

Western Echoes in Arabic Voices

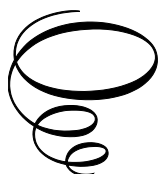
Western Echoes in Arabic Voices:

*A Mosaic of Dubbing Case
Studies from the Arab World*

Edited by

Rashid Yahiaoui

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------|
| Preface | viii |
| Acknowledgements and Permissions | viii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter One..... | 6 |
| Transcreation Strategies in Dubbing a Humorous Hybrid-Text Type | |
| Advert into Arabic – <i>Is Vernacular the Panacea?</i> | |
| Rashid Yahiaoui | |
| Abstract..... | 6 |
| Introduction..... | 7 |
| Audiovisual translation as an intersemiotic translation..... | 7 |
| Dubbing as a mode of audiovisual translation | 8 |
| Dubbing as a cultural adaptation..... | 9 |
| Arabic diglossia and dubbing..... | 9 |
| Hybrid texts in translation..... | 10 |
| Homer’s colonoscopy, the advertisement | 11 |
| Analysis and discussion | 12 |
| Cultural issues..... | 13 |
| Taboo issues..... | 18 |
| Religious issues..... | 22 |
| Concluding remarks | 25 |
| References..... | 26 |
| Chapter Two | 31 |
| Transcreating Humour for (Re)Dubbing into Arabic: Creativity, Register | |
| Variations and Meaning Making between Overt and Covert Dichotomies | |
| Rashid Yahiaoui | |
| Abstract..... | 31 |
| Introduction: A changing scene | 32 |
| <i>Monsters, Inc.</i> as a case study | 33 |
| Translation quality assessment model..... | 34 |
| The register of language..... | 35 |
| The register of dubbing..... | 36 |
| Dubbing humour and the charm of creativity | 37 |

| | |
|--|---------|
| Analysis and discussion | 38 |
| Statement of quality | 51 |
| Concluding remarks | 51 |
| References..... | 52 |
| Chapter Three..... | 56 |
| Shifts in Transadapting Western Socio-cultural References for Dubbing into Arabic- <i>The Simpsons</i> vs. <i>Al-Shamshoon</i> : A Case Study | |
| Rashid Yahiaoui and Ashraf Fattah | |
| Abstract..... | 56 |
| Introduction..... | 57 |
| Case study and research focus | 57 |
| Theoretical framework..... | 58 |
| Culture and translation..... | 59 |
| Western socio-cultural references | 62 |
| Rude language..... | 67 |
| Gender issues | 69 |
| Racial issues..... | 72 |
| Nudity and sexual references | 75 |
| Conclusion | 78 |
| References..... | 79 |
| Chapter Four..... | 83 |
| Fansubbing and the Perpetuation of Western Popular Culture's Gender and Racial Stereotypes in Arabic | |
| Rashid Yahiaoui | |
| Abstract..... | 83 |
| Introduction: the spectacle of the other..... | 84 |
| One thousand and one stereotypes | 85 |
| Once upon a translation | 86 |
| Fan subtitling: when amateurs take on the mantle | 87 |
| "The falsely obvious": myth meets multimodality | 88 |
| Image and language intertwined | 89 |
| Conclusion: the truth lies in the lies..... | 97 |
| References..... | 98 |
| Chapter Five | 101 |
| Stereotyping and Vilifying the Other behind the Mask of Humour – When a Chicken Smells of Fear | |
| Rashid Yahiaoui | |
| Abstract..... | 101 |

| | |
|--|---------|
| Introduction: seeing through a hazy glass | 102 |
| “Invention labours less, but judgement more” | 103 |
| Humour: when man laughs in scorn | 104 |
| “Mindlessly adopted and casually adapted” | 105 |
| CDA: Casting a critical eye on Family Guy | 106 |
| (Un)covering Islam in dubbing | 108 |
| Conclusion: <i>Family Guy</i> , humorous or dangerous? | 123 |
| References..... | 124 |
| Chapter Six | 128 |
| Functional and Sociocultural Attitudes of Code-Switching and its Relation to the Meaning-Making Process: The Case of Dubbing <i>Kim Possible</i> into Arabic | |
| Rashid Yahiaoui, Marwa Aldous and Ashraf Fattah | |
| Abstract..... | 128 |
| Introduction..... | 129 |
| Preliminary observations | 129 |
| The case of <i>Kim Possible</i> | 132 |
| Theoretical underpinnings | 133 |
| Interlingual code-switching | 137 |
| Intralingual code-switching | 146 |
| Concluding remarks | 153 |
| References..... | 154 |
| Chapter Seven..... | 158 |
| Ideological Constraints in Dubbing <i>The Simpsons</i> into Arabic | |
| Rashid Yahiaoui | |
| Abstract..... | 158 |
| Introduction..... | 159 |
| Translation and Ideology | 159 |
| Dubbing as a Form of Audiovisual Translation..... | 160 |
| Dubbing as an Ideal Conduit of Ideological Manipulation | 161 |
| The Simpsons as a Case Study..... | 163 |
| Ideological Issues..... | 165 |
| Religious Issues | 165 |
| Extrinsic Factors | 171 |
| Intrinsic Factors – Translator’s Ideology | 172 |
| Challenging Issues | 176 |
| Concluding Remarks..... | 179 |
| References..... | 179 |
| Conclusion..... | 182 |

PREFACE

Acknowledgements and Permissions

This volume brings together a selection of scholarly works that delve into the complexities of dubbing in the Arabic context. These studies, originally published in top-tier, peer-reviewed Scopus-indexed international journals, offer unique perspectives and findings that contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate nuances of dubbing in the Arab world.

Chapter One, “Transadaptation Strategies in Dubbing a Humorous Hybrid-Text Type Advert into Arabic – Is Vernacular the Panacea?” was initially published in *DELTA: Documentação e Estudos em Linguística Teórica e Aplicada*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1678-460X202339455531>. This study examines the challenges of translating humorous advertisements into Arabic, specifically exploring the role of vernacular in achieving effective communication.

Chapter Two, “Transcreating Humour for (Re)Dubbing into Arabic: Creativity, Register Variations and Meaning Making Between Overt and Covert Dichotomies,” <http://dx.doi.org/10.7592/EJHR2022.10.3.681>, and **Chapter Five**, “Stereotyping and Vilifying the Other Behind the Mask of Humor- When Chicken Smell of Fear,” <https://doi.org/10.7592/EJHR.2022.10.4.701>, were both published in *The European Journal for Humour Research*. These chapters investigate the processes of transcreating humour in dubbing, focusing on the interplay between creativity, register variations, and meaning-making in the translation of comedic content into Arabic.

Chapter Three, “Shifts in Transadapting Western Cultural References for Dubbing into Arabic - The Simpsons vs. Al-Shamshoon,” was first published in *inTRAlinea*. http://www.intralinea.org/current/article/shifts_in_transadapting_western_socio_cultural_references_for_dubbing. This study analyses the transformations that occur when Western cultural references are adapted for dubbing into Arabic, using The Simpsons and Al-Shamshoon as case studies.

Chapter Four, “Fansubbing and the Perpetuation of Western Popular Culture’s Gender and Racial Stereotypes in Arabic,” was initially published in the *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22034/ijscsl.2022.554602.2646>. This article explores the perpetuation of gender and racial stereotypes in Arabic fansubs of Western popular culture, highlighting the implications of such practices on societal attitudes towards marginalized groups.

Chapter Six, “Functional and Sociocultural Attitudes of Code-Switching and Its Relation to the Meaning-Making Process: The Case of Dubbing Kim Possible into Arabic,” was first published in *The International Journal of Bilingualism*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/13670069211019482>. This study investigates the use of code-switching in the dubbing of *Kim Possible* into Arabic, examining how it affects the meaning-making process and its relation to functional and sociocultural attitudes.

Finally, **Chapter Seven**, “Ideological and Cultural Constraints in AVT: Dubbing *The Simpsons* into Arabic,” was initially published in *Altre Modernità*. <https://doi.org/10.13130/2035-7680/6855>. This chapter scrutinizes the ideological and cultural constraints that arise when dubbing *The Simpsons* into Arabic, shedding light on the challenges faced by translators and producers in adapting culturally specific content for an Arab audience.

It is essential to note that all the mentioned journals have allowed the reuse of these articles in this volume. They are open-access platforms, and each subscribes to the *BY-NC-ND 4.0 Creative Commons license*. This endorsement permits the incorporation of these articles into this anthology, ensuring that the original publication platforms are acknowledged rightfully and extensively. Our sincere appreciation is extended to these academic platforms for their support and collaboration in showcasing these valuable insights to a wider audience.

This collection offers a fresh perspective on the global phenomenon of dubbing, viewed through the lens of the Arab world. By bringing together these diverse studies, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in adapting content for an Arab audience and the ways in which language, culture, and society intersect in the process of dubbing. As such, this volume serves as a testament to the rich tapestry of storytelling traditions in the Arab world and the evolving nature of communication in the modern era.

INTRODUCTION

In a bustling Algiers Cafe in 1968, as patrons sipped their mint tea and smoked shisha, the strains of an iconic Western movie theme interrupted the usual Arabic pop songs. The crowd watched, bemused, as Clint Eastwood's steely gaze confronted them from a television screen. But the words that came out of his mouth were not in English; they flowed in poetic Arabic. This unexpected blend of Western imagery and Arabic voice was not just a novel entertainment spectacle; it marked the beginning of a fascinating academic exploration into the world of cultural intersections, linguistic challenges, and the transformative power of dubbing.

In the vast landscape of global cinema and audiovisual entertainment, the intricate art of dubbing stands as an essential bridge, connecting diverse cultures and linguistic spheres. This book explores a phenomenon that not only reshapes the auditory dimension of films and television shows but also reflects the nuanced interplay between the Western and Arabic worlds. “Western Echoes in Arabic Voices: *A Mosaic of Dubbing Case Studies from the Arab World*” delves into the multifaceted journey of dubbing, unravelling its historical, cultural, and artistic significance as it unfolds across time and space.

The Dynamics of Dubbing: A Transcultural Encounter

Dubbing, replacing the original language soundtrack of a film or television program with a translated version, has become a linchpin in disseminating audiovisual content to diverse linguistic audiences. As technology has advanced and communication barriers have dissolved, dubbing has emerged as a powerful tool to mediate between cultures, enabling narratives to traverse linguistic boundaries while preserving the visual and emotional integrity of the original work. This book delves into the intricate dynamics that underlie the dubbing process, examining how Western cinematic and narrative conventions are transposed onto Arabic screens, captivating audiences with stories that are at once familiar and exotic.

Tracing the Origins: From Silent Gestures to Translated Voices

To fully appreciate the evolution of dubbing as an art form and cultural conduit, we must journey back in time to its origins. From the early days of silent cinema, where intertitles were used to convey dialogue, to the pioneering experiments of adding synchronized sound to images, the quest to bridge languages and cultures has been a constant endeavour. As cinematic storytelling gained momentum in the West, this burgeoning art form collided with the rich tapestry of Arabic culture. The collision gave birth to a unique synthesis that saw Western tales reborn with Arabic voices, reflecting the intricate intersection of linguistic translation, cultural adaptation, and artistic interpretation.

Cultural Transmutation: Bridging Narratives and Weltanschauungen

As cinematic narratives are transported from one cultural context to another, the question arises: how does the essence of a story transcend its linguistic and sociocultural confinement? The dubbing process is not merely a mechanical act of replacing words; it is an intricate act of transmutation, where stories metamorphose to accommodate the sensibilities and sociocultural norms of the receiving audience. In the case of Western narratives echoing in Arabic voices, this transmutation assumes a profound significance, as it involves translating not only words but also the underlying *Weltanschauung*—the worldview that informs and shapes the narrative's subtext. This book investigates the subtleties of cultural transmutation, delving into how themes, ideologies, and emotions are transplanted across linguistic and cultural frontiers.

Voices in (a)synchrony: The Role of Dubbing Artists, Translators, and Beyond

At the heart of the dubbing process are the skilled artisans—dubbing artists—who lend their voices to characters and breathe life into narratives. But the journey from one linguistic sphere to another is facilitated by the work of translators who carefully craft adapted scripts, ensuring that cultural nuances and linguistic expressions are aptly captured. These translators, in essence, bridge the gaps between societies, enabling narratives to resonate authentically with the target audience. We delve into the collaborative efforts of dubbing artists and translators, highlighting their symbiotic role in transforming source material into an intercultural medium. Additionally, we examine how critical language can serve as a powerful tool to not only

entertain but also convey socio-political commentaries, transcending cultural boundaries and fostering dialogue.

Navigating Sociocultural Norms and Ideological Landscapes

Dubbing is a process that extends far beyond the technical replacement of words. It is a voyage through the intricate seas of sociocultural norms and ideological landscapes, where narratives embark on a transformative journey as they navigate linguistic and cultural frontiers. As these narratives traverse borders, they must navigate the multifaceted nuances of both the source and target societies. Sociocultural norms, values, and taboos, embedded deep within the social fabric, play a pivotal role in shaping the interactions of characters, the portrayal of themes, and the perception of the other. These norms act as signposts, guiding the adaptation process to ensure resonance with the target audience while honouring the essence of the original work.

Within this intricate dance, the converging and conflicting ideological perspectives, often influenced by historical and political contexts, add another layer of complexity. Narratives infused with ideologies inherent to Western societies often encounter Arab cultural and ideological landscapes that carry their own historical baggage. The interpretation of narratives is not only contingent upon linguistic accuracy but also upon the alignment—or misalignment—of the narratives' ideological nuances with those of the target society. As stories evolve through dubbing, they assimilate and adapt, striving to balance fidelity to the original and relevance to the new context.

This volume delves into the delicate negotiation between sociocultural norms and ideological underpinnings. It explores how these intricate dynamics shape the dubbing process, leading to creative adaptations that resonate with the sensitivities and expectations of Arabic-speaking audiences. Through case studies and analyses, readers will gain insight into how narratives are moulded to bridge cultural gaps and foster a profound cross-cultural understanding. The chapter also explores instances where the clash of norms and ideologies might inadvertently hinder communication or generate misinterpretations, underscoring the importance of nuanced navigation in the intercultural communication landscape.

Manipulating Texts and Shaping Perspectives

Within the realm of cultural translation, the influence of ideology is an undeniable force that shapes the transformation of Western narratives as they journey into Arabic voices. Ideological undercurrents, both overt and

subtle, possess the power to manipulate texts and shape perspectives, wielding their influence on how Western culture is presented to Arabic audiences. This dynamic interplay between ideology, translation, and cultural adaptation is a complex terrain that warrants careful examination.

Cultural Adaptation and Ideological Influence

The translation of Western cultural narratives into Arabic often necessitates a process of cultural adaptation—an intricate dance where the nuances of one culture are woven into the fabric of another. Ideological underpinnings, rooted in historical, political, and societal contexts, play an integral role in this adaptation process. These ideologies can influence not only linguistic choices but also structural modifications, altering the narrative to align more closely with the target culture's sensibilities.

At times, this manipulation of texts serves to bridge cultural gaps and facilitate cross-cultural understanding. Ideological convergence enables the translated narrative to resonate authentically with the Arabic audience, fostering a deeper connection between cultures. However, this manipulation can also lead to instances of ideological bias, where the translator's perspective, guided by specific ideological leanings, shapes the narrative in a way that reinforces certain narratives or downplays others. Such manipulation is often subtle—choices in words, tones, or emphasis—that reflect the translator's ideological framework, subtly moulding the perception of the Western narrative within the Arabic context.

Framing Western Culture in an Arabic Context

Ideological influence extends beyond the manipulation of texts—it extends to the shaping of perspectives. Translating Western culture into Arabic involves not only linguistic adaptation but also a recontextualization that aligns with the ideological landscape of the target culture. This recontextualization can reframe Western cultural concepts, altering how the Arabic audience perceives them.

In this process, ideologies come to the forefront as they frame the perspective through which the Arabic audience views Western cultural narratives. Ideological orientations prevalent in the Arab world can highlight certain aspects of Western narratives while obscuring others. This selective framing can distort the narrative's original intent, either by magnifying elements that align with the target culture's values or by suppressing those that challenge prevailing ideologies. The impact of such

framing can vary, from fostering a richer appreciation of Western cultural nuances to perpetuating stereotypes and misrepresentations.

Balancing Authenticity and Reception

The manipulation of texts and perspectives, driven by ideology, underscores the inherent tension between authenticity and reception in cultural translation. Striking a balance between staying true to the original narrative and adapting it to the target culture requires translators to precisely navigate ideological currents. Their choices—whether to amplify or downplay certain themes, to highlight or subdue certain ideologies—play a significant role in shaping the reception of Western narratives within the Arabic context.

Translators are not immune to ideological influences, often drawn from their sociopolitical backgrounds. These influences can subtly seep into their translation choices, further complicating the already intricate landscape of intercultural communication. The translator's role is thus twofold: to understand the narrative's ideological implications and assess how their own ideological perspectives may impact the translation process.

The impact is profound in this intricate interplay between ideology, translation, and cultural adaptation. It shapes not only how Western culture is presented to Arabic audiences but also how Arabic audiences perceive and engage with that culture. The manipulation of texts and perspectives, guided by ideological currents, highlights the complex web of forces that shape the dubbing odyssey—a journey that is not only linguistic but also ideological, resonating with the rich tapestry of cultural exchange and intercultural dynamics.

A Tapestry of Voices, Translations, and Shared Narratives

“Western Echoes in Arabic Voices: *A Mosaic of Dubbing Case Studies from the Arab World*” embarks on a captivating journey that spans continents, cultures, and epochs. Through the lens of dubbing, we witness the intricate threads that bind the Western and Arabic worlds, the artistic ingenuity that defines cross-cultural storytelling, and the myriad voices that contribute to the shared global tapestry of human experiences. This introductory chapter lays the foundation for an immersive exploration, inviting readers to accompany us on a voyage that unearths the beauty, complexity, and resonance of the dubbing odyssey. As we traverse the chapters that follow, we will uncover the tales of languages entwined, narratives transformed, and cultures united in a harmonious symphony of voices, translations, satire, sociocultural norms, and ideologies.

CHAPTER ONE

TRANSCREATION STRATEGIES IN DUBBING A HUMOROUS HYBRID-TEXT TYPE ADVERT INTO ARABIC – *IS VERNACULAR THE PANACEA?*

RASHID YAHIAOUI

Abstract

Adapting advertisements across distant languages and cultures poses challenges due to their heavy cultural context. Complicating matters, some ads mix various text types and genres. This study explores strategies for translating a humour-laden, hybrid-text ad into Arabic through dubbing. It investigates the effectiveness of different Arabic variants. The case study is an audiovisual ad by standup2cancer.org featuring a cartoon Homer from The Simpsons, created to raise colon cancer awareness. Animation often escapes criticism due to its surreal nature, unlike real depictions that might be distasteful. Using Skopos Theory, the translations were analysed, focusing on the decision-making process in creating functionally suitable versions for Arab audiences. A Think Aloud Protocol gathered data on participants' decision agency during translation, validating choices. Most translators (80%) preferred Arabic vernacular, employing domestication (adaptation) as a macro-strategy and cultural substitution as a microstrategy. Humour transfer succeeded best in Arabic vernacular, reinforcing its suitability for various text types and genres.

Keywords: transcreation; hybrid text; dubbing; strategies; Arabic diglossia.

Introduction

The inextricable relevance of culture to translation studies has enabled translators in the late twentieth century, in light of the cultural turn, to move beyond the traditional dichotomies of equivalence and fidelity that long dominated the field. In the expanding landscape of audiovisual translation, and because cultural and ideological forces permeate and shape the word-image interplay, new strategies such as transcreation emerged on the scene to provide freer approaches to translation. Transcreation, more often than not, is called for in the world of advertising, especially since commercially oriented texts are culture-specific, designed with a purpose in mind, and, as is the present case, contain an amalgam of humour and scientific jargon. As Pedersen (2014) argues, transcreation “seeks to perform all the adjustments necessary to make a campaign work in all target markets while at the same time staying loyal to the original creative intent of the campaign” (58). Pedersen’s remark hints at the potential asymmetry and inaccessibility of cultural references that require extensive yet creative adaptation methods to ensure not only the linguistic and cultural acceptability of advertisements in the target culture but also to fulfil the advertisement’s purpose by producing the same desirable effect on the target audience.

Audiovisual translation as an intersemiotic translation

Audiovisual products occupy a semiotic space where the verbal and visual codes interact and are simultaneously expressed to create a meaningful whole. As a result of this dialogic exchange, rooted in the culture of origin, audiovisual translation (AVT) in general and advertisements, in particular, acquire the status of intersemiotic translation (Freitas, 2004; Taylor, 2020; Torresi, 2008). Extensive definitions have been formulated to characterize intersemiotic translation, Jakobson (1959) and Toury (1986) being the most notable ones; however, this study adopts Dusi’s (2005) definition as it immediately recognizes the inevitability of creative intercultural mediation. According to Dusi, intersemiotic translation is “not a simple transcodification but a transcultural, dynamic and functional event caught between the requirement to remain faithful to the source and the need to transform it into a text that is understood and accepted in the target culture” (183). What is of interest here is to examine how advertisements, which are “social, economic and cultural phenomenon[a]... characterized by a special use of language” (Ruiz and García, 2010, 148), are dubbed from English into Arabic via transcreation strategies, and how, and to what extent, language

variety (Modern Standard Arabic or Vernacular Arabic) plays a fundamental role in the dubbing of humorous hybrid-text types.

Dubbing as a mode of audiovisual translation

Dubbing is a common AVT mode that, as Chaume (2012) aptly puts it, “consists of replacing the original track of a film’s (or any audiovisual text) source language dialogues with another track on which translated dialogues have been recorded in the target language [while] [t]he remaining tracks are left untouched” (1). The removal of the original verbal narration emphasizes the established synergies between the inviolable visual narration and the translator’s creative (i.e., transadaptive) negotiation. That is to say, as the visuals cannot be manipulated and are in synthesis with other codes, the translator is obliged to find “an equally synthetic message” or “isotopic solutions” in the target verbal subtext by means of creative manipulation, as Chaume argues (1998, 17-18). In Chaume’s opinion, the textual constraints arising therefrom are not constraints *per se* but are permissive grounds for (re)creation; nonetheless, translators cannot easily extricate themselves from cultural and ideological constraints. In a similar vein, Muhanna (2014) views dubbing as a four-dimensional space where meaning has to be conveyed within a fixed timeframe that reflects the context-specific body language while taking into account lip-synchronization and characters’ bilabial movements. But the most critical dimension is that humour and cultural references should be legible and relayed appropriately.

Following this line of reasoning, it is inevitable that dubbing will become a medium of manipulation and censorship (Díaz Cintas, 2012; Kovarski, 1996; Zanotti, 2012), and the conglomerate chain of agents involved in the dubbing process –dialogue translator, dialogue adapter, actors, dubbing director, etc.– clearly reflects the different phases of manipulation. This goes to show that translators act within a social context, and this context reciprocally influences the translator’s ideology (Hatim and Mason, 2005; Tymoczko, 2003). The rewriting of values indicates that “translation is *parti pris* and that translators are engaged, actively involved, and affiliated with cultural movements” (Tymoczko, 2003, 200). In the Arab context, dubbing is the preferred mode of engagement since it promotes a sense of pan-Arabism and nationalism that counterweighs the linguistic hegemony of the English *lingua franca* on the one hand (Di Giovanni, 2016) and constitutes a censorial apparatus to conceal what is deemed inappropriate by an “Arab society which lives by religious, cultural and, in some countries, tribal values” (Yahiaoui, 2016, 196).

Dubbing as a cultural adaptation

While some researchers such as Thomas (1998), advocate faithfulness to the source culture to provoke “a healthy, creative and potentially fruitful clash of cultures” (107), and Mazi-Leskovar (2003) who considers retaining the exotic and the foreign in translation “to be a stimulus to reading” (254), others stipulate that integrating adaptive interventions (Agost, 2004) and developing cultural sensitivity (*Valdés Rodríguez, 2008*) are necessary measures in dubbing, or as Zabalbeascoa (1996) phrased it, “necessary evil[s]” (235). This parallels notions of acceptability and naturalness, the latter which in the realm of dubbing has been referred to as “prefabricated orality” and “contrived realism”. *A fortiori*, it is safe to argue that dubbing is one form of cultural adaptation that addresses the logistics of cultural difference by recontextualizing the original in line with the target culture’s identity and values. As a strategy, this cultural filtering fits Chesterman’s (2016) descriptions, namely that a strategy is a goal-oriented and problem-centered process that reacts to norms, involves textual manipulation, intersubjectivity, and is potentially conscious. Adaptation here – which encompasses the use of vernacular varieties – is distinguished as a macro-strategy (Federici, 2011; Newmark, 1988) that shares the same continuum with standardization – the minimization of language diversity in a multilingual society. For the sake of the current discussion, four micro-strategies are also distinguished: cultural substitution (replacing culture-specific items or expressions with ones more identifiable in the target culture), paraphrase (re-expressing the source item but in a different form), omission (often viewed as a form of subversion due to cultural clashes) and borrowing (the incorporation of source items without translation).

Arabic diglossia and dubbing

Dubbing and the entire spectrum of cultural adaptation into Arabic cannot be adequately discussed without first looking at the diglossic landscape of the Arabic language. Charles Ferguson (1959), the godfather of diglossia, defines the term as “[a] relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety” and he further states that the latter is “the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature [...] learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used [...] for ordinary conversation” (336). Ferguson’s definition attends to complex processes

such as, *inter alia*, language prestige, function and standardization, something which compartmentalizes the Arabic language within two varieties: a high variety and a low variety, representing Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and vernacular Arabic, respectively.

Drawing on Amara and Mar'i's discussion, Alsahafi (2016) maintains that MSA's elevated status in the Arabic society pertains to its liturgical function in Islam and Islamic heritage and the way it serves as a "unifying cultural force in Arab nationalism" (4). That is why Linn et al. (2018) consider standardization a desideratum, "something aspirational" and "an ideal form against which other forms can be judged" (27). Unlike Standard Arabic, the *lingua franca* of Muslims, vernacular Arabic varies according to geographical and social aspects that typologise the varieties into four regional classifications: The Iraqi/Gulf vernacular, the Levantine vernacular, Egyptian vernacular, and the Maghrib vernacular. However, the Egyptian vernacular remains the most widely adopted option in dubbing, sometimes in lieu of or after the traditional MSA. As I have argued elsewhere (Yahiaoui and Fattah, 2020; Yahiaoui et al., 2019; Al-Adwan and Yahiaoui, 2018), the Egyptian vernacular is not only widely popular, but also an ideal conduit to convey humour, satire and irony.

Hybrid texts in translation

Hybridity is a term that has been the subject of extensive research across a broad range of disciplines and interdisciplines, including translation studies. For instance, Schäffner and Adab (1997) suggest that hybrid texts are instigated by intercultural contact and are the result of translation; therefore, one definitive feature of hybridity is its non-conformity to the target culture's norms. Conveniently, the duo provide advertising as an example given that it helps "create a new global culture" and "often rely on knowledge, recognition and acceptance of social conventions and/or taboos" (Adab, 1997, 326). Schäffner and Adab's views of hybridity are similarly ricocheted by Pym (2001) from a cross-cultural communication perspective and Snell-Hornby (2001) from a post-colonial perspective. Nonetheless, hybridity is understood here in the sense elaborated by Hatim and Mason (2005) when they assert that hybrid texts "are multifunctional, normally displaying features of more than one type, and constantly shifting from one type to another. Given this inevitable hybridization, no categories, no matter how rigorously worked out, can be expected to be definitive" (Hatim and Mason, 2005, 107). Text-type and hybridity echo, to a great extent, Reiß's well-worn typology. Reiß (1981) identifies three functional dimensions:

informative (logical), expressive (aesthetic), and operative (dialogic); yet she, in light of the technological integration in translation, adds a fourth dimension: the audio-medial text-type, which she places above the other three since “it possesses its own regularities” (Reiß, 1981, 125). However, she dismisses the dimensions’ purity, mainly because they are synergistic and dependent on the communicative intention. Of course, text-typology cannot be mentioned without reference to the coterminous Skopos theory (Reiß and Vermeer, 1984/2014). Simply put, the theory states that the translational action is governed by its purpose, which automatically gives precedence to the target setting, target addressee, and target culture. To successfully achieve the source text’s skopos, translators resort to a plethora of translation strategies, similar to the micro-strategies mentioned earlier.

Homer’s colonoscopy, the advertisement

Homer’s colonoscopy is an advertisement broadcast in 2008 for Stand Up to Cancer (SU2C) organization, which according to their website, is created “to raise funds to accelerate the pace of groundbreaking translational research that can get new therapies to patients quickly and save lives now”. The advertisement, hence, aims to raise awareness of the importance of examination for early detection and treatment of colon cancer, and in one way or another, urges the viewers to donate. Viewed from the prism of hybridity, the advert is informative (transmits knowledge about colon cancer), operative (raises awareness and persuades viewers to consider early detection examinations), and audio-medial (as a verbal text infused with visual images). This amalgamation makes the advert simultaneously entertaining, educational, and scientific, which holistically serve the advert’s skopos. In fact, resorting to *The Simpsons* as the intertextual basis of the advert is rather ingenious when it comes to appeal and familiarity. As Beard (2004) observes, the American sitcom “is not a form of global culture, but of local culture with a global reach” (Beard, 2004, 290). In other words, although the genesis of *The Simpsons* came within the American culture and exhausts culture-specific references relevant to that culture, the show manages to transcend the local constraints because the humour is based on the visuals. Moreover, Homer’s personality, signposted by his lack of intelligence and forthright views, provides comic relief to an otherwise serious and critical subject.

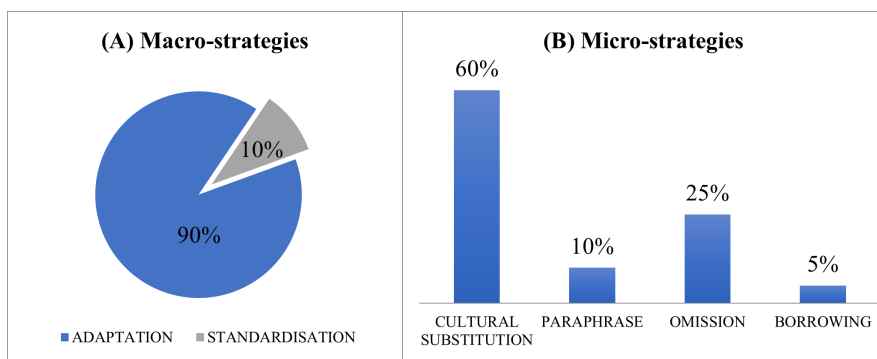
That said, and to reiterate, this paper’s objective is bipartite: first, to investigate the strategies employed to deal with an array of issues that arise in the dubbing of a hybrid-text type that also includes scientific jargon and

cultural and religious references for dubbing into Arabic. Second, to test which of the Arabic language variants is more suitable for such a task. In the present transcreation “experiment”, thirty-six participants were asked to translate the advert into either MSA or in one of its vernacular varieties. The participants’ translations were then accordingly analysed and further triangulated using a think-aloud protocol – in the form of question prompts – to fully gauge the participants’ agency in terms of decision making in the translation process and to validate their decisions. The analysis is divided according to three thematic issues the participants had to deal with: cultural issues, taboo issues, and religious issues. These themes are overlapping and intertwined with one another, but the main idea is that the issues represent different dimensions of ideology. For the sake of methodical treatment, I examine the transcreations made in MSA, followed by their vernacular counterparts (accordingly divided into group A and group B).

Analysis and discussion

As brokers of linguistic and cultural communication, translators are, by principle, in a mediation position that allows them to see the problem from the conciliatory and flexible angle of interculturality, which, in turn, influences the language choice and strategies they use. In relation to the former, 80% of the participants opted for the vernacular (Egyptian, Qatari, Syrian, and Tunisian), whereas the remaining 20% used standard Arabic. Figure 1 visually represents the participants’ variation in using macro and micro strategies.

Figure 1. Participants’ use of macro and micro strategies



Apropos of macro-strategies, the great majority preferred adaptation over standardization and primarily used cultural substitution and omission when it comes to micro-strategies, followed by paraphrase and borrowing, respectively. Let us take now a case of textual adaptation that illustrates, among other things, the ideological dimension of advertising.

Cultural issues

The advert's primary source of humour derives from its cultural embeddedness, a combination that lends texts, generally speaking, a degree of untranslatability, or makes translating humour "as desperate as that of translating poetry" Diot (1989, 84). Culture is inherent in the language, a quality often manifested using culture-specific items. Culture specifics, according to Ramière (2006), are "verbal and non-verbal (visual and auditory) signs which constitute a problem for cross-cultural transfer because they refer to objects or concepts that are specific to the original sociocultural context" (155). Along the same lines, Leppihalme (1997) differentiates between "transcultural" allusions (the meaning is mutually recognized in the source and target cultures) and "culture-specific" allusions (the meaning is exclusively known to those familiar with the source culture). Consequently, she concludes that culture specifics cannot be retained in translation because they will be unrecognizable or meaningless for the target audience. That said, translation solutions always foster creativity to achieve successful intercultural transfer. Let us examine MSA renditions first (see Table 1).

Example (1a) shows the use of a forbidden place (bar) and a forbidden practice (bet) in Muslim societies (Quran, Surah 2, verse 219; Surah 5, verse 90). The Islamic prohibition of such cultural concepts led one participant to omit the expression and replace it with "تستمتع بلحظات جميلة" [to make you have a good time], which is connected to the procedural discomfort prompted by the colonoscopy. Here, the participant is recontextualizing the cultural item in relation to the advert's medical setting to make his/her transcreation relevant to the narrative. Another translation omits the term "bar" but retains "bet" as in "لكسب رهان" [to win a bet], whereas the third translation inversely paraphrases "bet" but retains "bar" as in "كسب مباريات" [to win bar games]. The cultural items "bar" (where alcohol is served) and "bet" (one form of gambling) are transcultural if we apply Leppihalme's distinction; that is, although they are understood in Muslim societies, they are prohibited.

Table 1. Reconstructing socio-cultural items (MSA)

| Source Text | Target Text | Back Translation |
|---|---|--|
| (1a) But this time you won't be doing it to win a <u>bar bet</u> | - ولن يكون ذلك لجعلك <u>تستمتع بلحظات جميلة</u> - ولكن هذه المرة ليس لكسب <u>رهان</u> - ولكن هذه المرة لن تفعل هذا من أجل كسب <u>مباريات الحانة</u> | - And that won't be to make you have a good time - But this time not to win a bet - But this time you won't be doing it to win bar games |
| (2a) Welcome to the <u>Mayo Clinic</u> ... mmm Mayo! | - مرحباً بك في عيادة (مَيُو) ... واو، مايونيز! - مرحباً بكم في <u>مركز</u> <u>ماما الطبي</u> - مرحباً بك في <u>عيادتك... عما يتحدث؟</u> | - Welcome to Mayo Clinic...wow mayonnaise! - Welcome to Mom's Medical Centre - Welcome to your clinic...what is he talking about? |
| (3a) This is my <u>Moby Dick</u> ! This is my <u>Sergeant Peppers</u> ! | - هذا (موبي ديك) وهذه هي فرقة (بينلز) - إنه قصتي الخيالية، إنه <u>ألبومي الموسيقي</u> <u>المفضل!</u> - <u>فانوسي السحري</u> . | - This is Moby Dick, and this is the Beatles - My fictitious story, my favourite music album! - My magical lamp |
| (4a) To <u>Krusty Burger</u> ! | - هيا، إلى (كراستي برغر) - إلى <u>مطعم البرغر</u> | - Let's go to Krusty Burger - To a burger restaurant |

Example (2a) is more pun-oriented; the humour relies on both verbal and referential sources. Here, the proctologist welcomes Homer to his clinic, Mayo clinic, which triggers Homer to think about “Mayonnaise”. In reality, Mayo Clinic is a reputable non-profit medical centre commonly known in the United States; hence, the proper name “Mayo” is a socioculturally bound item and constitutes a homophonic pun when linked to the contracted “mayo”. Antonopoulou (2004) accentuates the retention of proper noun allusions in translation stating that if an entity is mentioned by name, then it is assumed that “the entity in question is worth naming and mentioning by name and/or [...] that the recipient of the message is in the position to identify the referent” (243). Cultural implications are immediately conceivable, as it is likely that the recipient might not get the humorous inferences, or they cannot be replicated in translation. On one occasion, the

pun has been retained using the borrowing strategy, and it achieves the humorous effect, albeit the target audience would not think of the proper name “عيادة (ميو)” [Mayo Clinic] as an allusion to an actual entity. Another translation not only omits the pun, but it also re-names the clinic as “مركز ماما الطبي” [Mom’s Medical Centre], a choice that might indicate ulterior motives. The pun has been sacrificed likewise in “مرحباً بك في عيادتك. . عما” [welcome to your clinic...what is he talking about?], which is a problematic rendition, particularly as Homer’s facial expressions in the advert does not suggest confusion.

Example (3a) shows a double use of culture-specific items: one literary and the other musical. On the one hand, “Moby Dick” is the eponymous antagonist of Melville’s novel of the same name, a gigantic whale that Captain Ahab vowed to hunt for and destroy (in this context, the proctologist is likened to Ahab and Homer’s rear that of the whale). On the other hand, “Sergeant Peppers” is a music album by the English band The Beatles and is considered a masterpiece by many (after uttering the words, the proctologist miraculously pulls out a Sergeant Peppers music CD). One participant retained the cultural allusion of “Moby Dick” yet paraphrased “Sergeant Peppers” to “The Beatles”, which can be assumed to be a name more recognizable in the target culture: “هذا (موبي ديك) وهذه هي فرقة (بيتلز)” [this is Moby Dick and this is the Beatles]. Another participant exchanges the connotative meanings with the denotative, making the cultural items more explicit. The translation reads as “إنه قصتي الخيالية، إنه ألبومي الموسيقي” [my fictitious story, my favourite music album]. The references are explained to allow for easier recognition, albeit the cognitive appreciation of the joke is lost in translation. A different translation integrates instead an allusion to the *Arabian Nights*, which is a canonical text in Arabic literature, via the use of Aladdin’s lamp: “فانوسي السحري” [my magical lamp].

When Homer wakes after the colonoscopy, he decides to immediately pay a visit to “Krusty Burger”, a restaurant located in the fictitious town of Springfield that serves unconventional fast food, to “test drive” his new colon. As example (4a) shows, the proper name was either rendered as it is in translation “هيا، إلى كرستي برغر” [let’s go to Krusty Burger] or underwent a shift to signify any restaurant “إلى مطعم البرغر” [to a burger restaurant]. However, it is fair to postulate that the comedic effect arises not directly from the name but from Homer’s decision to consume fast food immediately after the excision of the polyps. In this instance, the SU2C organization is highlighting the role of trans fatty acids (found in fast food) in affecting the digestive system in general and the colon in particular. The following excerpts in Table 2 exhibit creative cultural reconstruction of the

source text's material when switching to dialectal varieties by which the original setting is localized according to the participants' sociocultural environment.

Table 2. Reconstructing socio-cultural items (**vernacular**)

| Source Text | Target Text | Back Translation |
|---|---|---|
| (1b) But this time, you won't be doing it to win a <u>bar bet</u> | - هاذي مش بش تعملها على <u>خطر خطر</u> - بس المرة دي مش <u>حتكسب</u> <u>من وراها فلوس!</u> | - This is not for you to use for a bet - But this time, you are not getting any money from it |
| (2b) Welcome to the <u>Mayo Clinic</u> ... mmm Mayo! | - نورتننا يا أستاذ في Colonoscopy Centre - مرحبا بيك في كLINIK حشيشة، ممم، شيشة - أهلين بعيادة دعبول، ممم، معمول | - Welcome to the Colonoscopy Centre - Welcome to the Hashisha Clinic ... mmm shisha! - Welcome to Daaboul Clinic ... mmm maamoul! |
| (3b) This is my <u>Moby Dick</u> ! This is my <u>Sergeant Peppers</u> ! | - دي شي يحنط للأجيال القادمة - هاذي عزيزة عثمانة، وهاذي فطومة بورقيبة، هاذي عليسة وحنبعل - دا حلم عمري، إيه العظمى دي! دا اليوم أم كلثوم - آيه والله أحلى من ١٠٠ أسهرة بقاسيون على أنغام الست فيروز العظيمة | - This should be mummified for future generations! - This is Aziza Athamna, Fatouma Bourguiba... these are Alisa and Hanaabal - This is the dream of my life. What a great thing! This is Umm Kulthum's album! - I swear, it's better than 100 concerts by the great Fairouz in Qasioun |
| (4b) To <u>Krusty Burger</u> ! | - مشبنا هريس الوالدة - يالا ببنا على <u>أبو شقرة</u> حالا! - عند <u>كشري أبو طارق</u> | - Let's go to <i>Harees Al-Waldah</i> [lit. Mum's Harees] - Let's go to <i>Abu Shakra</i> right now! - To <i>Abu Tareq's</i> Kushari |

Example (1b) displays the participants' concurrent omission of "bar" and the hedging of "bet" to connote the involvement of money, as in "مش حتكسب" [you are not getting any money from it] to gain appropriate reception. Although the translation "خطر خطر" [to use for a bet] uses a Tunisian term for "bet", most Arab viewers would not recognize the connotation.

Two strategies can be observed when looking at example (2b); the "Mayo-mayo" pun was either eliminated or culturally recreated. For instance, one participant decided to re-name the clinic as "Colonoscopy Centre" to generally refer to the procedure. In contrast, two other participants relied on assonant rhyming and cultural items to preserve the pun. To elucidate, "كلينيك حشيشة، ممم، شيشة" [Hashisha Clinic, mmm shisha!] re-names the clinic "Hashisha" (meaning weed) and uses the culture-specific item "shisha" (a type of smoking prevalent in Arab culture) to convey the pun. Identically "عيادة دعبول، ممم، معمول" [Daaboul Clinic, mmm ma'amoul!] re-names the clinic "Daaboul" (which means fat man in some Levantine dialects) and relates it to "ma'amoul", which is a popular sweet in the Arabian Peninsula.

Example (3b) reflects the de-americanization of the source text in translation. For instance, "دي شي يحنط للأجيال القادمة" [this should be mummified for future generations!] substitutes the original references using the ancient Egyptian practice of mummification. Meanwhile, "هاذي عزيزة" [this is Aziza Athamna, Fatouma Bourguib, these are Alisa and Hanaabal] is rich in Tunisian allusions to famous historical figures and places. Other participants primarily focused on transadapting "Sergeant Peppers" using celebrated singers in the Arab world, such as the Egyptian Umm Kulthum and the Lebanese Fairuz. Therefore, "this is my Sergeant Peppers" becomes "إيه العظمة دي! ده اليوم أم" [what a great thing! This is Umm Kulthum's album!], and in another becomes "أيه والله أحلى من ١٠٠ سهرة بقاسيون على أنغام الست فيروز العظيمة" [I swear, it's better than 100 concerts by the great Fairouz in Qasioun]. In fact, the appearance of the album after the verbal remark represents what Zabalbeascoa (1994) calls the visual joke, "the joke which depends on a combination of words and picture and where the translator can only hope to find some form of compensation in words that will cover the same images, which cannot be altered by convention" (97). This explains why the focus was only on the music reference; to avoid dissonance between the verbal and the visual channels.

Cultural substitution is also evident in example (4b), in which "Krusty Burger" was adapted to "أبو شقرة" [Harees Al-Waldah] "أبريس والدة"

Shakra], and “كشري أبو طارق” [Abu Tareq’s Kushari]. All the adaptations mention famous restaurants in Qatar and Egypt, respectively, that serve traditional food (i.e., the Khaliji hariss, the Egyptian Kushari). These renditions, in one way or another, corroborate the view that the translatability of culture-related jokes does not require an obligation to linguistic structures more than it requires the translator’s successful delivery of the joke.

Taboo issues

Allan (2001) interprets taboo words as “those considered offensive, shocking, or indecent when used in certain contexts” (148). Likewise, Knowles (2000) defines taboo as “a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place, or thing” (1072). Interestingly enough, Ghazalah (2003) notes that “Standard Arabic monolingual and bilingual dictionaries usually have no entries for taboo words for sociocultural and religious reasons” (213). All these conceptualizations encapsulate the fact that taboo words are culture-specific, which entails the perception that taboo is not ubiquitous in all cultures. Naturally, this heterogeneity adds a layer of constraint to the translator. In a conservative culture such as that of the Arab culture, which is predominantly governed by religion and societal customs, it is rarely the case that taboo words would not be euphemized or censored. The following excerpts in Table 3 illustrate how taboo references have been rendered in MSA.

As the back translations indicate, rendering sexually suggestive words into Arabic underwent significant shifts, indicating that the participants are conscious of the target norms and culture. In example (5a) for instance, Homer’s instantaneous suggestion “boobs embiggened?” has been replaced with less offensive and more acceptable terms, as in “ستجملين أنفك السمين؟” [beautifying your fat nose?] and “ستقومين بعملية تجميل؟” [having plastic surgery?]. Since the connotations of the original are sensitive, the translations display evasive substitutions to avoid cultural infringement. However, “تريدين تكبير صدرك؟” [make your chest bigger?] euphemistically attempted to disguise the unpleasantness and embarrassment by using an alternative form capable of communicating the same meaning without being overtly explicit (Al-Adwan, 2015). As Farghal (1995) claims, the pragmatic reliance on euphemism “in natural language is more akin to standard Arabic than to different varieties of colloquial Arabic because it is deeply rooted in the linguistic politeness manifested in careful speech” (369). Thus, one

could argue that the formality of language influences translation behaviour, which means the high variety of Standard Arabic and its association with religion and the language of the Quran is perhaps one reason why dysphemism is more present in colloquial Arabic.

Table 3. Taboo language (MSA)

| Source Text | Target Text | Back Translation |
|---|---|--|
| (5a) You're having your <u>boobs embiggened</u> ? | - هل ستجعلين أنفك السمين؟ - تريدin تكبير صدرك؟ - ستقومين بعملية تجميل؟ | - Are you beautifying your fat nose? - You want to make your chest bigger? - You are having plastic surgery? |
| (6a) They stick a camera up <u>your ah-ow!</u> | - يدخلون كاميرا في منطقة "الواو" - سيدخلون كاميرا في جزئك الخلفي - يتطلب هذا وضع آلة تصوير داخل أسفل جسمك | - They will insert a camera in the 'wawa' area - They will insert a camera in your backside. - This requires putting a camera inside your lower part |
| (7a) <u>This ass</u> is why I became a doctor! | - كم أنا محظوظ! - هذا ما جعلني أدخل مهنة الطب! - بسبب هذه المؤخرة أصبحت طبيباً! - إن هذا الجسم سبب أرغبني في أن أكون طبيباً! | - How lucky I am! - This is why I joined medicine - because of this ass, I became a doctor - This body is what made me want to become a doctor! |

In example (6a), Marge is explaining to Homer what a colonoscopy is by saying "they stick a camera up your ah-ow". Character divergence is worth noting here, even if very briefly. Contrary to Homer, Marge shows signs of moralism and conservatism, which she clearly reflects in her behaviour and speech in varying degrees and which could reasonably justify her use of the innuendo "ah-ow". In one of the translations, the term has been equivalently rendered as "منطقة "الواو" ['wawa' area]. Using a similar innuendo to paraphrase the meaning in Arabic managed to compromise and convey the message without violating either the source text content or the target culture,

and yet, the lexical addition of “area” insinuates the anatomical nature of the utterance. The other two translations, on the other hand use “جزئك الخلفي” [back side] and “أسفل جسمك” [lower part] respectively, both of which discard the metaphoric façade by using fairly acceptable expressions in Arabic. Even when the participants de-euphemized the source utterance, the translations still present a level of conscious refrain from referencing the meaning directly.

Example (7a) is an explicit reference to what Marge called “ah-ow”. The doctor’s exclamation, “This ass is why I became a doctor” is outright humorous because first, it is unexpected, and second, the visuals (the sparkling light effect) and diegetic music contribute to the effect. In terms of translation, the term has been entirely omitted in “كم أنا محظوظ!” [how lucky I am!] and “هذا ما جعلني أدخل مهنة الطب” [this is why I joined medicine]. As mentioned earlier, references to the private parts represent offensive content in the Arab culture, and such sanitizations establish linguistic politeness and decency. Therefore, in both instances, the taboo is maneuvered and mitigated by allowing the visuals to compensate for the loss. Likewise, the translation “إن هذا الجسم سبب أرغني في أن أكون طبيباً” [this body is what made me want to become a doctor!] lessens the obscenity of the taboo item by transitioning from partial to whole. Remarkably, another translation directly transfers the meaning using the word “المؤخرة” [ass/lit. rear], which the participant perhaps deemed acceptable to render given the scientific setting of the advert. All the above translations, however varying, are confined within the semantic scope of the original utterance, which is not always the case with the vernacular.

Table 4. Taboo language (**vernacular**)

| Source Text | Target Text | Back Translation |
|---|---|---|
| (5b) You’re having your <u>boobs embiggened</u> ? | - حَتْسِيبِنِي أَسَافِر مَعَ صَاحِبِي لَوَحْدِي؟ - بَتَفَكِينَا مِنْ مَشَاوِيرِ الْجَمِّ؟ - بَاش تَرِيقَل بَدَنَكَ وَتَوَلِي سَفَالَت؟ - هَتَنَفَخِي شَفَايِفَكَ وَلَا إِيه؟ - هُو إِنْت قَرَرْتَ تَنَفَخِي صَدْرَكَ؟ | - You will let me travel alone with my friends? - You will relieve me from going to the gym? - You are going to tone up your body and become gorgeous? - You are going to (inflate) make your lips fuller? - You are going to (inflate) augment your chest? |