven determinant problems they may face during film subtitling. It should be noted that the research did not address linguistic, cultural, or technical issues in greater detail or provide any specific treatment to students regarding these matters. The limitations of this study should be acknowledged. Also, this research focused solely on subtitling American films from English to Arabic. This was done because American movies are the most popular and viewed by Arab audiences, making them the dominant choice for this study. Future research should consider a broader range of film origins and languages to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subtitling challenges faced by students.

APPENDIX

The questionnaire

Dear Respondents,

The aim of this questionnaire was to determine Saudi learners' attitudes, perceptions, and preferences regarding subtitling. The questionnaire also attempted to determine the practices and suggestions for better inclusion of subtitling courses in English programs.

You can fill out the questionnaire below only if you meet the following criteria:

1. You are a female who graduated no more than a year recently from a translation program in one of four specific Saudi universities: QU, KSU, EU, or PNU
2. You have ages ranging from 21 to 26 years.
3. You did not fail in any translation course or drop out of any semester during your bachelor's degree.

Your participation is totally voluntary. We assure the confidentiality of the collected demographic information and the anonymity of your identities.

Thank you so much for your participation!

Regards,

The Research Team

Demographics

University-College:

- 1- Qassim University
- 2- King Saud University
- 3- Electronic University
- 4- Princess Nourah University

Knowledge

1. I know what is meant by subtitling
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
2. I know the elements of subtitling
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
3. I know the programs used in subtitling
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
4. I know the differences between translation, subtitling, and localization
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree

Attitudes

1. I have a positive attitude toward subtitling and its specialized course
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
2. Subtitling develops the four language skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking)
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
3. Subtitling helps to know its specialized programs
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
4. Subtitling helps to expand vocabulary
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
5. Subtitling helps to master grammar
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
6. Subtitling helps to realize the differences between the two languages (source and target)
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
7. Subtitling helps differentiate between language levels (formal, informal)
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
8. Subtitling helps to develop the translation skills

- totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
9. Subtitling helps to develop the skill of translation criticism
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
 10. Subtitling enhances the understanding of the notion of audience identification
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
 11. Subtitling helps to motivate individuals to learn the language
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
 12. Subtitling provides initial training for the workplace
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
 13. Subtitling enhances cultural awareness
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
 14. Subtitling helps to raise the subtitler's confidence in their mother tongue
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
 15. Subtitling helps to raise the subtitler's confidence in their second language
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree

Problems

Subtitling problems

1. Choosing the right material
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
2. Knowledge of suitable programs
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
3. The difficulty of using subtitling programs
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
4. Cultural differences between the two languages
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
5. The difference in language levels between the two languages
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
6. It consumes a lot of time
to totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
7. It consumes a lot of effort
to totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree

Practice

- 1 - Watch the video, rate its translation, and write your feedback

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=343aJkjSUy0>

- 1 - rate the translation
Excellent- Very good- Good- Fair- Poor
2. Your feedback:

- 2 - Watch the video, rate its translation, and write your feedback

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkSDM9Uxgq8>

- 1 - rate the translation
Excellent- Very good- Good- Fair- Poor
2. Your feedback:

- 3 - Watch the video, rate its translation, and write your feedback

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaN_5Vz7kXA

- 2 - rate the translation
Excellent- Very good- Good- Fair- Poor
2. Your feedback:

Suggestions

The following suggestions will help in the development of subtitling courses in universities:

1. Adding independent subtitling courses at more than one level in Bachelor's programs at Saudi universities
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
2. Appointing a specialized supervisor in subtitling theater and has experience in it to supervise students' work and direct it in the best possible way
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
3. Holding training and practical courses for students on subtitling
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree
4. Holding live meetings with subtitling pioneers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Arab world.
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree.
5. Organizing competitions by the Literature, Publishing, and Translation Commission for subtitling and placing awards for it
totally agree, agree, don't know, disagree, totally disagree

Is there anything you would like to add?

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