



Applying Gottlieb's Global Normalization Between Arab Amateur and Professional Subtitling of American Films (The Case of Thor: Love and Thunder)

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative quantitative research offered a comparison between amateur subtitling and professional subtitling of American movies into Arabic. It was found that Arab amateur subtitlers do not follow Gottlieb's (2012) global normalization strategies of subtitling on the linguistic level but tend to comply more to the global norms on the technical layout level. The findings of the research are limited to a small corpus, consisting of 15 examples, in which a comparative analysis of the strategies employed in each of the two subtitled versions of the American movie, Thor: Love and Thunder (2022) was conducted; hence, the results cannot be generalized on all Arab amateur subtitlers. However, findings might be beneficial for future research in the field. Further research is also needed on reasons behind Arab amateur subtitlers' avoidance to comply with the norms of global normalization compared to professional subtitlers.

Keywords: professional subtitlers, amateur subtitlers, global normalization strategies, cultural norms, offensive language, transfer.



Introduction

Audio-visual Translation (AVT) has come to be acknowledged as a recognized field of research in translation studies (TS) in the last two decades. The proliferation of AVT, both as a form of translation and as an area of studies, came hand in hand with the technological development. With the advent of technology, a particular interest in audio-visual translation has aroused in the academic circles (Pérez-González, 2007). The most popular AVT modes explored by researchers are subtitling and dubbing, the different aspects of which were explored in both descriptive and applied types of TS. This research focuses on an issue that has not been adequately researched in AVT studies, which is comparing amateur and professional forms of subtitling in the Arab world.

Subtitling has been variously described by AVT scholars. One interesting description was offered by Gottlieb (2012) who explained that subtitling is a multimodal text that can be defined as

diamesic translation in polysemiotic media (including films, TV, video and DVD) in the form of one or more lines of written text presented on the screen in sync with the original verbal content. By ‘diamesic translation’ is meant the type of verbal transfer that crosses over from writing to speech, or – as in the case of subtitling – from speech to writing (p. 37).

In the last two decades, a new paradigm of subtitling, manifested in amateur subtitling, started to see the light; the empowerment of this special paradigm of subtitling was mainly caused by the advent of technology (Wilcok, 2013). It can also be referred to the phenomenon of fansubbing compared to professional subtitling.

Professional Subtitling Versus Amateur Subtitling

Professional subtitling, also known as mainstream subtitling and commercial subtitling, can be defined as “accepted subtitling practices used by professionals working for audiovisual industry” (Pérez-González, 2007). According to Wilcok (2013), professional subtitlers “are encouraged to follow the norms or ‘best practice’ of their industry in order to produce subtitles that are consistent, of a high quality and that have been made easy to process through methods such as length reduction and domestication” (p. 3). These norms or best practices are further explicated by Gottlieb (2012) who asserted that professional translators must seek the norm of localization by using the global normalization strategy through which “the subtitler moves the dialogue away from its original and, literally speaking, often eccentric position within its genre, pulling it into a position which is less extreme” (p. 52).

In contrast to professional subtitling, amateur subtitling is carried out by non-professional translators or fansubbers who follow their own norms. Bogucki (2009) argues that amateur subtitling “is not unrelated to fansub” (p. 49). Accordingly, the term amateur subtitling is usually used interchangeably with non-professional subtitling or fansubbing; in this sense, it means that “communities of volunteers that produce non-professional subtitles come together online and use the technological resources at their disposal to create subtitles and distribute them over the Internet” (Orrego-carmona & Lee, 2017). Bogucki (2009) prefer to describe those ‘non-



professional' subtitlers as amateur subtitle producers instead of translators, stating that it is "a term used here in place of 'translator' or 'subtitler' as the product under discussion does not qualify as fully fledged subtitling"; moreover, the amateur subtitle producers "typically work with a recording of the original, but they have no access to the post-production script." (p. 49).

The past two decades have witnessed a proliferation of fansubbing (Wilcok, 2013) or amateur subtitling. The rationale behind this phenomenon is that the digital era and ease of accessing networks have provided those amateur subtitling with the required tools for subtitling without being restricted by the censorship of any organization. Moreover, information and communication technologies have been a rich soil for the phenomenon of fansubbing to expand and grow (Gonzales, 2007). This amounts to saying that within the amateur subtitling paradigm, fans with no training and with the needed available access to technology can subtitle any newly released program or movie directly and make it available online.

There are several reasons behind the success and proliferation of the fansubbing phenomenon. One reason can be attributed to the fact that amateur subtitlers produce subtitled versions of a newly released movie or program in a relatively short time (24-48 hrs), "according to the needs and preferences of their audiences" (Gonzales, 2007, p. 71), compared to professional subtitlers who follow certain organizational and social norms before releasing the subtitled versions to public media. Although amateur subtitling has become very popular, its research area is still considered modest, but increasing, in the academic circles of Translation Studies (Wilcok, 2013). Another reason for the success of fansubbing is the weight and popularity of online subtitled movies and programs, which made it a widely spread worldwide phenomenon. Due to this success, studies on amateur subtitling forced its way into TS body of research.

Research on Amateur Subtitling (Fan Subbing) in the Arab World

The situation is different in the Arab world in relation to the amount of research conducted on amateur subtitling. Albeit becoming a widespread online phenomenon in the Arab world, amateur subtitling, or fansubbing, is still a pristine area of study there. The number of studies addressing the norms, and strategies employed in the process of Arab amateur subtitling (i.e., Khalaf & Rashid, 2016; Eldalees et al., 2017; Yahiaoui, 2022; Al-zgoul and Alsalman, 2022; Ibrahim & Algahazalli, 2023) are relatively modest in regard to the increasing number of studies in the field.

Ibrahim and Algahazalli (2023) focused on how fansubbers translate abbreviations from the English movie, *The Fifth Estate*, into Arabic. Three fan translations of the movie were selected for analysis. The study found that the fansubbers made more linguistic errors than technical errors and did not achieve a good balance between the linguistic and technical aspects of translation. Ibrahim and Algahazalli concluded that the limitations of amateur fan translation were evident in the high error rate.

Eldalees et al. (2017) examined Arabic subtitles of the film, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which were produced by amateur subtitlers from Jordan and Lebanon. Eldalees et al.'s study focused on how the amateur subtitlers handle sensitive topics like sexuality,



swear words, and embarrassing bodily functions. Using Al-Adwan's (2015) model of euphemisation in subtitling, the study revealed that while the model addresses most problematic instances, it fails to account for the use of dysphemism as a translation strategy. The findings showed that fansubbers employ both euphemism and dysphemism when translating challenging content in Arabic subtitles.

Amateur subtitling swear words into Arabic was also examined by Al-Zgoul and Al-Salman (2022), whose quantitative-qualitative research focused on how culture-specific expressions in English subtitles are translated into Arabic by fansubbers. The study focused on analysing both the English subtitles and the Arabic fan subtitles, applying Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014)'s translation model of translation strategies, and Ljung's (2011) classification of swear words. The researchers found that the connotations of the swear words were often neglected in the fan subtitles, which reducing the accuracy of the translation. The study provided insights into how fansubbers translate culture-specific expressions and swear words and offered recommendations to improve such translations.

Furthermore, Khalaf and Rashid (2016) examined how Arabic amateur subtitle translators attenuate or lessen the profanity of swear words in English movies. The researchers argued that subtitling profanity poses challenges due to differences in the way offensive swear words are viewed by different cultures. Cultural norms were found to strongly influence the choice of attenuation strategy for translating swear words.

Yahiaoui (2022) chose to explore the issue of how Arabic fan subbers share in maintaining the misrepresentation and stereotyping which are widespread in Western popular culture, such as TV, films, music and comics. Yahiaoui's study used techniques like multimodal critical discourse analysis and film analysis, and applied Roland Barthes' concept of myth to analyze how Hollywood's "soft power" (p. 2) shapes global audiences' views. The focus of the study was on how racial and gender groups, as Arab and Muslim men and women, are negatively stereotyped in Western films and TV shows, and how Arabic subtitles of these works perpetuate this misrepresentation.

To fill in the gap in the literature of amateur subtitling in Arabic research, the current research aims to explore the basic differences between the two paradigms of amateur subtitling and professional subtitling in the Arab world. This aim was achieved through investigating and comparing the differences on the linguistic and the technical levels between two Arabic subtitled versions of the American film, Thor: Love and Thunder (2022). In regard to the linguistic level, the qualitative comparative analysis focused on the type of strategies frequently used by professional (PRO) and (NP) non-professional subtitlers in translating a particular aspect of language in the American film, namely, sensitive and offensive language, i.e., abusive swearwords, cursing, profane/blasphemous expressions, animal name terms (Ávila-Cabrera, 2016, p.29). Gottlieb's (2012) global normalization strategies, as opposed to his (literal) transfer strategy (1992, p.166), were adopted to describe the strategies used by the Pro and NP subtitlers. Analysis of the technical level, on the other hand, focused on comparing the standards followed in the subtitling layout, on the basis of the



recognized subtitling standards, or ‘Code of Good Subtitling Practice Guide’, proposed by Ivarsson and Carroll (1998), which include, for example, position of subtitles, number of characters in each line, number of lines on screen, and heads and glosses. The research also investigates, via quantitative analysis, the frequency rate of normalizing and transfer strategies in 15 non-randomly selected samples from each version.

Based on the above aims, the current research addresses the following questions:

1. What are the types of strategies mostly used by professional subtitlers and amateur subtitlers in two Arabic subtitled versions of the American movie, Thor: Love and Thunder on the linguistic level and technical level of subtitling layout?
2. How far do Gottlieb’s global normalization and transfer strategies reveal differences between professional (PRO) and non-professional (NP) subtitling on the linguistic level illustrated in the offensive language used in the American movie?
3. How far does Ivarsson and Carroll (1998)’s code of subtitling standards contribute to revealing the differences between Arab PRO and NP subtiters on the technical level of subtitling layout features?

Corpus of Study: Thor: Love and Thunder

The study corpus is based on the American movie, Thor: Love and Thunder produced by Marvel Studios and distributed by Walt Disney Motion Pictures in 2022. The comparison of the global normalization and transfer strategies used by the Arabic subtitlers is conducted on the linguistic and technical (layout) levels of the two study corpora, namely, the fansubbed version and the professional subtitled version of the American film. On the linguistic level, the comparison is conducted with reference to the translation of sensitive and offensive language, i.e., abusive swearwords, cursing, profane/blasphemous expressions, animal name terms (used for insulting or cursing) (Ávila-Cabrera, 2016, p.29), in the two subtitled Arabic versions, whereas the comparison on the technical level includes the analysis of standards followed by the subtitlers on the level of the subtitles’ layout; i.e., the number of character, number of lines, position on the screen, and color of subtitles in both versions.

Thor: Love and Thunder (2022) is a PG-13 famous Marvel movie. PG-13 is a “US trademark” that means “a film rating meaning “parents strongly cautioned”: it indicates that parents may find some content of the film unsuitable for children under thirteen” (Collins Dictionary, n.d.). The movie revolves around the Marvel Comics character, Thor, who is pictured as the god of thunder with his magical hammer, Mjolnir. Thor decides to retire and goes through a self-discovery journey, in which he is disrupted by Gorr, the ‘Butcher of gods,’ who aims to kill all existing gods. To face the threat, Thor asks for aid from his ex-girlfriend, who surprisingly turns out to be the Mighty Thor, a marvel superhero, and King Valkyire, his friend. Through a galactic adventure together, both Thor and his former girlfriend succeed in stopping Gorr.



Review of Related Literature

The literature review consists of two sections: one introducing the theoretical framework mainly based on Gottlieb (2012) and Ivarsson and Carroll (1998); the other including reviews on previous research, background history and definition of amateur subtitling, in addition to its characteristics and standards.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the research is based on Gottlieb's (2012) global normalization strategies, which were adopted to explore the different conventions of the two subtitling paradigms, i.e., amateur and professional subtitling. According to Gottlieb (2012), subtitling is considered as a foreignizing or overt type of translation. Consequently, localization strategies must be employed to make the text acceptable and comprehensible to the target audience; "many subtitled films and TV programs show clear signs of streamlining or normalization, in which non-standard verbal elements have been replaced by standard ones" (p. 51). By employing the global normalization strategy, subtitlers make the original eccentric dialogue 'less extreme', a phenomenon, which, to Gottlieb (2012), is diagnosed as "as the centripetal effect in translation" (p. 52).

According to Gottlieb (2012), Global normalization strategies are employed on both the linguistic level and layout level. Strategies of global normalization on the linguistic level include two main strategies applied on the lexical and syntactic levels:

1. Condensation: "Subtitles are condensed by default" (Gottlieb, 2012, p.59). In other words, condensation is considered as a must in subtitling to cope with time and space constraints. Subtitlers condense or reduce their texts on two lexical levels, namely, the word level and syntactic level, through the following strategies:
 - a) decimation and omission carried out on the lexical level, which are illustrated in reducing pauses, false starts and repetition (p. 56).
 - b) simplifying by using generalization, synonyms, or contractions (on the lexical level) (p. 56).
 - c) Modulation on the syntactic level, used to make the needed changes in the structure, as for example, changing for example active into passive. Gottlieb (2012) recommends avoiding echoing which means "copying foreign syntax in the subtitles" (p. 61).

2. Explicitation, which is applied by clarifying ambiguous lexical items using strategies as expansion and paraphrase (p. 52).

In contrast to the global normalizing strategies that basically aim at changing the original offensive term form, and hence are considered to be target/localized-oriented, the strategy of 'Transfer', which is defined by Gottlieb (1992) as "the strategy of translating the source text completely and accurately", indicates a source-foreignized orientation in subtitling (p. 166).

As for the global normalizing strategies applied on the level of the overall layout, Gottlieb (2012) distinguishes between macro segmentation and micro segmentation (p. 65). Macro segmentation is concerned with shaping the units of the dialogue into blocks. Dialogue blocks can be categorized as:



1. Grammatical segmentation shaping blocks of dialogue by semantic and syntactic units.
2. Rhetorical subtitles segmenting blocks by the speech rhythm.
3. Visual segmentation shaping the blocks in accordance with the moves of the scene on the screen.

Micro segmentation is concerned with shaping the macro segmented individual blocks into certain global subtitling technical parameters and conventions. Audio-visual translators must be aware of sense blocks as segments, and blocks are of paramount importance to viewer's perception (Gottlieb, 2012, p. 67).

In regard to layout, Ivarsson and Carroll (1998) (as cited in Ramael, 2001) have proposed the 'Code of Good Subtitling Practice Guide' which, they think, has to be followed by subtitlers. Some of the technical conventions posed by them are:

3. Subtitles position should be consistent centred.
4. Lines of each subtitled block should be limited to two lines.
5. Top line should be shorter than bottom line.
6. Each line should be limited to 37 characters including spaces.

The current research explores the application of the global normalization norm by amateur subtitling as opposed to professional subtitling on both the linguistic level, represented by sensitive and taboo terms or expressions, and the technical level, represented by subtitles' layout, to draw conclusions related to the basic practices and conventions followed by Arabic subtitlers belonging to the two different set of subtitling paradigms.

Previous Research on Amateur Subtitling

According to Cornu (2013), not long ago, research on amateur subtitling was not only discouraged, but was also not accepted in the academic circles (as cited in Orrego-Carmon, 2019). However, the last two decade witnessed an increasing number of translation studies investigating, and exploring this phenomenon (i.e., Ameri and Khoshsaligheh, 2019; Dayamanti and Hartono, 2021; Díaz-Cintas & Munoz Sanchez, 2006; Dore and Petrucci, 2021; Dwyer, 2017; Gach, 2012; Hall, 2021; Nornes, 1999; Perez-Gonzales, 2014; Putri and Wijaya, 2018; Wilcock, 2013)

History of Amateur Subtitling

The history of amateur subtitling is traced back to late 70s. The phenomenon was launched by Japanese anime American fans as a reaction to preventing these animations from being subtitled for American and Canadian TV broadcasting channels due to some regulations and restrictions at that time (Dwyer, 2019). Therefore, early studies on amateur subtitling were limited to Japanese anime into English language with no consideration to other genres or other languages (Brian, 2012; Ferrer Simo, 2005; Hatcher, 2005; Schules, 2012; Díaz-Cintas and Munoz, 2006; Condry, 2010; Künzli and Dow 2011). With the advance of technology, the potential tools of subtitling were realized by larger number of users along with the ease of communication on the internet. Ever since, amateur subtitling community



have grown larger and larger to include other genres in order to fulfil the needs of the global audience (Orrego-Carmon, Lee, 2017).

Definition

Reviewing the literature, one might notice that there were different attempts made by different scholars to provide a definition that precisely describes the phenomenon of fansubbing. According to Díaz-Cintas (2018), this difference is due to the difficulty of drawing clear lines between the different attitudes of amateur subtitling scattered over the internet. Among the scholars who provided definitions for the term ‘fansubbing’ were: Nornes who (1999) described amateur subtitling as “abusive subtitling” (p.448); Dwyer (2012a) who labelled it as Guerilla translation, Antonio et al.(2017a) who defined it as non -professional translation, and Díaz-Cintas (2018) who termed it cyber subtitles.

Characteristics and Standards

This section provides a short overview of the most distinctive features of fansubbing. Many scholars provided a plethora of arguments about the differences between the conventions of fans subbing and formal subtitling. As indicated by Wilcock (2013), fansubbing is considered a rapidly developing translation genre that is influenced and driven by the needs and expectations of the audience rather than being driven by the economic factor as is the case with professional subtitling. In other words, fansubbers’ priority is based on consumers’ expectations while professional subtitling priority is based on economic factors.

To this end, myriad studies were conducted to explore the characteristics and features that lie at the basis of fans subbing. According to Perez-Gonzales (2014), fansubbers produce their subtitling to programs as a reaction to their disagreement with professional subtitling conventions and practices. Fansubbers’ community is made up of voluntarily self-appointed untrained translators who seek to fulfil entertainment rather than profitability. Perez-Gonzales asserted that fansubbing practices can be reflected clearly in the wide range of fonts, colors, and alignments used within a subtitled movie as opposed to professional subtitling which uses a unified type of fonts, colours, and alignment. Perez-Gonzales concluded that fansubbing breaks all linguistic and technical norms to fulfil the consumer’s expectations.

Ameri and Khoshsaligheh (2019) explored the practices of Iranian amateur subtitling practices. The researchers focused on two aspects: understanding the profile of Iranian amateur subtitlers and examining products to understand practices and features. The study reached the conclusion that amateur subtitlers do not tend to follow the target norms, but rather translate creatively.

Dore and Petrucci (2021) assessed the impact of the fast technological development on the field of subtitling. Dora and Petrucci analyzed the interlingua and intercultural levels of the English series fansubbed into Italian comparing it to its dubbed and professionally subtitled versions. The study shows the flexibility of professional and amateur AVT, which appear to overlap within today’s ever-changing mediascape.



Gach (2012) analyzed three Ukrainian films fansubbed into English to evaluate the quality of fansubbers' subtitling and their compliance to the existing subtitling standards. The study found that fansubbers tend to violate the existing subtitling norms concerning layout, spatial parameters, punctuation, and omission other linguistic, cultural, and prosodic elements.

Wilcock (2013) made an in-depth linguistic and cultural investigation of a ST and a TT to uncover the strategies and practices employed by Amateur subtitlers. Wilcock stressed that professional subtitlers are encouraged to employ high quality standards to ensure acceptability and legitimacy to the norms of the target audience, i.e., professional subtitlers are forced to be target language oriented. On the other hand, amateur subtitlers' sole standard to be fulfilled and ensured is language correctness, i.e., amateur subtitlers are more source language oriented.

Putri and Wijaya (2018) conducted a descriptive comparative study on two versions of a subtitled movie to explore the differences between the strategies used by fansubbers and professional subtitlers in translating idioms. The study reached the conclusion that professional subtitlers tend to be more communicative than amateur subtitlers. In other words, professional subtitlers tend to be more target language oriented in order to render a more natural comprehensible text compared to amateur subtitlers who are more source language oriented.

To elaborate on the approach adopted by subtitlers, Dwyer (2017) compared between professional subtitling and amateur subtitling focusing on the standards outlining length, layout and language. Dwyer found out that fansubbers prefer to produce a word-for word translation adopting a source-oriented approach.

Díaz-Cintas & Sanchez (2006) described the product of amateur subtitling as a "hybridisation" (p. 50) where amateur subtitlers tend to use different subtitling approaches and strategies to foreignize the product incorporating it with notes and glosses. Similarly, Nornes (1999) defined the practices of amateur subtitlers as "abusive strategies" (p. 448) where amateur subtitlers tend to prefer foreignization as opposed to "corruption strategies" which fulfil domestication.

Dayamanti and Hartono (2021) explored the strategies used by fansubbers in the subtitling of the Korean variety show, "Hot and Young Seoul Trip X NCT LIFE" (2018) into Indonesian. The study listed several of the mostly used strategies, which were imitation, dislocation, expansion, paraphrase, transcription, condensation, and deletion. Along with the implementation of the previously mentioned strategies, the study highlighted the creative use of layout and textual parameters including colors, fonts, and alignment. Albeit violating the recognized standards of subtitling, the study found that those violations helped audience overcome language barrier assisting in delivering a comprehensible text.

Unlike other scholars, Hall (2021) sought to examine the differences between English subtitled versions of Korean drama series carried out by professional subtitlers and amateur subtitlers. Hall focused on exploring differences, reasons for these differences, and reception factors. The study pinpointed that fansubbing has both points of strength and weaknesses. The point of strength lies in the fact that it more popular among audience as it meets their needs and expectations. Nevertheless,



fansubbers tend to be too source-language oriented which leads them to commit linguistic and layout errors.

Methodology

The research mainly adopts a mixed qualitative-quantitative research method to conduct descriptive comparative analysis of the two paradigms of Arabic subtitling, and reach conclusions about the difference between the rate of applying normalizing strategies in both paradigms. To pinpoint the differences in applying global normalization strategies in both paradigms (amateur subtitling and professional subtitling), qualitative textual and technical analysis was used to analyze and compare the Arabic professional subtitled version (referred to as PRO) and the Arabic amateur subtitled version (referred to as NP) of the English movie Thor: Love and Thunder (2022). The two compared versions were: the professional subtitled version broadcasted via Disney Plus platform, and a fansubbed version found on the famous movie website, myfliker.to. To explore the output of Arab fansubbers, the results of textual and technical levels of analysis were drawn based on 30 selected samples, 15 from each of the two source versions. The samples are non-randomly selected to shed light on the frequency of normalization practices, the different strategies and the general subtitling orientations of professional and amateur subtitlers, that is, whether they are source/foreignization-oriented or target/localization-oriented. The 15 samples were listed in tables 2 and 3 (See Appendices 1 and 2) based on the order of their appearance in the original and subtitled films.

Quantitative analysis of the number and percentage of normalization in comparison to transfer strategies in the study corpora reveal the differences between the Arab professional and amateur subtitlers' tendency to depend more on normalizing (localizing) or foreignization strategies in subtitling American films. However, it has to be taken into consideration that the results of the current research are limited to the 15 selected samples from each paradigm, and that those results could have differed in the case of a wider study sample.

Units of analysis in this research included:

- the linguistic level: including analysis of the strategies used to translate sensitive and offensive language, whether on the level of words or phrases or clauses;
- the technical level: including analysis of subtitling layout including position of subtitle on the screen, numbers of lines, number of characters, and synchrony.

The technical layout level is analyzed according to the existing recognized subtitling standards proposed by Ivarsson and Carroll (1998), as listed in Table 1, to check the conformity of both subtitling paradigms with those existing standards. As for the linguistic level, the frequency of global normalization and transfer strategies used in subtitling sensitive and offensive language are investigated and compared in the 15 selected samples from each of the two subtitled versions.

In order to determine the translation/subtitling orientation, the recurrence of each type of normalization strategy was calculated to determine on the general subtitling orientation of each of the two types of subtitlers towards localization or foreignization. Based on qualitative analysis and calculations, the researcher



determined the differences between practices and strategies adopted by Arab professional subtitlers and Arab Amateur subtitlers.

Results and Discussion

This study compared 15 samples illustrating fansubbed and professional TV subbed translations of the same source version's offensive expressions. The study traced some differences and similarities between the standards (conventions) and strategies applied in both paradigms on the technical and linguistic levels. On the technical level, the comparison showed that both PRO and NP subtitlers follow the same norms with slight differences.

Table 1. Comparison of Standards of the Fansubbed and Professional TV Subbed Versions on the Technical Level (Layout, Based on Ivarsson and Carroll (1998))

Standard	PRO	NP
Color	Pale white	Pale white
Number of characters in each line (equal or less than 37 per line)	=>37 characters per line	=>37-40 per line
Number of lines on screen (equal or less than 2)	1-2 centred bottom lines	1-2 centred bottom lines
position	Top or bottom	Bottom

Table 1 reveals that both genres mostly applied the universal subtitling norms according to the existing recognized subtitling standards proposed by Ivarsson and Carroll (1998). However, minor differences were found in relation to the number of characters in each subtitled line and the positioning of heads and glosses. It is worth mentioning that the comparative analysis pinpointed that amateur subtitlers (NP) slightly exceeded the limit by 3 more characters. However, some global platforms such as Netflix allows up to 42 per line when subtitling to Modern Standard Arabic (Netflix, 2023). There was also a difference detected in the positioning of the heads and glosses, for NP subtitlers positioned the heads and glosses on the bottom of the screen, whether the bottom of the screen was occupied by subtitled lines or not, whereas Pro subtitlers positioned the heads and glosses on the bottom of the screen when there were no subtitled lines and on the top of the screen if the bottom was occupied with subtitled lines.

On the linguistic level, 15 examples were collected and compared in relation to the subtitling of sensitive and offensive terms (See Appendices 1 and 2). Qualitative textual analysis revealed differences between NP and Pro subtitles on the linguistic level, as illustrated in the translation of sensitive and offensive terms and expressions. Most differences were traced in the translation of sensitive concepts, particularly those related to the religious implications of the word 'God', as indicated in examples 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 15. PRO subtitlers applied the norms of global normalization, in accordance with Gottlieb (2012), in subtitling all those examples, except for examples 4 and 9, where 'King Yakan' and 'I love being a king' are translated



literally using the strategy of transfer, disregarding that the word ‘King’ is referring to a mythical imaginary god in the American film. The normalizing strategy of condensation, especially, by generalization, is mostly used in these examples. In Example 3, ‘god of thunder’ is translated by condensation using the general term ‘king’ to replace the source term, ‘god’, thus, it reads as ‘king of thunder’ in the Pro Arabic subtitles. In Example 6, ‘goddess of death’ is also translated using condensation by generalization into Queen of death (See Table 2) to avoid the blasphemous undertone in the target version. Similarly, in Example 7, PRO subtitlers translated ‘god Butcher’, using generalization, into ‘Butcher of Kings’. In Example 11, the phrase ‘god army’ is also rendered using the euphemizing and general term, ‘king’ to replace ‘god’ as a means of avoiding literal transfer of sensitive language. As the target viewers might find the reference to a ‘goddess of death’, a ‘god butcher’ and a ‘god army’ (as used in the source version) offensive and even blasphemous, PRO subtitlers tended to simplify the original by generalizing the word ‘goddess’ into ‘god’ into ‘Kings’ and King in examples 6 and 7, and 11 respectively. The generalized meaning in examples 6 and 7, however, conflicted with the actual translation of the word King in examples 4 and 9, where the word is transferred literally as ‘King’, which resulted in the loss of the semantic differences between the words ‘god’ and ‘King’.

In Example 5, ‘godly stardust’ is translated using the strategy of condensation by simplifying (synonym) into ‘Royal stardust’ (See Appendix 2). The strategy of explicitation by paraphrasing the original term is used by PRO subtitlers in the 3 remaining examples with a blasphemous mention of gods, namely, 1, 3, and 15.

In comparison, NP subtitlers tended to transfer the meaning of the words ‘god’, ‘goddess’ and ‘king’ literally, and hence preserved the semantic differences between ‘god’ and King intended in the movie. They applied the norms of global normalization only in Example 7, where the offensive compound phrase ‘Godly stardust’ is translated by NP subtitlers as ‘scared stardust’, using the normalizing strategy of condensation by simplifying (using a synonym). It can be concluded, then, that the orientation of Pro subbers in these eight examples was towards localization while that of the NP subbers was towards foreignization.

Examples 2, 8, 10, 12, 13, and 14 revealed the differences between the kinds of strategies used by Arab Pro and NP subtitlers in translating offensive swearwords and expressions, as dog, shit, and asshole in the American film. Both PRO subtitlers and NP subtitlers employed the strategy of explicitation by paraphrase in examples 10, and 12 to conform to the norms of globalization in translating the swearword dog and the offensive statement, ‘I want to feel shitty’. The expression “shit” is regarded by Arab people as a taboo swearword. Therefore, PRO subtitlers employed the strategy of explicitation by paraphrasing the meaning of ‘holy shit’ and ‘shitty’ as ‘Damn’ and “feeling bad” in examples 10 and 12 respectively. Similarly, NP subtitlers used explicitation by paraphrase to translate the same offensive swearwords in examples 10 and 12 into ‘Oh!’ (Literally, ‘Oh what a wonder!’) and ‘I want to feel awful’ respectively. The paraphrase of the implied wonder using an acceptable target exclamatory interjection was an obvious application of a euphemizing form of the



offensive source word to normalize the expression in the target culture. Both PR and NP subtitlers were oriented towards localization in the two examples.

The PRO and NP subtitlers, however, used different types of strategies in the other examples. In example 2, the “animal name term” (Ávila-Cabrera, 2016, p.29) used in the cursing insult, ‘You dog’, is translated as ‘You filthy’ by the PRO subtitler who used the normalizing strategy of condensation by generalization. In contrast, the NP subtitler used transfer to translate the animal-name curse accurately as it is used in the source version. Hence, while, in Example 5, the PRO subtitler was localized, the NP subtitler was foreignized in translation orientation.

PRO subtitlers also employed explicitation by paraphrase in Example 8 while the NP subtitlers used explicitation by expansion. The offensive cursing expression “ass whole” in Example 8 was paraphrased by PRO subtitlers into “menace” instead of transferring it to its accurate literal equivalent in the target version. On the other hand, NP subtitlers translated the taboo expletive, ‘ass hole’ into “he was named after a soap brand,” using explicitation by expansion, which led to a total mistranslation. This might have resulted from the fact that in the process of fans subtitling, subtitlers are provided with the raw material quality reduced hence affecting sound and image of the original (Díaz-Cintas & Sánchez, 2006).

Examples 13 and 14 include offensive cursing and blasphemous expressions, namely, ‘go to hell’ and ‘Demon’. Since it is not acceptable to the (Arab) target audience to curse and describe others as demons, PRO subtitlers employed the strategy of explicitation by paraphrasing the term into “damn you” in Example 13, and condensation by generalization in Example 14 where “demon” is replaced by the more general word “evil”. By doing so, PRO subtitlers conformed to the norms of globalization making the text acceptable to the Arab receiver. On the other hand, NP subtitlers used transfer, subtitling both offensive expressions literally. It is possible to say then that in these two examples, the difference between the translation orientations of PRO and NP subtitlers is once more obvious, as the former oriented their subtitles towards normalization and localization to conform to the target culture norms, while the latter resorted to foreignization of the Arabic subtitles.

To conclude, on the linguistic level, particularly represented by offensive words and phrases, this research explored and compared 15 examples illustrating the PRO and NP subtitlers’ application of opposite normalization and transfer strategies, suggested by Gottlieb (2012), in two Arabic subtitled versions of the American film, Thor: Love and Thunder (2022). The study revealed that PRO subtitlers mostly employed Gottlieb’s norms of global normalization, since normalization strategies are used in 13 out of the 15 selected samples, a rate that is equal to 87%. The normalization strategy of condensation, in its different forms (i.e., generalization and synonyms), was the most frequently used, since it was detected in 7 examples. It was followed by explicitation by paraphrase, which was traced in 6 examples of the offensive and sensitive terms subtitled by PRO subtitles. The normalizing strategy of modulation was not detected in any of the study samples. In comparison, transfer (which refers to literal or accurate translation) was the least used strategy, occurring only in 2 examples. Thus, it could be concluded that the PRO subtitlers are target/localization-

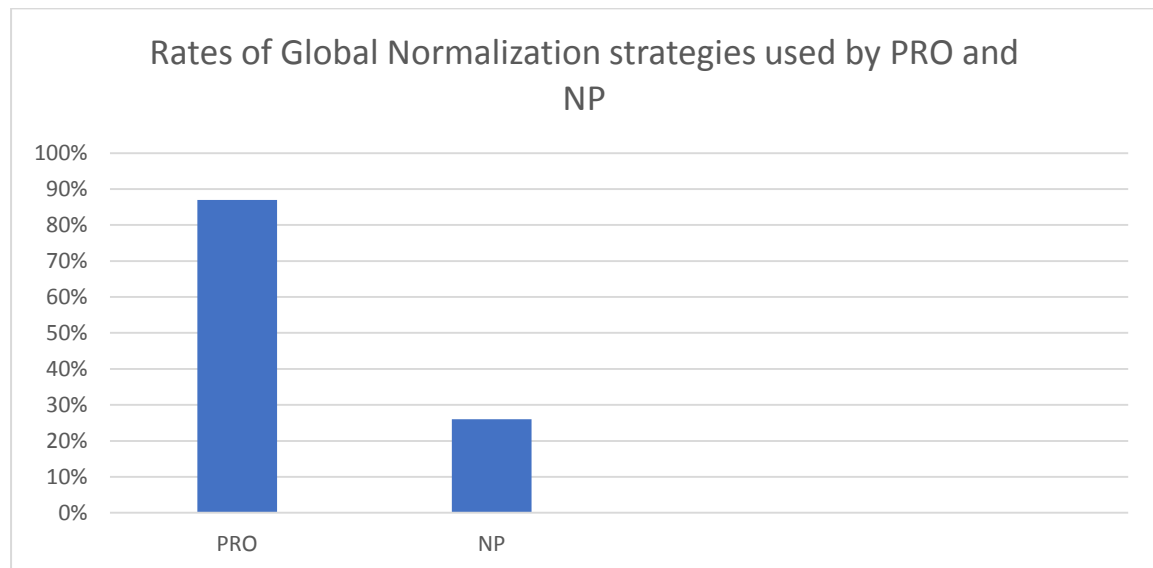


oriented in their general approach to the translation of offensive and blasphemous language of the American film.

On the other hand, NP subtitlers depended much more on literal translation produced through the strategy of transfer, which is used in 11 out of the 15 examples, that is, 73.5 % of the overall number of examples – a rate that makes it is the most frequently used strategy by amateur subtitlers of the American film. Four instances of the normalization strategies were employed by NP subtitlers; three of which fall under explicitation, one by paraphrase and another by expansion, and one instance only fall under condensation by simplifying (synonymy). This means that the rate of normalization strategies in NP subtitling was 26.5% only of the overall rate of strategies employed. The strategy of modulation was not detected in any of the 15 examples. The statistical calculations in relation to the strategies used by NP subtitlers, as such, indicate that their general translation orientation is directed towards the source-version, which also means that they are foreignization-oriented in their translation choices. (See Figures 1 and 2 for illustration of statistical results).

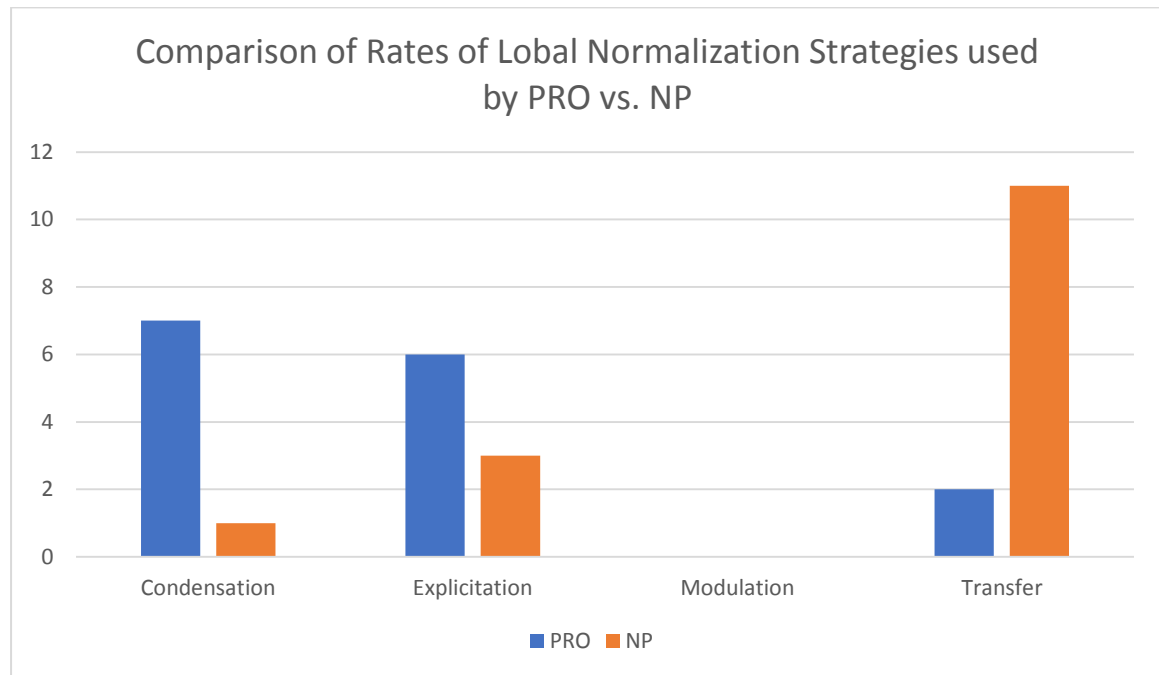
Figure 1.

Rates of Global Normalization strategies used by PRO and NP Translators



**Figure 2.**

Comparison of Rates of Global Normalization Strategies in PRO and NP Translations



The quantitative analysis, thus, led to the result that PRO subtitlers, in aspiring to achieve acceptability, tended to conform to norms of global normalization, applying the required strategies to achieve it, while NP subtitlers, in comparison, were more inclined towards literal subtitling (transfer) than conforming to the norms of global normalization.

This research offered a comparison between amateurs subtitling and professional subtitling in subtitling American movies into Arabic. As far as the profile of amateur subtitling is concerned compared to professional subtitling, it was found that Arab Amateur subtitlers do not follow the global norms of subtitling on the linguistic level but tend to comply more to the global norms on the technical layout level. The findings of the research are limited to a small corpus, consisting of 15 examples, in which a comparative analysis of the strategies employed in each of the two subtitled versions of the American movie, *Thor: Love and Thunder* (2022) was conducted; hence, the results cannot be generalized on all Arab amateur subtitlers. However, findings might be beneficial for future research in the field. More empirical research is still needed in the area. Further research is also needed on reasons behind Arab amateur subtitlers' avoidance to comply with the norms of global normalization compared to professional subtitlers.

In summary, the research outlined above focused on the comparison between professional and amateur forms of subtitling in the Arab world, a topic that has received limited attention in the broader field of Audio-visual Translation (AVT). The key takeaways and contributions of the research can be summarized as follows:



1. **Contextualizing Audio-visual Translation (AVT):** The introduction provided an overview of the evolution of Audio-visual Translation (AVT) as a recognized field within Translation Studies (TS) over the last two decades. It highlighted the impact of technological development on the proliferation of AVT and introduced the primary modes of AVT, with a specific focus on subtitling.

2. **Profiling Professional and Amateur Subtitling:** The research distinguished between professional subtitling, carried out by industry experts following established norms and best practices, and amateur subtitling, undertaken by non-professionals or fansubbers who operate outside industry standards. It delved into the motivations and characteristics of both paradigms.

3. **Rise of Amateur Subtitling:** The study emphasized the emergence and growth of amateur subtitling, particularly in the digital era, where fansubbing has become a global phenomenon. The success of fansubbing is attributed to its ability to quickly produce subtitled content tailored to audience preferences, circumventing the constraints faced by professional subtitlers.

4. **Research on Amateur Subtitling in the Arab World:** The research underscored the scarcity of studies on amateur subtitling in the Arab world, despite its prevalence. It highlighted a few studies that have examined various aspects of amateur subtitling in the region, including linguistic and technical challenges faced by fansubbers. In other words, the literature reviewed identified a research gap concerning the comparison between professional and amateur subtitling in the Arab world. However, the findings are based on a small corpus of 15 examples, specifically focusing on a comparative analysis of two subtitled versions of the movie "Thor: Love and Thunder" (2022). As a result, the research acknowledges the limitations in generalizing the findings to all Arab amateur subtitlers.

Despite the limited scope, the research provides a foundation for future investigations in the field. The study offers valuable insights into the practices of Arab amateur subtitlers, shedding light on both linguistic and technical aspects of their subtitling work. This information can inform subsequent studies, contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamics between amateur and professional subtitling in the context of Arabic translation. The study highlighted the potential for further research to explore the reasons behind Arab amateur subtitlers' divergence from global normalization norms, particularly when compared to professional subtitlers.

To conclude, the research contributes to the growing body of knowledge in Audio-visual Translation by addressing a specific and underexplored aspect of subtitling in the Arab world, comparing professional and amateur practices in both linguistic and technical dimensions emphasizing the need for further exploration and investigation into the reasons behind these differences. The study serves as a starting point for broader inquiries into the motivations and strategies employed by Arab amateur subtitlers.



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**Appendix 1**

Analysis of PRO subtitlers' Strategies on the Linguistic Level (offensive and sensitive language)

Ex. No.	Original Version	time	Pro	Back Translation	Strategy used
1	My lord	00:03:55	سيدي /Sīdī/	Sir	Explication by paraphrase
2	You dog	00:04:24	أيها القذر /Ayyuhā alqdhr/	You filthy	Condensation by simplifying (generalization)
3	god of thunder	00:10:57	ملك الرعد /Malik al-Ra'd/	King of thunder	Condensation by simplifying (generalization)
4	King Yakan	00:10:58	الملك يكان /al-Malik yākān/	King Yakan	Transfer
5	godly stardust	00:19:46	غياب النجوم الملكي /Ghubār al-nujūm al-Malakī/	Royal stardust	Condensation by simplifying (synonym)
6	goddess of death	00:20:25	ملكة الموت /Malakatu al-mawt/	Queen of death	Condensation by simplifying (generalization)
7	god butcher	00:23:54	سفاح الملوك /Saffāḥ al-mulūk/	King butcher	Condensation by simplifying (synonyms)
8	Ass whole	00:42:16	المزعج /Almuz'j/	You menace	Explication by paraphrase
9	I love being a king	00:48:13	أحب أن أكون ملكاً /Uḥibbu an akūn malkan/	I love being a king	Transfer
10	holy shit	00:53:33	بالعجب /Yā lil-'ajab/	WOW!	Explication by paraphrase
11	god army	01:07:29	جيش من الملوك /Jaysh min al-mulūk/	Army of kings	Condensation by simplifying (generalization)
12	I want to feel shitty	01:10:55	أريد أن أشعر بالسوء /Urīdu an ash'ar bālsw'/	I want to feel bad	Explication by paraphrase
13	Go to hell	01:46:39	اللجنة تحل عليك /al-La'nah thl 'alayka/	Damn you	Explication by paraphrase
14	Demon	01:46:40	أيها الشرير /Ayyuhā alshryr/	You villain	Condensation by simplifying (generalization)
15	With powers of a god	01:47:52	بقدرات هائلة /Beqdurāt hā'lh/	With superpowers	Explication by paraphrase

**Appendix 2**

Analysis of NP subtitlers' Strategies on the Linguistic Level (offensive and sensitive language)

Ex. No.	Original Version	time	NP	Back Translation	Strategy used
1	My lord	00:03:55	مولاي /Mawlāy/	My lord	Transfer
2	You dog	00:04:24	أيها الكلب /Ayyuhā al-kalb/	You dog	Transfer
3	god of thunder	00:10:57	إله الرعد /Ilāh al-Ra'd/	God of thunder	Transfer
4	King Yakan	00:10:58	(المالك ياكان) /al-Malik yākān/	King Yakan	Transfer
5	godly stardust	00:19:46	غبار مقدس /Ghubār Muqdis/	sacred stardust	Condensation by simplifying (synonym)
6	goddess of death	00:20:25	آلهة الموت /Ālihat al-mawt/	Goddess of death	Transfer
7	god butcher	00:23:54	قاتل الآلهة /Qātil al-ālihah/	King killer	Transfer
8	Ass whole	00:42:16	اسمه على اسم ماركة صابون /Ismuhu 'alā ism mārkh Ṣābūn/	He was named after a soap brand	Explication by expansion
9	I love being a king	00:48:13	أحب كوني ملكة /Uḥibb Kūnī Malakah/	I love being a queen	Transfer
10	holy shit	00:53:33	يا للعجب /Yā lil-'ajab/	WOW!	Explication by paraphrase
11	god army	01:07:29	جيش من الآلهة /Jaysh min al-ālihah/	Army of Gods	Transfer
12	I want to feel shitty	01:10:55	أريد أن أشعر بالاستياء /Urīdu an ash'ar bālāstyā'/	I want to feel awful	Explication by paraphrase
13	Go to hell	01:46:39	إلى الجحيم /ilá al-jaḥīm/	To hell	Transfer
14	Demon	01:46:40	أيها الشيطان /Ayyuhā al-Shayṭān/	You Demon	Transfer
15	With powers of a god	01:47:52	متمنعة بقوى آلهة /Mtmnt'h beqwā Āliha/	Has powers of a God	Transfer