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## **Strategies & Euphemistic Procedures in Interlingual Subtitling into Arabic: The case of *Glengarry Glen Rose* Movie**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Subtitling has become a self-standing craft in the domain of audiovisual translation involving specific skills and a mixture of various translation procedures. Subtitling in many cases tend to trigger challenging aspects in the attempt to translate cultural codes from oral dialogues to written subtitles. This paper attempts to generally explore the use of these techniques in the subtitling of the American movie, *Glengarry Glen Rose* with a special focus on the techniques adopted in translating offensive taboo words and phrases, like cursing, name-calling etc. into Arabic and how far ‘acceptable’ expressions and polite words are used in order to disguise impolite or annoying semantics as per the perceptions of Arabic audience. This research is a descriptive qualitative research, as pair samples of utterances are collected from the movie and assessed based on Henrik Gottlieb’s typology of subtitling strategies (1992). The study hypothesises that although subtitlers in most cases fail in rendering the exact semantic elements of the original dialogue into Arabic and that the subtitling does not necessarily coincide with the original structure of the source, yet it is considered an adequate translation product as long as the translation is reflecting the peculiarities of the source utterances

**Keywords:** Euphemisms, taboos, subtitle translation, linguistic transference

## استراتيجيات الترجمة السينمائية وأساليب التلطيف عند النقل إلى اللغة العربية: فيلم غلين غاري روس

الأستاذة: ثريا البشير الويفاتي

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### الملخص

أصبح مجال ترجمة الحاشية السينمائية (Subtitling) بمثابة الصناعة القائمة بذاتها في مجال الترجمة السمعية البصرية والتي تنطوي على عدد من المهارات المعينة ومزيج من أساليب الترجمة المختلفة. هذا، ويعد مجال ترجمة الحاشية السينمائية في غالب الأحيان مفعما بالتحديات في محاولة لنقل معاني العبارات ذات الخصوصية الثقافية للحوار الشفوي للفيلم إلى ترجمة مكتوبة. إن هذه الورقة العلمية بشكل عام بصدد استكشاف استخدام أساليب الترجمة هذه في الترجمة السينمائية للفيلم الأمريكي (غلين غاري روس) مع التركيز بصفة خاصة على الأساليب المتبعة في ترجمة الكلمات والعبارات المسيئة، مثل ألفاظ السبب واللعن والتناوب بالألقاب.. الخ. إلى اللغة العربية، وإلى أي مدى يتم توظيف عبارات " مقبولة " وكلمات مهذبة بغية إخفاء وتورية التلميحات الغير لائقة او المزعجة من منظور المشاهد العربي. إن هذه الدراسات هي عبارة عن دراسة نوعية وصفية، حيث تم تجميع عينات ثنائية للألفاظ من الفيلم وتقييمها استنادا للتصنيف النوعي المقدم من قبل هنريك غوتليب (1992) حول استراتيجيات ترجمة الحاشية السينمائية. إن هذه الدراسة تفترض أنه بالرغم من فشل مترجمي الشاشة السينمائية، في أغلب الأحيان، في إيجاد مقابل دقيق للعناصر الدلالية للسيناريو الأصلي ونقلها إلى اللغة العربية، ومن كون ذلك لا ينطوي بالضرورة على تقيد المترجم بصورة مطابقة للتركيب اللغوي للنص الأصلي، بيد ان هذا قد يفضي إلى ترجمة مقبولة ومناسبة طالما أنه يعكس خصوصيات المعنى المكرس داخل اللفظ الأصلي.

**الكلمات الافتتاحية:** العبارات الملطفة – التابوهات – ترجمة الشاشة السينمائية – النقل اللغوي

## Introduction

Subtitling is the procedure of putting the translation of the original sound track on screen. Taylor (2002) states that subtitling: “involves transferring the characteristics of spoken dialogue to the written mode”. Meanwhile, Baker (2001) suggests that *dubbing* is an oral translation activity that makes use of the acoustic channel in screen translation. However, subtitling is a visual translation activity that involves superimposition of a written text onto the screen. The term ‘screen translation’ is also used frequently which, according to Cintas subtitling is “a craft that involves displaying written text at the bottom of the screen, in this way allowing the source language to be heard” (2003). Subtitling is a process which entails technically transferring a SL movie or audiovisual media to a TL movie or audiovisual media synchronized with the original verbal message (Gottlieb, 2004). This industry includes all screen products such as TV, cinema, computer-screen, electronic-gaming, Internet web pages and CD-ROM’s. In this regard, Cintas has introduced another term for subtitling called multimedia translation which deals with the media multitude and the channels by which the message is transmitted.

It is suggested that subtitling is accepted more easily than dubbing or voice-over simply because it is much cheaper and requires less allocated budgets, but, more importantly, because it permits the original soundtrack to remain on screen. Sponholz (2003) argues that interlingual subtitles are the most cost-effective mode of audiovisual language transfer. On the other hand, watching subtitled films/programs carry a number of advantages, as it could help foster second language acquisition and enhance reading skills. Gottlieb (2004) considers interlingual subtitling as an instrument for improving reading skills, boosting foreign languages skills, facilitating easy and cheap international program exchange and cementing the dominance of English.

**Research Methodology:**

This research is a descriptive qualitative research aiming at describing certain cases related to the subject of this study. The data in this research is based on analyzing a number of euphemistic procedures followed through adopting a number of subtitling strategies of the movie: *Glengarry Glen Rose* (1992) <sup>1</sup> The procedure of this paper starts by: a) data collecting, b) data analysis technique, c) and a conclusion.

The object of the research is the American *Glengarry Glen Rose* movie as the source text (ST) and its Arabic subtitling as the target language (TT). The data of this paper consists of spoken text spoken by the actors and actresses in *Glengarry Glen Rose* Movie as the source text (ST) and the Arabic subtitling appearing in the monitor as the target text (TT). The data is analyzed by identifying the source text meaning and the equivalent meaning in target text, focusing on the strategies used in *Glengarry Glen Rose* subtitling according to Gottlieb's typology (1992). The final stage is to present the result and conclusion. This research uses qualitative analysis strategy.

**The process of Subtitle Translation:**

In distinction from translation and interpreting, subtitle translation focuses on the transfer of the original sound track (the spoken mode) into (the written mode), while putting attention to other visual and audio modes.

Figure (1)

**Difference between Translation, Interpreting & Subtitling**

	Source Language		Target Language
<b>Translation</b>	Written	—————>	Written
<b>Interpreting</b>	Spoken	—————>	Spoken
<b>Subtitling</b>	Spoken	—————>	Written

<sup>1</sup> *Glengarry Glen Ross* is a 1992 American drama film adapted by David Mamet from his 1984 Pulitzer Prize-winning play of the same name, and directed by James Foley. The film depicts two days in the lives of four real estate salesmen and how desperate they become when the corporate office sends a trainer to "motivate" them. He tells them that, in a week's time, all except the top two salesmen will be fired. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glengarry\\_Glen\\_Ross\\_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glengarry_Glen_Ross_(film))

Subtitle translators are supposed to translate the semantic potentials of the modes from the source text (ST) into the target text (TT). In the production of the target text, certain meanings may be lost or gained under different circumstances. Accordingly, in subtitle translation, the meaning, sense, function and representation will be different between the source text and the target text. Yet, the translator might not manage rendering everything in the dialogues into the subtitles, but he still holds the option to choose to ignore parts of meanings that are represented or to rephrase it differently. This results in a number of syntactic/ semantic transformations. Yet, the differences between the spoken and written modes generally fall under the issue of ‘linguistic transference’. On the other hand, the translator’s decision in dealing with the representation of subtitles is normally influenced, in many cases, by cultural, social, and political constrains.

### **Dealing with Offensive Utterances /Taboos Words:**

In Routledge Dictionary of Language & Linguistics (2000), taboo word is a term that is avoided for religious, political or sexual reasons and is usually replaced by a euphemism. In the New Oxford Dictionary of English (2001) A taboo is “a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place, or thing”. Wardhaugh (2000) considers a taboo as the prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior believed to be harmful to its members in that it would cause them anxiety, embarrassment, or shame.

In order to understand the concept of euphemisms, we need to understand the culture of that language to which euphemistic expressions are related. When certain parts of utterance or words are perceived as taboos by audience in certain societies, then such forbidden expressions are to be avoided in the process of subtitling. As a matter of fact, taboos are not a universal phenomenon, as it could vary from a region to another and enjoy acceptance as per the variation of cultural contexts. In this regard, Rawson (1995) suggests that euphemistic expressions are cultural linguistic creations which reveal its numerous mapping relations with culture.

The role of euphemistic expressions is to deal with 'unmentionable' taboo with a created euphemistic expression. The role of euphemistic expressions is to deal with issues 'unmentionable' or words/expressions that refer to *Face-Threatening Acts* (FTAs); for instance, death, disability, bodily functions, war and sex (Wilkinson, 2013). The degree of FTAs varies, ranging from serious to mild. Subsequently, Brown and Levinson (1987), as an extension to Goffman's face theory; have tackled the concept of politeness, which its intention is to reduce the face threats of the FTAs (Mills, 2003). Brown and Levinson (1987) highlight that politeness has a socially-basic role, as it can lead to conflicts among communicators. However, the norms and values of a given society contribute to the evaluation of the degree of politeness and the assessment of the extent to which actions threatens "face" or which politeness strategy is to be taken will differ across different cultures.

### **Most Prevalent Subjects of Euphemism in movie subtitling:**

Based on the above discussion, it is generally agreed that creation of euphemisms came as a result of the existence of taboos, and that all languages hold a treasury of euphemistic expressions which people tend to use in order to avoid being rude or offensive. Besides being automatically used to disguise harsh and rude language, euphemisms are also employed to covert social, religious and physical aspects; such as, death, sex, sexual organs, and any sort of verbal violence or extreme language. Below are the two commonly used issues of Euphemism in movie subtitling:

#### ***1- Euphemism Related to Religion (sacred taboos):***

Euphemisms related to belief doctrines are considered as the oldest found. They are taboos that are connected to series of religious bans, which subsequently, have been generated over the pass of time a set of euphemisms. Sacred taboos are linked to religious thinking and gospel truths. Subtitlers, in most cases opt for alternative nouns/pronouns as proper names, as substitutes for the Divinity that do not contradict with the beliefs of intended movie audience. Alterations on names given to God are not only created for a courtesy due, but also to avoid clashes between divergent culture and belief systems.

On the other hand, acts that are sought to be violating religious prohibitions are being omitted and replaced by other normally accepted alternatives, as disguising all words that refer to drunkenness, or intoxic abuse, for example: changing *drinking alcohol* to *soft drinks* or *boyfriend* to *fiancé*, i.e. a word that refers to a relation that would necessarily lead to marriage.

### **. *Euphemisms Related to Sex (Taboos of the Impure):***

Taboos of the impure refer to words related to the excretory functions, such as defecation that evoke a natural feeling of disgust or revulsion. In addition to the mention of words that refer to particular body parts: (genitalia), particular physiological acts: (sexual intercourse), and those referring to a particular sexual orientation: (homosexuality/lesbianism). Such indecent expressions are avoided by performing alterations on the unwanted reality of the original dialogue or simply by using scientific terminology instead. This also applies to abusive and insulting terms, where the subtitler tends to substitute harsh and indecent words/phrases for the reason of good manners and courtesy.

### **Subtitling Techniques:**

In attempt to achieve balance between the ST and TT contents, subtitlers normally adopt a number of subtitling strategies. Henrik Gottlieb (1992) has introduced ten strategies used in the process of subtitling, including: 1) Expansion, 2) Paraphrase, 3) Transfer, 4) Imitation, 5) Transcription, 6) Dislocation, 7) Condensation, 8) Deletion, 9) Taming and 10) Resignation. Gottlieb stresses that these strategies can also be found in other types of translation. Below is an elaboration on the usages of above-mentioned techniques, supported by examples extracted from *Glengarry Glen Rose* movie script by the writer David Mamet<sup>2</sup>. The movie under consideration has been selected specifically because it was one of the most controversial and talked-about movies in the 1990's because of its harsh language and its excessive practice of intimidating statements. Another additional ground for selecting this movie in particular was due to the fact that it has been used as a mean to discuss ethics in business-related contexts, and to raise ethical awareness of ethics courses.

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<sup>2</sup> **David Mamet** has always used vulgarity to the fullest extent in his plays and screenplays, none more celebrated than *Glengarry Glen Ross*. 'Mamet-speak' began to develop, defined as rapid fire dialogue between characters overlapping in clusters with a good helping of profanity to make it music to the ears for some..

The movie is loaded with explicit language and filled with empty words, curses and jargon that cannot be understood by audience outside the domain of real estate business. On the other hand, the sentences are mostly short, chopped and unfinished because of conversation interruptions and repetitive phrases. Worth to mention, such explicit and overt words are generally used to emphasize a matter without having any bad connotation. In fact this way of speech portrays the real way of American speaking. Below are the techniques which have been used by the subtitler based on typology of Gottlieb (1992) supported by a number of relevant examples extracted from the movie subject of study:

- a) **Expansion:** It is used when the source text requires an explanation because some cultural nuances are not retrievable in the target language. The below example refers to culture-specific references:

ST: <u>Polacks</u> and <u>deadbeats</u> <sup>3</sup>	TT: الأميركيين ذوي الاصول البولندية وأولئك المتصلين من دفع ديونهم
ST: How am I going to make a living on these <u>deadbeat wogs</u> ? <sup>4</sup>	TT: كيف لي أن اتحصل على لقمة عيش من هؤلاء الهنود الغير مرغوب فيهم؟

- b) **Paraphrase:** This is where the translator rephrases an utterance in the source text which cannot be reconstructed in the same syntactic way in the target language.

ST: Hit the bricks, pal, and beat it, 'cause you are going out!	TT: أغرب عن وجهي يا صاح واخرج لأنك مطرود من هنا!
ST: You want to decide who should be dealt with how, is that it?	TT: تريد أن تحدد من وكيف وبأي طريقة يتم التعامل معنا، أهذا كل ما في الأمر؟

<sup>3</sup> This phrase is epithet spoken by one of the movie characters as an ethnic slur which denotes a person of Polish ethnicity. It is considered by some insulting in certain contemporary usages.

<sup>4</sup> is a derogatory and racially offensive slang word referring to a non-white, or darker-skinned white person, including people from the Middle East, North Africa, the Indian subcontinent. The character in this context is referring to the successful real-estate Indians businessmen

- c) **Transfer:** This is where the subtitler translates the source text completely and correctly. The below examples reflect full, slow, unmarked speech with adequate rendering.

ST: I'm going anyway. Let's talk about something important.	TT: إنني ذاهب على أية حال. دعنا نتحدث عن شيء ذو أهمية
ST: When you die, you're gonna regret the things that you don't do.	TT: عندما تموت سوف تتأسف لتلك الأشياء التي لا تقوم بها

- d) **Imitation:** refers to the strategy where the subtitler maintains the same forms, i.e. greetings, names of places and persons...etc. Below is Identical expression, equivalent rendering

ST: Because you drove a <i>Hyundai</i> to get here tonight, I drove an \$80,000 <i>BMW</i> .	TT: ذلك لأنك قدت (هيونداي) للوصول إلى هنا، أما أنا فقد قدت (بي.أم. دبليو). ثمنها 80,000 دولارا.
ST: As you all know, first prize is a <i>Cadillac Eldorado</i>	TT: كما تعلمون جميعا، فإن الجائزة الأولى هي سيارة (كاديلاك الدورادو)

- e) **Transcription:** It is used in cases where a source term is odd or unusual even in the source language itself, for instance, using a phrase from a third language. Below are adequate renderings for the Italian word 'finito' meaning: -done /finished. The second example refers to a nonstandard expression, i.e. 'real estate jargon'

ST: Two weeks and <i>finite</i>	TT: اسبوعان والأمر منتهي (فينيتو)
ST: And my job is to marshal those leads	TT: مهمتي هي إتمام تلم الصفقات

- f) **Condensation:** This technique refers to the process of shortening the source text. In an attempt to partially reduce it without deleting a meaning. Condensation tends to retain both meaning and most of the stylistic features of the original, while eliminating some of the redundancies and working on enhancing coherence for the audience.

ST: Get them to sign on the line which is dotted	TT: اجعلهم يوقعون العقد
ST: I'm here from downtown. I'm here from Mitch and Murray. And I'm here on a mission of mercy.	TT: جئت من قلب المدينة من طرف ميتش وموراي وفي مهمة إنسانية بحثة

- g) **Decimation:** This method is adopted to manage a large speech volume due to fast speech or the situation in a quarrel when the actor speaks so fast. Through reduction in content, the message is conveyed with the help of other channels. i.e. (soundtrack and vision).

ST: You stupid f***ing cunt. You, Williamson, I'm talking to you, shithead. You just cost me \$6,000. Six Thousand dollars, and one Cadillac. That's right? I'm gonna have your job, shithead	TT: ويليامسون أيها الغبي! انت كلفتني لتوي 6000 دولار وسيارة كاديلاك. ولهذا سأخذ مكانك في العمل.
ST: You're talking about what! You're talking about... about bitching about that sale you shot, some sonofabitch who don't wanna buy land, some broad your're trying to screw, so forth. Let's talk about something important. They all here.	TT: أنت لا تتحدث الا عن صفقاتك المربحة وعن ارض لا يريد رجل وغدا ان يشتريها الخ.. الجميع هنا فلنتحدث عن أشياء مهمة.

- h) **Deletion:** This refers to total elimination of parts of the source text, where the subtitler opt for omitting full elements, such as a line of dialogue from the ST speech in the TT subtitle. Deletion is also used to manage non-verbal content, repetitions, filler words and tag questions without loss of information to the audience.

<p>SL: What are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it, asshole? You're f***ing shit. Where did you learn your trade you stupid f***ing cunt, you idiot? Whoever told you you could work with men? Oh</p>	<p>TL: ماذا ستفعل حيال ذلك أيها الأحمق؟ من أين اكتسبت صنعتك أيها الغبي؟ إنك وغد محتال من قال لك انه يمكنك العمل مع الرجال؟</p>
<p>SL: What does that mean? Why would it not... Oh, f*** you. You do not know your job. That's what I'm saying. You do not know your job. That's what I'm saying.</p>	<p>TL: ماذا يعني هذا؟ أجبني أيها الوغد. إنك لا تتقن عملك. هذا ما أقصده... هذا تماما ما أقصده.</p>

- i) **Taming:** This is used in dealing with rude and offensive words and phrases in a pleasant and acceptable equivalent.

<p>ST: That guy's a f***in' asshole. Anybody who talks to that asshole is a f***in' asshole</p>	<p>TT: ذاك الشخص وغد لعين. وأي أحد يتحدث معه فهو وغد لعين مثله.</p>
<p>ST: I don't wanna hear no f***in' shit and I don't give a shit</p>	<p>TT: لا أود أن أستمع لأية سخافات وأنا لا أبالي بشئ</p>

**Resignation:** This strategy is usually adopted when no solution can be found and meaning is lost, for instance in the below example where the speech is deviant and incomprehensible. The second example and depending on the contextual meaning, it seems that the character is voicing his frustration towards the exploitive rules governing the sales board.

ST: That's "talk," my friend, that is "talk.	TT: -
ST: Aaronow: You're on this . . . Moss: All of, they got you on this "board ... " AaronowI, I . . . I . . . : Moss: Some contest board . . . Aaronow: I . . . Moss: It's not right. Aaronow: It's not. Moss: No	TT: -

As shown above, the translator integrates the meanings in an attempt to convey the meanings that suit to the target audience. Accordingly, the subtitle definitely loses meanings resulting in a semantic loss, yet it still reserves the wholeness of the meanings represented in the original dialogue.

**Recommendations:**

The main area for attention in relation to dealing with cultural codes and overt language is through considering the integration of meanings in order to create some sort of equivalent wholeness between the original sound track and subtitles

**Conclusion:**

his is because it has technical matters such as space and timing. The translator has to follow the rules of subtitle and dubbing with a precise translation. This includes removing, adding, or his is because it has technical matters such as space and timing. The translator has to follow the rules of subtitle and dubbing with a precise translation. This includes removing, adding, or The researchers conclude that translating movies (subtitle and dubbing) is not the same as intertextual translation. This is because it has technical matters such as space and timing. The translator has to follow the rules of subtitle and dubbing with a precise translation. This includes removing, adding, or researchers conclude that translating movies (subtitle and dubbing) is not the same as intertextual translation.

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In subtitling translators have to follow a number of subtitling rules and techniques that involves adding, removing and rephrasing ...etc., because of technical matters involving (space/timing). In the subtitle translation of the movie *Glengarry Glen Rose*, a number of subtitling techniques and euphemistic procedures are used in order to render a good translation quality. Euphemisms represent an improved form of expression that are created due the need to create an acceptable reality. Since bans hold a social and religious character, the use and impact of euphemisms are linked to the social and religious levels. Thus, typically, a term at a certain social context can be vulgar in another register or a social context. Because subtitling into a different language does not only involve the transfer of a spoken mode into a written one, therefore movie translators are recommended to consider the meanings integrated in order to create some sort of equivalent wholeness between the original sound track and subtitles.

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