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Komunikacija i kultura online, Godina VII, broj 7, 2016.

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ADDRESSING COHERENCE IN ENGLISH-ARABIC SUBTITLING
BY AMATEUR AFICIONADOS

The present article discusses coherence in terms of linguistic, cultural and polysemiotic channels. Subtitlers are often faced with major stumbling blocks to get the message across in a cohesive and coherent fashion within the scope of various semiotic modalities, typically underpinning the construction of meaning. The present study is based on the data excerpted from the famous American sitcom, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* first aired in 1990, subtitled by two amateur subtitling aficionados and one MA translation student (who will be referred to as student subtitler) enrolled on Audiovisual Translation course at Al-Quds University for the school year 2014/2015. The article employs a comparative analysis of the subtitles made by the amateur subtitlers and a trained subtitler. The article reveals that the student subtitler seems to be more aware of the specificities of subtitling and capable of rendering the accurate coherent semiotic meaning(s) of the uttered communication in the American sitcom than the other subtitlers. The article finally proposes a number of implications for the work of amateur subtitling aficionados and student subtitler and makes various recommendations that might assist in improving the translation quality.

Keywords: Audiovisual Translation, semiotics, subtitling, translation, Arabic, amateur subtitlers

1. Introduction

It is true that over the centuries, translation has become the favored mode of intercultural communication all over the world, ranging from word-for-word translation to free translation. Today, more than ever, translation should go beyond a mere act of transferring textual aspects of Source Language (SL) into Target Language (TL) to adhere to the transference of the cultural conceptualisation of different SL situations, perhaps by means of verbal and/or non-verbal semiotics. Particularly related to original linguistic and cultural setting, Audiovisual Translation (AVT), as a mode of translation that gained weight and momentum during the last couple of decades, may be deemed as the most delicate area of intercultural communication. Within the

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discipline of AVT, subtitling has occupied a sacrosanct status in such communication, and acquires additional superficial characteristics of construing coherent messages from the SL to the TL. More often than not, these messages have become hostage to semiotic and polysemiotic parameters.

The present study focuses on the transfer of conceivable and coherent semiotic messages in the subtitling from English (i.e. SL) into Arabic (i.e. TL) by two amateur subtitler aficionados and one student subtitler. As the vast majority of the aficionados need only a username and password to upload their subtitles into websites (coming in many shapes and forms), the end product is usually not subject to any translation quality assessment. Each subtitler uses his/her own sets of standards in subtitling usually based on the premise of their understanding of SL text and translation skills.

This aim of this study is particularly to provide some insights into a multitude of mistakes amateur subtitlers make in translating the American sitcom into Arabic, and to what degree would the filmic coherence be preserved in the target product at the end of their rope.

2. Literature Overview

Translation *per se* is the art of transference of a SL utterance syntactically, semantically, semiotically, etc. into a TL one. This is obviously pertinent to subtitling as a mode of translation. To be more precise, let us look at a more formal definition that may properly help towards better understanding of subtitling. Díaz Cintas and Remael wittingly point out that subtitling is:

> A translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original [dialog] of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off) (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007:8).

Many scholars have long dwelled on media translation in view of its real expansion as a primary broadcast channel of communication between nations. Of those who manifestly proposed sets of subtitling strategies are Ivarsson (1992) and Karamitroglou (1998).

Subtitling mainly falls into interlingual subtitling and intralingual subtitling; the former represents the communication "from one language into another language" and "from spoken dialog into a written, condensed translation which appears on the screen"

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(Dries 1995: 26). The latter, however, refers to same language subtitling. Similarly, for De Linde and Kay, "the amount of dialog has to be reduced to meet the technical conditions of the medium and the reading capacities of non-native language users [to] achieve something approaching translation equivalence when conducting subtitling" (1999: 1-2). Different semiotic and polysemiotic channels that pertain to subtitling should be given particular consideration. Baker (1998: 245) states that these channels include: (1) the verbal auditory channel, e.g., dialog, background voices, and sometimes lyrics; (2) the non-verbal auditory channel, e.g., music, natural sound and sound effects; (3) the verbal visual channel, e.g., superimposed titles and written signs on the screen; and (4) the non-verbal visual channel, e.g., picture composition and flow.

Coherence and subtitling abound in the literature. In language, coherence is decidedly of extreme importance to maintain countless acts of communication in spoken or written utterances. Baker (1998: 300) argues that coherence refers to "the network of semantic relations which organize and create a text by establishing continuity of sense." On the other hand, cohesion refers to the "network of lexical, grammatical and other relations which provide formal links between various parts of a text" (Baker 1998: 301). In a similar vein, De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981: 84) point out that "the recipients of any multimodal text need to make multiple intra- and intermodal links to create coherence, i.e., the general impression of a continuity of sense in a text." Insofar as subtitling is concerned, Mason (1989) elucidates the specific importance of preserving maximum coherence in translation, a point with which Díaz Cintas (2008:100) legitimately agrees: "Maintaining semiotic coherence and cohesion is very important since what is being conveyed in the subtitles must not contradict what the image is telling the viewer or information that can be understood from the soundtrack."

For the sake of a definite meaning of coherence, we adopt a combination of coherence in language as suggested by Baker (1998) and De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) on the one hand, and coherence in subtitling as proposed by Mason (1989) and Díaz Cintas (2008) on the other. Therefore, it is of paramount importance for the subtitler to ensure synchronization of the subtitles with the dialog and the moving image as a lack of synchronization may lead to a breakdown in communication. More specifically, coherence in subtitling ensues from an integration of the verbal auditory channel, the non-verbal auditory channel, the verbal visual channel and the non-verbal visual channel.

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3. Methodology

3.1. Procedures of the Study

The raw data of the study was drawn from a corpus of three Arabic subtitles for famous American sitcom: *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, first aired in 1990. Two of the subtitles were downloaded from a well-known website, i.e. Subscene[1], which is intended for amateur subtitling aficionados of movies and TV series. The third subtitle was done by an MA translation student subtitler at Al-Quds University, undertaking a master's degree in Translation and Interpreting. As part of a final project for a course entitled 'Audiovisual Translation II', the student subtitler used a custom-made subtitle program called Subtitle Workshop (version: 6.0b, built 131121) that allows subtitling of different audiovisual materials.

To pinpoint and bring the problem under discussion into focus, considerable attention has been paid to the fundamental distinction between the amateur subtitlers and the student subtitler. The three subtitles contain sufficient justification for gaining insight into the complex problems that both the amateur subtitlers and the student subtitler face in preserving coherence while translating the sitcom. It is quite true, in the words of Karamitroglou (2000:104), that "the number of possible audiovisual translation problems is endless and a list that would account for each one of them can never be finite." Most tellingly, perhaps, subtitling is the most unappreciated form of AVT as Nornes (1999:17) further argues: "no one has ever come away from a foreign film admiring the translation [;] all of us have, at one time or another, left a movie theater wanting to kill the translator." The same is true of subtitling from Arabic into English, and most obviously, Bahaa-Eddin (2006) identifies six major subtitling problems which include (1) literal translation; (2) insensitivity to context; (3) ungrammatical; (4) unnatural or inaccurate translations; (5) treatment of foul language and; (6) unnecessary formality. More precisely, Gamal (2008: 5-6) speaks of the problems of subtitling from the viewers' perception: (1) television language Televese, i.e. "a new genre of on-screen language" (Gamal 2008: 4), is too stiff; (2) deletion appears to be a prominent strategy; (3) swear words are too clichéd; (4) cultural images are mistranslated; (5) translation of film titles is too liberal; (6) the language of subtitling is becoming a genre; (7) mistakes are always to be expected; (8) the font used in subtitles is too small and subtitles are too fast to read; (9) spotting is a major source of irritation; and (10) white color of subtitles is unhelpful.

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[1] Subscene: available at: http://subscene.com/. (Accessed 5 September 2015)

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What makes this discussion particularly relevant is perhaps the tendency to veer towards the technical dimension of subtitling. In reality, a number of scholars have made strenuous efforts to handle subtitling problems (for example, Baker 1998; Gottlieb 1998; Ivarsson and Carroll 1998; Karamitroglou 1998, among many others). The theorization of Karamitroglou (1998) can be accorded some kind of validity as he proposes subtitling standards applicable to the subtitles by English and other European languages. Nevertheless, Arabic subtitles do not conform to these standards as Arabic and English fall into two different linguistic families. The special linguistic characteristics of Arabic may help subtitlers to abide themselves by some standard subtitling conventions. For example, "the elision of short vowels and the use of superscripts in Arabic […] all help to conserve space on screen" (De Linde and Kay 1999:6), and also "the letters of a single word can work with joined-up by 'ligatures' or cursive script" (Thawabteh 2007: 187). Since Arabic does not contain such norms for subtitling, most Arabic subtitlers tend to integrate them within their subtitles. For example, Karamitroglou argues that sans-serif typeface is preferable to a serif typeface:

> Since the visual complexity added to the latter results in a decrease in the legibility of the subtitled text Typefaces like Helvetica and Arial are qualified. Proportional distribution rather than Monospace distribution (usually used on typewriters) saves the space required to fit the desired 35 characters into a subtitle line (Karamitroglou 1998, Spatial Parameter).

Contrary to what Karamitroglou states, legible fonts insofar as Arabic is concerned, as one of the authors has already argued, may include other types:

> Tunga, Akhbar MT, Deco Type Naskh, MS Sans Serif, Faris Simple Bold, Arabic Transparent, Deco Type Naskh Special, Traditional Arabic and Simplified Arabic, etc. On the other hand, illegible fonts may include highly serifed fonts e.g., Andalus, Courier New, PT Bold Arch, Kufi, Arabic Typesetting, Deco Type Thulth, Diwani Letter, among others (Thawabteh 2011:35).

Unlike this technical dimension of Arabic subtitling, our qualitative study will analyse which of the three subtitles better establish semiotic cohesion and convey the optimum meaning for the TL viewers. In a sense, this study aims to properly understand which of the two groups could gear its output to TL receivers more appropriately.

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3.2. Data of the Study

This paper is based on data excerpted from *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, an American television sitcom aired on NBC in 1990. The protagonist and star of the sitcom Will Smith plays the role of a streetwise teenager from West Philadelphia in a fictionalized version of himself. He is forced to move to Bel Air by his worried mother in order to escape from a life of increasing delinquency and street fighting. He was an ungrateful spoiled brat whose life changed amidst clashes, sorrow and joyful days with his uncle and aunt (from his mother's side), his three cousins and the butler, all of whom, along with other characters, will undertake daily unpredictable experiences that will shape their personalities. There are 148 episodes; this study will deal with episode 1 of the first season of the sitcom.

3.3. Significance of the Study

Sitcoms (particularly American ones) have become the general trend in Arab television stations and mainly in the MBC Group (Middle East Broadcasting Center)[2], one of the largest, most popular and leading private media company in the Middle East and North Africa region. Since 1991, MBC has broadcast the latest top-rated Western entertainment shows with Arabic subtitles in line with subtitling norms only adopted by the group itself. Most of the Arabic shows can be viewed through one of MBC's sites[3], but only few foreign ones can be retrieved. This poses a dilemma for viewers who are interested in viewing the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s sitcoms again with Arabic subtitles.

The 1990s American sitcoms such as *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *Home Improvement, Full House*, among many others are considered to be very famous classical humorous all over the world. As there are no archiving systems of such sitcoms aired in Arab channels, viewers have to download or screen them online from many open source websites, most often than not, without subtitles. To appreciate the contents of these sitcoms, viewers resort to download them from other open source sites such as subscene, fansub, etc.

As the only channel of free communication between SL and TL, subtitle sites such as Subscene have become a major revolution in the era of communication. Viewers are relying more and more on these channels as televisions policies, especially of Arab

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[2] MBC: available at: www.mcb.net. (Accessed 5 September 2015)
[3] MBC: available at: www.shahid.net. (Accessed 5 September 2015)

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television broadcasting channels, have become stricter in subtitling foreign movies into the Arabic language.

4. Discussion and Analysis

This study investigates several issues of semiotics, coherence and subtitling from theoretical and practical vantage point. In this section, we shall use ten examples from the three above mentioned Arabic subtitles in order to understand the coherence difficulties and problems subtitlers may encounter when translating from English spoken language into Arabic written one. Let us consider Example 1 below a bit more closely:

(1) Song untranslated

The opening theme song of the sitcom is left untranslated in both subtitles downloaded from Subscene (referred to as Sub 1 and Sub 2), whereas the student subtitler opts for translating the song (referred to as Sub 3). Its translation is shown in Table 1 below. The song has a very important (if not the most important) potential semiotic relevance as it narrates the life of the protagonist and the cause for sending him to live with his aunt and uncle in Bel Air. It also offers an insight into the livelihood of both families (Will Smith and his mother compared to his aunt and uncle), the poor versus the rich and children raised in the streets versus those who grew up in wealthy families.

Table 1: English song along with student subtitler's Arabic translation

English song	Arabic Translation
Now, this is a story all about how my life got flipped, turned upside down. And I'd like to take a minute just sit right there. I'll tell you how I became the prince of a town called Bel Air. In west Philadelphia born and raised on the playground was where I spent most of my days chillin' out maxin' relaxin' all cool. And all shootin some b-ball outside of the school.	والآن هذه هي القصة الرائعة عن كيف أن حياتي فجأة انقلبت رأسا على عقب. وأود أن أنتهز هذه الفرصة وأنا جالس هنا لأخبركم كيف أصبحت أمير حيّ اسمه (بيل اير). ترعرعت وعشت في غرب (فيلادلفيا) في الملاعب كنت أمضي أوقاتي مسترخيا، مستمتعا مع أصدقائي نلعب كرة السلة بعد المدرسة

When a couple of guys who were up to no good started making trouble in my neighbourhood,	عندما بدأ بعض الشبان المشاغبين بإثارة المتاعب في حيي الجميل.
I got in one little fight and my mom got scared. She said 'You're movin' with your auntie and uncle in Bel Air'	دخلت في عراك صغير فجن جنون أمي. قالت "ستذهب للعيش مع خالتك وزوجها في (بيل اير)".
I begged and pleaded with her day after day, but she packed my suit case and sent me on my way. She gave me a kiss and then she gave me my ticket. I put my Walkman on and said, 'I might as well kick it'.	توسلت إليها ورجوتها بلا فائدة، حضرت لي أمتعتي وجهزتني للمغادرة بعد أن قبلتني آخر قبلة وناولتني التذكرة وضعت السماعة في أذني وقلت "لا بأس من التجربة".
First class, yo this is bad, drinking orange juice out of a champagne glass. Is this what the people of Bel-Air living like? Hmmmmm this might be alright.	في الدرجة الأولى، يا للروعة، عصير البرتقال في كؤوس المشروب الفاخرة إذا كانت هذه هي الحياة التي يعيشونها في (بيل اير). فلا مشكلة أبدا بالنسبة إليّ.
I whistled for a cab and when it came near. The license plate said fresh and it had dice in the mirror If anything I could say that this cab was rare. But I thought 'Nah, forget it' - 'Yo, holmes to Bel Air'.	صفّرت لسيارة أجرة وعندما اقترب كانت مزركشة حتى لوحتها، فكرت بأن هذه السيارة فريدة، ثم قلت "لا، إنسى الأمر"، هيا أيها السائق خذني إلى (بيل اير).
I pulled up to the house about 7 or 8. And I yelled to the cabbie 'Yo holmes smell ya later' I looked at my kingdom. I was finally there to sit on my throne as the Prince of Bel Air	وصلت عند السابعة أو الثامنة، وقلت للسائق "تركت ماضي السابق"، ونظرت إلى مملكتي الجديدة، وأخيرا وصلت لأكون أمير هذا الحي، حيّ (بيل اير)

The contracted informal forms, e.g. *chillin' out*, *maxin'*, *relaxin'*, etc. are utilized by the SL speaker to show how language reflects a particular social stratum, something

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that is totally missing in the TL as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is obviously used by the student subtitler. Although the linguistic situation in the Arab world is not the topic of this research, we have to touch upon the phenomenon of diglossia, defined 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, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation (Ferguson 159: 336, cited according to Versteegh 2006: 630).

Regarding our topic, it is safe to argue that MSA, by common consensus, attracts (and is likely to fulfil the expectations of) a wider audience of receivers in the Arab world. It is also true, in the words of one of the authors, that MSA "ameliorates the situation greatly [and it] stands as a tool for euphemism" (Thawabteh 2014: 13). On the other hand, subtitlers may opt for diglossic switching, i.e. "alternating between Standard Arabic and the colloquial varieties of their native dialect" (Versteegh 2006: 370). We see an instance of diglossic switching in Example 1 والآن هذه هي القصة الرائعة عن كيف أن حياتي فجأة انقلبت رأسا على عقب ('Now, this is a story all about how my life got flipped, turned upside down'), in which the student subtitler suddenly alternates MSA with Palestinian dialect by using عن كيف (lit. 'about how'), shows that the use of a less formal variety of Arabic can give a more coherent translation.

For more elaboration, see Example 2 below:

(2) "I didn't know there were so many brothers living in this neighborhood."

Sub1: *lam ʾakun ʾaʿlam ʾanna al-kathīra mina as-sūdi yaʿīshūna fi hadha al-ḥay.*[4]

Sub2: *kathīrūna yaʿīshūna fi hadha al-ḥay lam ʾakn ʾaʿrifu ʾanna hunaka ʾkhwah.*

Sub3: *kathīrūna mithlana yaʿīshūna fi hadha al-ḥay wa lakn lam ʾakn ʾaʿrif ʾanna hunaka sūdan*

To render SL lexical item 'brothers' in Example 2 above, the subtitlers in 1 and 3 used *sūd* (lit. 'black', with different grammatical cases in mind) whereas Sub 2 utilized *ʾkhwah* (lit. 'brothers'). For an American audience's perception (especially African-American one), it goes without saying that 'Black' (in reference to the color of the skin) is deemed inappropriate and offensive to use, as it has negative racist connotations.

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[4] The IPA transliteration system is used.

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Therefore, there is a good reason for resorting to 'brothers' which in the American viewers' mind refers directly to African-Americans[5]. However, the term 'brothers' is not neutral after all as people of European origin should not use it so as not to offend African-Americans. For an Arab audience, however, the Arabic counterpart *sūd* is considered neutral and appropriate. The rendition of *'khwah* (lit. 'brothers') in Sub 2 is too literal, to the great surprise of the audience, that is to say, a local neighborhood with many putative brothers (rather than sisters, for instance) living in. This interpretation seems to be recalcitrant to the tone of the translation. The item *sūd* (lit. 'Black') in Sub 1 and Sub 3 might be appropriate to address the minimal expectations of the target audience as they cannot understand that Will is speaking of the black community, and of the living in a fancy and high class neighbourhood. For more illustration, consider Example 3 below:

(3) "Make it sound like we're back on the plantation, like: Master William! Master William"

Sub1: *taqūlūha wa k'annana fī il-khalf fīl-mazra'ati mathalan: sayid Williyam sayid Williyam.*

Sub2: *yaj'alunī ash-'uru k'annanī fīl-mazra'ati mithl sayid (Williyam) sayid (Williyam).*

Sub3: *yaj'alunī ash-'uru wa k'annana 'udna ilā mazra'ati-l-'abīd mithl sayid (Williyam) sayid (Williyam).*

In Example 3 above, Will speaks with insinuation to slave plantations, dating back to Black people enslaved by colonialists in their plantations of cotton, rubber, tea, sugar coffee, etc. Again, for the American viewer, particularly the African-American community, the word 'plantation' alone brings back the bitter days of the harsh oppression of slavery and colonialism in the nineteenth century America. For an Arab audience, the use of *mazra'a* (lit. 'farm') alone does not bring any mental image or connection to the slave plantation as used in Sub 1 and Sub 2. Conversely, in Sub 3, the trained subtitler adds the word *'abīd* (lit. 'slaves') as an explanatory device so that the Arab audience can better understand the meaning intended by Will. The choice made by the subtitler takes explicit semiotic modalities contained in the text into consideration, e.g., visual elements, color etc., which makes the subtitle more coherent. Take Example 4 below:

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[5] In Mughazy's new book, "Colonel Qaddafi reminded the American people how they used to have negative stereotypes of certain groups within American society itself, such as African Americans and Native Americans" (2016: 15) whereby word *sūd* from Qaddafi's speech is translated into African Americans.

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(4) "Hey, Aunt Viv!"

Sub1: *'ammatī fīf.*

Sub2: *marḥaban ayyatuha al-xālah fīf.*

Sub3: *marḥaban xālah fīf.*

Arabic kinship-related terms constitute an intractable problem when translated to other languages of little linguistic and cultural affinity as is the case with English whereby the translation normally leads to 'non-congruent items' (Shunnaq 1993). For example, someone's aunt in English refers to their mother's or father's sister, or the wife of their paternal and maternal uncle, whereas in Arabic, two distinct terms are used to distinguish the ties of this kinship *'ammah* (lit. 'paternal aunt') and *xalah* (lit. 'maternal aunt'). If the lexical item *'ammah* (lit. 'paternal aunt') is rendered into English, it will refer to one of the above designations.

In Example 4, for an amateur subtitler, who probably did not watch the episode where there is a reference of Will's mother as the sister of his aunt and not his uncle or was lazy enough not to go back to his/her subtitle and amend his/her mistake, he/she would assume that aunt here means the paternal aunt since in the subconscious of an Arab, the ties of paternal aunt or uncle are stronger than those of maternal aunt or uncle. Sub 2 and Sub 3 provide the correct version when they referred to his aunt as *xālah* (lit. 'maternal aunt') and not as *'amma* (lit. 'paternal aunt'); later on in the episode, Uncle Philip makes a remark referring to Will's bad habits that come from his mother's side thus including Will's aunt Vivian in the remark. This obviously provides a clear coherent reference to the audience that Uncle Philip is not pleased with his wife's side of the family. Therefore, the rendition *xālah* (lit. 'maternal aunt') in the Arabic subtitle is very crucial to the understanding of future events. Example 5 below further illustrates it more aptly.

(5) "'The plane ride was stupid.' 'I'm saying the plane was dope...' 'No. Stupid, dope...'".

Sub 1: *rukūbu iṭ-ṭā'irati kāna 'amran ghabiyyan qultu 'inna iṭ-ṭā'irata kānat rā'i'atan 'amran ghabiyyan rā'i'an.*

Sub 2: *rukūbu iṭ-ṭā'irati kāna 'amran ghabiyyan qultu 'inna iṭ-ṭā'irata kānat rā'i'atan 'amran ghabiyyan rā'i'an.*

Sub 3: *rukūbu iṭ-ṭā'irati kāna minal-āxir qultu 'inna rukūba iṭ-ṭā'irata kāna 'amran rā'i'an 'amran minal-āxir rā'i'an.*

In these three separate subtitles, Will endeavors to convey how happy he was on board the plane and uses colloquial words like 'stupid' and 'dope'. Both words are perceived as typical of the SL culture, acutely utilized by Will to mean more or less 'terrific'. To render the meaning in the Arabic subtitle, subtitlers should be first familiar with and further be absorbed in the SL culture the best way possible, and then use equivalents insofar as the target audience is concerned. In Example 5 above, both Sub 1 and Sub 2 have failed to render the intended meaning by SL producer, thus bringing about significant changes in meaning — quite incoherent meaning indeed. Sub 3, however, uses commonly adopted words in the Arabic vernacular which render the intended meaning quite perfectly without losing the allusion to the social milieu Will obviously belongs to instead of his Uncle Philip's proper upbringing.

In Example 6 below, Will refers to his cousin using the word 'Scottish' as she is in the room wearing a traditional outré Scottish outfit, the uniform of her school.

(6) "Hi. My little Scottish cousin".

Sub 1: *marḥaban yā bint xāltī al-ʿuskutlandiyyah aṣ-ṣaghīrah.*

Sub 2: *marḥaban yā bint xāltī aṣ-ṣaghīrah.*

Sub 3: *marḥaban yā bint xāltī aṣ-ṣaghīrah al-jamīlah*

In Example 6 above, Will is trying his best to convey that his cousin looks good in her outfit, and it does not affect meaning of the visual-linguistic message of the sitcom later on. Therefore, as a strategy employed in translating subtitles, omission of information can be used of the word 'Scottish' as it does not have such value when translated into Arabic. With regard to the omission strategy, Ivacovoni states:

Omission means dropping a word or words from the SL [text] while translating. This procedure can be the outcome of the cultural clashes that exist between the SL and the TL. In fact, it is in subtitling translations where omission attains its peak in use. The translator omits words that do not have equivalents in the [target text], or that may raise the hostility of the receptor (Ivacovoni, 2009, par.1).

Furthermore, Baker (1992:40-86) proposes three forms for omission: omission in word or expression, omission in idiom, omission in content of information. Sub 2 and Sub 3 opt for omission in word whereby Sub 3 makes it more coherent to the audience by tactfully using the gender-marked adjective *jamīlah* (lit. 'beautiful'). However, in Sub 1 the rendition of 'Scottish' is its nearest equivalent *ʾuskutlandiyyah* (lit. 'Scottish'). For an Arab viewer, it is difficult to understand the intended meaning

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of *bint xāltī al-'uskutlandiyyah aṣ-ṣaghīrah* (lit. 'my little Scottish cousin'), because such translation implies that the family has Scottish origins, which is simply not true.

(7) "I'm your humble servant"

Sub 1: *'ana xādimuk adh-dhalīl.*

Sub 2: *'ana xādimuk al-mutawaḍi'.*

Sub 3: *'ana xādimuk al-mutawaḍi'.*

Will uses the word 'humble' to denote that he is at Ashley's service (his little cousin) and that he is not a snob who will not help his cousin if she asks for help. As 'black' people of lower class see themselves as humble people, the choice of words here, when translating to Arabic, should be meticulous. In Sub 1, *adh-dhalīl* (lit. 'humiliated') is opted for as an equivalent to 'humble', with a very negative image, namely weak and humiliated, which is a far cry from the meaning intended by Will. Sub 2 and Sub 3 render more or less the exact meaning, i.e. a person who is not arrogant, but is down to earth. In this regard, Orero (2004: 86) argues that subtitlers should not dismiss "the content of the non-verbal channels"; thus they should take into account the hidden meaning and adapt it to the target culture in a non-offensive way.

Consider Example 8 below:

(8) "'-I'm gonna take a swim before dinner.' '-Good luck. The pool heater's broken."

Sub 1: *sawfa astaḥimmu qabla al-'ashā ḥaẓan muwafqan saxxānat il-biraka mu'aṭalah.*

Sub 2: *s'asbaḥu qalīlan qabla al-'ashāi' ḥaẓan muwafqan saxxān ḥammam is-sibaḥati maksūr.*

Sub 3: *s'asbaḥu qalīlan qabla al-'ashāi' ḥaẓan muwafqan saxxān ḥammam is-sibaḥati maksūr.*

In this dialog, Will's aunt Vivian expresses the desire to go for a swim, immediately. Ashley, Will's cousin, tells her that the heater of the pool is broken. In translation in general, translators should maintain some kind of consistency which in turn will facilitate a more coherent flow of information in the TL. Both Sub 2 and Sub 3 keep this consistency linking *s'asbaḥu* (lit. 'I will swim') with *ḥammam is-sibaḥah* (lit. 'swiming pool') as both verb and noun are derivatives. On the other hand, Sub 1 fails to choose the most coherent words as the subtitler combines *astaḥimmu* (lit. 'I will

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take a shower') which denotes bathing in the bathroom or shower-room with *il-biraka* (lit. 'pool'), that usually denotes a swimming pool. Sub 1 seems to be less natural as the subtitler uses an ungrammatical feminine nominative singular *saxxānat* (lit. 'heater') instead of the grammatical masculine singular, i.e. *saxxān* (lit. 'heater').

Take Example 9 into consideration:

(9) "'-I'm sure it was. I bet you're def.' '-That's what she said.' '-Not deaf. D-E-F. That's just slang. Means terrific, good.'"

Sub 1: *'ana mut'akid bi'nnahu kān kathālik 'urāhinu 'annahu kān rā'i' hātha biḍabṭ mā qālathu laysa aṣaman rā ā ya 'ayn hathihi kalimat 'āmiyyah ta'ni rahīb jayid.*

Sub 2: *'ana mut'akid bi'nnahu kān kathālik 'urāhinu 'annahu kān rā'i' hātha biḍabṭ mā qālathu laysa aṣaman rā ā ya 'ayn hathihi kalimat 'āmiyyah ta'ni rahīb jayid.*

Sub 3: *'ana wathiqun min thālik 'urāhinu 'ann 'udhunki al-musīqiyyah hashshah hātha mā qālathu lā aqṣudu ṣammā' 'innahu ta'bīrun bil-lahjati il-'amiyyah ya'nī mudhhila rā'i'ah*.

In this dialog, Will is trying to tell Ashley that she has a good ear and that she is terrific in music by using slang words, which at first she totally misunderstands thinking that she is really deaf to music. To render this slang Sub 1 and Sub 2 were not able to use this word play between *deaf* (unable to hear) and *def* (slang for 'terrific'). The coherence of the dialog in both subtitles is broken as Ashley answers Will's first comment by agreeing to being deaf to music, since she did not know the real spelling and meaning of the slang word. This misunderstanding is not rendered in both subtitles; on the contrary, she seems to agree that she is good from the start of the dialog as implied by both subtitles. Sub 3 on the other hand, uses a derivative of 'deaf' or *ṣammā'* (lit. 'deaf') which implies her being deaf. The words *'udhunki al-musīqiyyah hashshah* (lit. 'having no good ear for music') assume that Will is telling her that she does not have a good ear for music. Thus, when she makes her utterance, it provides a sense of coherence that the previous two subtitles could not convey. Will did not really mean 'deaf', but sensitive and able to catch the rhythm of the music. Similarly, Antonini and Chiaro (2009:97; emphasis in original) speak of the difficulty of rendering acronyms in the same sitcom:

acronyms created a certain amount of perplexity amongst respondents. For example, a clip from the sitcom *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* featured Will Smith asking

for a BLT sandwich. Despite plenty of clues from the context no respondents understood that the acronym refers to 'Bacon, Lettuce and Tomato'.

In the last example, the use of the word 'fence' implies two meanings: fencing is the sport of fighting with long thin swords, a meaning that is intended by Will's uncle's associate. The other meaning is to denote a criminal who buys and sells swags.

(10) "-I used to fence at Bel-Air.' '-Really? How much do you think we could get for that stereo?"

Sub 1: *laqad ʾistamtaʿta fī bil ayr bijad? Bikam taʿtaqid ymkinuna ʾan najnī min hadha al-musajil?*

Sub 2: *kuntu ʾubarizu bis-sayfi fī bil ayr ḥaqan? kam birʾiyka qad naḥṣul muqābil dhālika al-musajil?*

Sub 3: *ḥaqan? kam birʾiyka qad naḥṣul muqābil dhālika al-musajil? kuntu ʾunaṣib fī bil ayr.*

Will makes a joke using the same word in its slang context, now with a new meaning: to buy and sell stolen goods. Sub 1 totally changes the meaning of the first dialog, thus destroying the coherence of the information flow. Sub 1 omits the word 'fence' and changes it into *ʾistamtaʿta* (lit. 'I enjoyed') which does not render a coherent fold of events in the subsequent dialog. He/She also uses a three-line subtitle to add a side-definition of the word 'fence' which completely clashes with the two lines standard of Karamitroglou (1998). Sub 2, on the other hand, mentions the explicit act of fencing *ʾubarizu bis-sayfi* (lit. 'I fence with the sword'), but again fails to make a coherent link with Will's subsequent reply, which implies selling his uncle's stereo to gain money. Only Sub 3 was able to render the twist of meaning by choosing a synonym of the word *ʾubarizu* (lit. 'I fence with the sword') which is *ʾunaṣib* (lit. 'I defraud') as this meaning flows coherently with the subsequent utterance made by Will.

5. Concluding Remarks

It is clear that amateur subtitling is an area that needs to be streamlined in the Arab World, and that subtitling problems can be linguistic, cultural and/or technical as far as the current study is concerned. The article shows that amateur aficionados play a crucial role in intercultural communication as depicted in the subtitling that people may enjoy by viewing and understanding (to some extent) television movies and

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shows from other countries. They provide them with a means to understand the culture, humor, drama, thrill, etc. of the SL and help bridge the gaps between cultures.

Most people will make do with any subtitle they may find online free of charge for their favorite movies and shows, thus dismissing many problems encountered during the screening of subtitles which may result in confusion, incoherence, poor synchronization and so on.

One recommendation for these websites that post open source subtitles is to develop their own standards, but preferably some professionally set standards for subtitles, e.g. as the ones proposed by Karamitroglou (1998). By setting some standards in rendering subtitling, there will be a better chance for unification of subtitles and more coherence in rendering the semiotics of the movies and shows with all of their different aspects and modes.

The task of the subtitler (be amateur or student subtitler) has various challenges. This paper showed that the student subtitler provides more coherent translation in terms of verbal and non-verbal semiotics, because her specialized education and training enabled her to conscientiously apply different translation strategies in different situations. With reference to the arguments made by Bahaa-Eddin (2006) and Gamal (2008) about multifarious problems of subtitling from Arabic and English, we can reaffirm that most of the coherence problems fall within the ambit of the problems both scholars have raised. Deletion strategy is obvious in Example 1 above in which the song, considered to be the fulcrum of the sitcom, was deleted by the amateur subtitlers, perhaps because of laziness. It has to be noted that introductory songs on TV channels in the Arab world are sometimes translated or left untranslated. Within the song, the student subtitler has omitted the SL phrase 'champagne glass' in "drinking orange juice out of a champagne glass…" in which the phrase has been rendered into *mashrūb fākhir* (lit. 'a luxury drink') rather than an expensive French white wine. The latter is likely to be offensive for many Palestinians, who belong to the Arab-Islamic culture, which is strictly against any use or mention of spirits. Regarding this example, it seems that the deletion was a deliberate strategy.

The cultural images seem to be blurred in the translation as shown in Example 2 above, in all three subtitles. In another example, one can speak of the insensitivity to context in Example 3 as shown in Sub1 and Sub 2, i.e. *mazra'a* (lit. 'farm'). This translation is semiotically incoherent as it does not cater for the polysemiotic channels underpinning the sitcom. On the contrary, the transferability of 'plantation' by Sub 3 is more likely to be subtle and sensitive to the context of situation.

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In our final instance, the stiff and formulaic use of on-screen language as a genre (i.e. Televese) is an obvious point as can be illustrated in *sayid Williyam* ('Master William') (Sub 1, Example 3); *'amran ghabiyyan rā'i'an* ('No. Stupid, dope') (Sub 1, Example 5); and *'urāhinu 'annahu kān rā'i' hātha biḍabṭ* ('"-I'm sure it was. I bet you're def.' - Sub 1, Example 9). All these subtitles include forms of expression, relevant for on-screen language. The fact that Modern Standard Arabic is not typically used for everyday conversation in the Arab world poses great challenges to subtitlers, particularly when a vernacular is to be transferred to Arabic. While MSA often represents a tool for euphemism, the use of a less formal language by introducing dialectal elements makes the translation sound more natural and more coherent, as seen in Example 5, Sub. 3

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