Rendering of Cultural References: A Case Study of the Films *300* and *Gladiator*

A THESIS IN AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

By

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Dedication

For my Mother and Father

Abstract

Language and culture have always been two sides of the same coin. In the field of translation, many studies have been conducted to illustrate the complex relationship between language and culture, as they bond tightly together and are deemed inseparable. However, with the proliferation of advanced technology such as the Internet, mass media, DVDs and satellite channels, people have become more exposed to other cultures. Therefore, it has become evident that Audiovisual Translation (AVT) is essential to bridge the communication gap between cultures. Subtitling is one of the dominant modes of AVT in the Middle East, yet only a few studies have been conducted in this domain. The main aims of this thesis are to identify the most common cultural references that occur in two American feature films, namely *300* and *Gladiator*; to detect the most dominant translation strategies applied by subtitlers in rendering these cultural references from English into Arabic; to determine the orientation of translation towards foreignisation or domestication in terms of loyalty to the source or target culture; and to verify the main factors which motivated subtitlers to opt for a certain strategy over another. The findings indicate that source language (SL)-oriented translation strategies are most common, and borrowing and direct translation are the most used strategies among other translation strategies. The genre of period dramas, and in particular sword-and-sandal films, transculturality and co-text have been the chief factors in the decision to favour one strategy over another. Finally, the selection of solutions in tackling cultural references has not been motivated by agency, but has been left to the arbitrary choices of subtitlers.

Search Terms: *300*, *Gladiator*, AVT, subtitling, cultural references and translation strategies.

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Abbreviations

AVT: Audiovisual Translation

SL: Source Language

TL: Target Language

ST: Source Text

TT: Target Text

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter covers the objectives of the study, the importance of the study to the field of Translation Studies, the research questions the thesis seeks to answer, the reason behind choosing *300* and *Gladiator*, and provides an outline of the structural pillars of this thesis.

1.2 Purpose of Study

The main aims of this research are to investigate translation strategies applied by subtitlers in rendering cultural references into Arabic subtitles in a selection of two films: *300* (2007, directed by Zack Snyder) and *Gladiator* (2000, directed by Ridley Scott). Moreover, the study attempts to identify the types of cultural references used in these epic films, and to determine whether the subtitlers tended towards source SL-oriented or target language (TL)-oriented translation strategies when approaching the problems of rendering cultural references.

1.3 Significance of Study

AVT is a relative newcomer to Translation Studies. In spite of the fact that subtitling is deemed one of the dominant modes of AVT in the Middle East, only a few studies have been conducted in this domain. Thawabteh (2011, p. 3) says that "the situation seems to be awkward in the Arab World, for studies on AVT are still thin and unsatisfactory". Gamal (2014, p. 1) argues that "[a]udiovisual translation (AVT) in the Arab world remains outside the scope of translation departments".

Furthermore, studying the problems and strategies of rendering cultural references from English into Arabic has been neglected by Arab translatologists. The rendering of cultural references is certainly considered a challenging task, especially from English into Arabic. Since English (Germanic family) and Arabic (Semitic family) come from different language families (Al-Masri, 2010, p. 92), undoubtedly the cultures differ as well, which, in turn, becomes a problematic task for the subtitler/translator who has to communicate the meaning of the source cultural references into the TL.

Raising the awareness of considering culture in Translation Studies, will make "it more appropriate to think of translation as a process which occurs between cultures rather than simply between languages" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014, p. 35).

1.4 Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

1.   What types of cultural references are found in *300* and *Gladiator*?

2.   What are the translation strategies employed by subtitlers to overcome the problems of rendering culturally bound items?

3.   Do these strategies tend to be SL-oriented or TL-oriented?

4.   Why are these strategies selected by the subtitlers of the two films?

1.5 Why *300* and *Gladiator*?

Broadly speaking, the selection of any corpus of any study should be based on certain criteria that respond to the study's core analysis and research questions. Accordingly, this study has chosen two films, namely *300* and *Gladiator*, because the dialogues of both films contain an abundance of cultural references which may cause translational hurdles in the TL. Moreover, the popularity of those films, both globally and domestically (the Middle East), is another factor in favour of their selection. As period films, they also pose an additional layer of intercultural complexity, namely bridging the historical and cultural gap between ancient Rome and Greece (presented through the lens of Hollywood) and the modern-day Middle East.

1.6 Thesis Structure and Organisation

The thesis is broken down into five chapters. Following on this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 will present a review of relevant literature. This review will include a discussion of the background of AVT and its modes; the mode of subtitling, including definitions, a brief history of subtitling in the Arab world, types of subtitling, and features and constraints of subtitling; the notion of culture and how it is related to language as well as a classification of cultural references from the perspective of Translation Studies; a discussion of culture in Translation studies, followed by a brief description of the notion of translation strategy and an exploration of Venuti's distinction between domestication and foreignisation and an in-depth discussion of translation strategies suggested by translatologists which can be used to tackle culture-specific references.

Chapter 3 will present the research methodology in order to achieve the intended aim of the present study. This is followed by a proposed classification of cultural references and translation strategies for the purpose of this study in addition to a continuum of SL-oriented and TL-oriented translation strategies.

Chapter 4 will present the data analysis, discussion and findings. It will begin with a brief description of the two films, followed by an identification of the types of cultural references and their occurrence in the films. SL-oriented translation strategies and TL-oriented translation strategies will then be analysed before the most important instances of cultural items of both films will be discussed in order to see if the subtitlers opted for foreignising or domesticating the cultural references of *300* and *Gladiator*.

Finally, Chapter 5 will recapitulate the primary aims of the current study, the methods adopted by the researcher to achieve these aims and the findings obtained. Moreover, the chapter will exhibit the limitations of the present study and provide recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

2.1 Overview

This chapter gives special attention to subtitling and culture. The chapter starts with a brief overview of AVT and the types which may fall within this field. Following this, attention is directed towards subtitling by defining subtitling, reviewing its history in the Middle East, identifying the types of subtitling and touching upon the main characteristics of subtitling. Then, the chapter moves on to discuss the concept of culture and its affiliation with language and translation, followed by a definition of cultural references. Since this study primarily focuses on how to deal with cultural references in translation, the classifications of cultural references and translation strategies put forth by translation scholars are explored. Finally, a summary is provided to conclude the chapter.

2.2 AVT at a Glance

AVT is a relatively new area in translation studies. It has caught the attention of translation scholars since the 1990s (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p.8), particularly in 1995 when the Council of Europe consented to host a conference, held in Strasbourg, on audiovisual communication and language transfer to commemorate the centenary of the cinema (Gambier 2003, p. 17; Cattrysse & Gambier 2008, p. 12; von Flotow, 1995, p. 286). However, within a relatively short period of time (two to three decades) the field has broadened rapidly, gained ground and is now thoroughly recognised within the domain of translatology (Ramière, 2007, p. 32)

AVT can be defined as a "translational practice that works with source texts that combine two communication channels, audio and visual, and in this sense it stands in contradistinction with written translation or interpreting" (Díaz-Cintas, 2010); that is to say, the rendition of texts incorporated in audiovisual products such as films, TV shows, video games, plays, operas, etc., products that should contain a composition of both acoustic and visual channels. Simply put, audiovisual products are created to be heard and seen concurrently (Chiro, 2012).

The term 'AVT' has become the prevailing term to refer to a translation practice where image and sound are involved in the process of translating from one language into another (Palumbo, 2009, as cited in Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p.

12). The vacillation of scholars in coming up with a standard term for the field can be construed as:

> a reflection of the changing times in which we live. Far from representing a barrier to communication, it could be interpreted as a clear sign of the desire of many academics to maintain an open and flexible approach to our object of study; one that can assimilate and acknowledge the new realities emerging in the translation world. (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 12)

In this study, unless otherwise stated, the label AVT is used to refer to the rendition practice of all audiovisual products.

2.2.1 Typology of AVT.

In the Middle East, AVT seems to be associated mainly with subtitling, dubbing and voice-over. From Gambier's (2003, p. 172; 2009, p. 42) standpoint, however, the field is not restricted to the three previously mentioned types, and he suggests two principal classifications of AVT practices: dominant and challenging.

The dominant types consist of interlingual subtitling, dubbing, consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, voice-over, free commentary, simultaneous or sight translation and multilingual production (Gambier, 2003, pp. 172–174; Gambier, 2009, pp. 42–43). On the other hand, challenging types include scenario/script translation, intralingual subtitling, live or real-time subtitling, surtitling and audio description (Gambier, 2003, pp. 174–176; 2009, pp. 44–46).

2.3 Subtitling

Generally speaking, subtitles are a translation of what is uttered on the screen, appearing as a text at the bottom of an on-screen display so that the message of a source dialogue becomes accessible to the target audience. In most cases, subtitles consist of one or two lines of text displayed at the bottom of the screen. In Japan, however, subtitles are positioned at the side of the screen at times, particularly vertically (Pedersen, 2011, p. 8). Subtitling in its most basic definition is "the process of providing synchronized captions for film and television dialogue (and more recently for live opera)" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 161). For González (2009) it is "a production of snippets of written text (*subtitles*, or *captions* in American English) to be superimposed on visual footage – normally near the bottom of the

frame – while an audiovisual text is projected, played or broadcast" (p. 14, emphasis in the original).

From a semiotic perspective, subtitling is defined by Gottlieb (2008, p. 208) 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 dialogue". Diamesic translation, also called diasemiotic translation (Gottlieb, 2004a, p. 86; 2001, p. 245), as elucidated by Gottlieb (2008, p. 45), is a shift of language mode (medium of expression) from oral to written or written to oral. Gottlieb (2008, p. 42; 2001, p. 245) also refers to subtitles as polysemiotic (multi-channel) texts[1]. Polysemiotic text is a type of "text where information comes through more than one semiotic channel, e.g. a film" (Pedersen, 2011, p. 240), wherein the text (message) requires "the presence of two or more parallel channels of discourse [auditory, visual, etc.] constituting the text" (Pedersen, 2011, p. 10). The term 'text' used by Gottlieb should not be confused with written verbal material. Here, it indicates "*any message containing verbal material*[2]" (Gottlieb, 1997, p. 27, emphasis in the original, as cited in Pedersen, 2011, p. 10).

2.3.1 History of subtitling in the Arab world.

Unfortunately, no satisfactory account of the history of subtitling in the Arab world has been provided to date. The research paper, *Egypt's Audiovisual Translation Scene*, written by the Egyptian-born Australian translatologist Muhammed Y. Gamal (2008), is considered one of the most significant papers which has sought to give a comprehensive historical background of the AVT field in the Arab world in general and Egypt in particular. The proliferation of satellite channels around the globe have urged numerous Arabic channels in the 1990s to screen imported foreign TV shows or films; in order to make them accessible to Arab audiences, subtitling and dubbing

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[1]   In its strictest sense, the term text is usually used to denote "a message which has been recorded in some way (e.g. writing, audio- and video-recording) so that it is physically independent of its *sender or receiver*" (Chandler, 2014, emphasis in the original).
[2]   According to Hussain (2014, p. 85) verbal material, whether it holds a meaning or not, refers to a material that is produced in written, printed or spoken form, such as words, signs, symbols, alphabetical letters, numbers, nonsense syllables, etc.

have been the preferred methods (Gamal, 2008, p. 1). However, Gamal (2008, p. 2) stresses that Arabic channels have opted for subtitling over dubbing because it is much cheaper and faster, and presumably also due to the fact that "[d]ubbing was deemed too dangerous to the fledgling cinema industry in Egypt – an industry which was to have far reaching implications for the entire Arab world" (Gamal, 2008, p. 3). Al Alami (2011) lends credence to Gamal's claims by stating that the Arab world is currently "witnessing the non-stop spreading of Turkish television series dubbed into Arabic. These dubbed Turkish series are competing with Syrian series, because Turkish series are basically being dubbed into Syrian dialect by famous Syrian actors" (p. 13).

According to Gamal (2008, p. 2), the first cinema in the Arab world was established in Egypt in 1907. He also adds that the first Arabic talkie film in the Arab world to be broadcasted with subtitles was called "Children of the Rich", and was produced in Egypt in 1932 (2008, p. 2). Furthermore, the first pioneer subtitling company in the Arab word was Anis Ebaid Films: the words 'Subtitled in the studios of Anis Ebaid' appeared on almost every foreign film screened in Egypt and other Arab countries between 1944 and 1989 (Gamal, 2008, p. 2).

The rapid expansion of the cinema industry in Egypt and the increasing number of imported films have established the principal standards of subtitling films and TV shows into Arabic, such as using a maximum of two lines, adopting formal Arabic and censoring foul and offensive language, sexual terms and blasphemy (Gamal, 2008, pp. 3–4). In other words, the subtitler applies standard terminology in the Arabic language, especially when dealing with taboo phrases; however, the terminology used differs from one film genre to another (p. 4). The standard translation of particular phrases that appear on the screen has been referred to as *televese* (p. 4), or television language.

2.3.2 Types of subtitling.

AVT scholars' classification of subtitles is mainly based on two perspectives: linguistic and technical (Bartoll, 2004, 53), with Gottlieb (1992, p. 163; 2001, p. 247) being one of the first to do so. Linguistically, subtitling subsumes intralingual subtitling and interlingual subtitling. The former sub-category is an illustration of vertical translation (Gottlieb, 2001, p. 247), that is, it "involves a shift from oral to written but stays always within the same language" (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p.

14). An example of intralingual subtitling is Cockney into Standard English. This method is also known as closed captioning in America, indicating a transcription of the original SL speech. This method is useful for the Deaf and hearing impaired, as well as for those who are trying to learn a new foreign language (Gottlieb, 1992, p. 163). Interlingual subtitling, on the other hand, is concerned with language transfer from one language to another, e.g. an English film with Arabic subtitles. Interlingual subtitling is an exemple of diagonal translation, with a change in both language and medium, crossing over from oral mode in the SL to written form in the TL (Gottlieb, 1992, p. 163; Gottlieb, 2001, p. 247; Gottlieb, 2008, p. 210). This type can also be called "interlinguistic subtitles" (Liu, 2014, p. 1105).

On the technical aspect, subtitling is subdivided into: "open subtitles" and "closed subtitles" (Gottlieb, 1992, p. 163; Gottlieb, 2001, p. 247; Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 21). Open subtitles are inseparable (embedded) components of the motion picture or television programme; namely they "are burned or projected onto the image and cannot be removed or turned off, namely not optional. The programme and the subtitles cannot be disassociated from each other, allowing the viewer no choice as to their presence on screen" (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 21). Conversely, closed subtitling is a technical feature which grants the audience the privilege of turning the subtitles on or off when needed: that is, they are optional.

2.3.2.1 *New type of subtitling: Fansubbing/amateur subtitling.*

The advent of the Internet and new technologies such as DVDs, computer software and media streaming devices have created the potential for a new type of subtitling to emerge, namely fansubbing or amateur subtitling. Fansubbing refers to the process of translation which is carried out by film or TV programme fans or non-professional translators "in order to make a given film or television programme available in translation to a wider audience, in a faster timeframe or in a more *adequate* version" (O'Sullivan, 2011, p. 147, emphasis in the original). Initially, fansubs referred to "subtitles of various Japanese anime productions made unofficially by fans for non-Japanese viewers" (Bogucki, 2009, p. 49). Currently, the term refers to subtitles which are produced by fansubbers, namely "[a]mateur subtitle producers" (Bogucki, 2009, p. 49), "that nobody has commissioned or paid for" (Díaz-Cintas, 2015, p. 637).

2.3.3 Merits of subtitling.

Subtitling possesses four features which make it relatively different from any other type of AVT. In this section, subtitling is used to refer to both intralingual and interlingual subtitles. The four features are as follows:

1. Didactic: Subtitling can be used as an educational tool for learning foreign languages for hearers (Danan, 1992; Vanderplank, 1988; Bird & Williams, 2002) as well as the Deaf and those who are hard of hearing (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007; Gambier, 2009, p. 42; Díaz-Cintas, 2013, p. 282; Valero-Garcés, 2015, p. 160; Neves. 2008, p. 140). Kruger, Kruger and Verhoef (2007) believe that subtitling can help enhance people's literacy and multilingualism. In addition, subtitles can be used as a means of helping immigrants and their children to preserve their mother tongue whether they are living overseas or in their homelands (Valero-Garcés, 2015, p. 160).

2. Diasemiotic: From the semiotic perspective, subtitling can be viewed as being far superior to other kinds of audiovisual methods of translation since it is "diasemiotic by nature" (Gottlieb, 2004a, p. 86). Here, the medium is changed from oral (source dialogue) to written (subtitles).

3. Authentic: Subtitling preserves the authenticity and the originality of audiovisual materials, such as films and TV programmes. In other words, subtitling discountenances any manipulation whatsoever of the soundtrack and image of the original.

4. Economical: Subtitling is considered to be a cheaper, quicker, less labor-intensive and less technically sophisticated process when compared to dubbing (Al Alami, 2011, p. 14; Alrosan, 2012, p. 18).

2.3.4 Technical constraints of subtitling.

Subtitling is one of the most constrained modes in translation. In particular, subtitling is governed by two technical constraints: temporal and spatial. Gottlieb (2004b, p. 219) depicts both limitations as "[t]he famous and infamous time-and-space constraints of subtitling". Consequently, the subtitler is occasionally required to rewrite much of the translation (Sánchez, 2004, p. 12), usually condensing the subtitles, especially when the dialogue is fast (Pedersen, 2011, p. 115; Gottlieb, 2004b, p. 219). Spatial constraint is associated with the number of lines and characters that can be displayed on the screen at any given time. The norm in subtitling is a maximum of two lines. According to some sources, a one-liner should

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contain a maximum of 35 characters (Pedersen, 2011, p. 19; Gottlieb, 2001, p. 245; Madej, 2010, p. 171). In the Middle East, it has been noted that most satellite channels normally tend to use a maximum of 30 to 40 characters per line. In China, the ideal number of characters for each subtitle line is 15 at the most (Fong, 2009, p. 94).

Temporal constraint is associated with "the maximum time duration for one subtitle to stay on the screen to give the viewer sufficient time to read and comprehend the textual line(s)" (Alrosan, 2012, p. 26). Here, the subtitler must make sure that subtitles are well-synchronised with speech dialogue; in other words, the appearance of the subtitles at the bottom of the screen must abide by "the pace of the sound-track dialogue" (Hatim & Mason, 1997, p. 65).

As a general rule of thumb, two seconds is the minimum duration for a subtitle to remain displayed on the screen and seven seconds is the maximum (Hatim & Mason, 1997, p. 65).

2.4 The Link Between Culture and Language

Culture and language are considered inseparable parts of the translation process, therefore the subtitler or the translator cannot simply overlook the cultural aspect of the source text (ST) or the dialogue and focus solely on the linguistic elements. Faiq (2008, p. 35) accentuates the close relationship between them by saying, "language and culture represent the two sides of the same coin".

It is well established that "language is the foundation upon which culture rests" (Farghal & Shunnaq, 1999, p. 122). In the same vein, Ghazala (1995, p. 193) says that language "is the heart within the body of culture". Samvor, Porter and McDaniel (2007, p. 168) explain that the relationship between culture and language is apparent since "language is the primary means of instructing members of a society in culturally acceptable practices and behaviors for social interaction, in the appropriate relationships to the physical environment, and to the sensed but unseen supernatural". Ghazala (1995, p. 193) states that "culture is the umbrella under which come many things in a society, including language".

2.4.1 Definition of culture.

According to Harper's *Online Etomolgy Dictionary* (2016), the term 'culture' means "tilling of land", from the French verb *colere* which means to "tend, guard, cultivate, till"; and from the Latin word 'cultura', meaning "cultivating, agriculture".

Metaphorically speaking, culture is like agriculture since "seeds continually absorb elements from the land, or rather the ecosystem, to ensure their development. In the same way, people continually absorb, unaware, vital elements from their immediate environment which influence their development within the human system" (Katan, 1999, p. 17).

There are numerous definitions of culture that have been presented by scholars of linguistics and anthropology. The most classical definition of culture is provided by the English Anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylo, saying that culture "is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (as cited in Peacock, 2001, p. 3).

House (2002, p. 93) states that the definition of culture relies on two concepts: the humanistic and the anthropological. The former concept "captures the 'cultural heritage' as a model of refinement, an exclusive collection of a community's masterpieces in literature, fine arts, music etc." (House, 2002, p. 93). The latter, however, is defined as the "overall way of life of a community or society, i.e. all those traditional, explicit and implicit designs for living which act as potential guides for the behaviour of members of the culture" (House, 2002, p. 93). On the other hand, Cakir (2006) defines culture as:

> the context within which we exist, think, feel and relate to others. It is the "glue" that binds a group of people together. It can be defined as a blueprint that guides the behaviour of people in community and is incubated in family life. It governs our behaviour in groups, makes us sensitive to matters of status, and helps us to know what others expect of us and what will happen if we do not live up to their expectations. Thus, culture helps us to know how far we can go as individuals and what our responsibility is to the group. (p. 155)

Consequently, no one can deny that culture is an inherent part of language. If the subtitler or the translator overrides these strong ies, s/he "will commit a serious mistake" (Ghazala, 1995, p. 193).

2.5 Translation and Culture

Newmark (1988, p. 94) defines culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression". In their edited book, *Translation, History and Culture*; Bassnett and Lefevere introduced a new term to translation studies, namely "the cultural turn" (1990, p. 8), which has played a pivotal role in altering the perception of studying translation from different angles. Bassnett and Lefevere (1990, p. 8) accentuate that "neither the word, nor the text, but the culture becomes the operational 'unit' of translation". Here, they underline the fact that translational studies should not only be approached linguistically, but approached and studied from a cultural aspect as well.

Considering culture in translation studies will make "it more appropriate to think of translation as a process which occurs between cultures rather than simply between languages" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014, p. 35). Nida and Taber (2003), define cultural translation as "a translation in which the content of the message is changed to conform to the receptor culture in some way, and/or in which information is introduced which is not linguistically implicit in the original" (p. 199). Nevertheless, Nida (1964, p. 160) argues that the less distance between language and culture the fewer translational barriers a translator may face. Díaz-Cintas, Matamala and Neves (2010, p. 12) acknowledge that "in the fruitful marriage between Translation Studies and Cultural Studies, today's AVT authors tend to show an increased awareness of the cultural embeddedness of translation".

2.6 Cultural References

According to Aixelá (1996), the foremost problem in defining culture-bound references lies in the fact that all things are realistically considered culturally specific in language, even language itself (as cited in Ranzato, 2013, p. 67). Díaz-Cintas (2013, p. 73) defines cultural references as "lexical items [that] refer to people, gastronomy, customs, places and organizations that are embedded in the Other's cultural capital and may be completely unknown to the target viewer". Moreover, a number of translation scholars use synonymous labels to refer to cultural references such as "culture specific, culture bound references/elements/terms/items/expressions, realia, allusions, or, more generally, cultural references" (Ranzato, 2013, p. 67). Ramière (2007), for example, uses "culture-specific references" (p. 20). In their book, *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitiling*, Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) use the term "cultural references" (p. 216). They also define culture-bound terms as

"extralinguistic references to items that are tied up with a country's culture, history, or geography" (p. 200). Teilanyo (2007), on the other hand, uses "culture-bound concepts" (p. 4). On top of that, the Swedish translation scholar Jan Pedersen has introduced another term, which he calls "extralinguistic cultural references" (2011, p. 2) or "extralinguistic culture-bound references" (2005, p. 2), ECRs for short. However, he excludes intralinguistic culture-bound references; viz., "idioms, proverbs, slang and dialects" (2005, p. 2).

Since English (Germanic family) and Arabic (Semitic family) come from different language families (Al-Masri, 2010, p. 92), undoubtedly the culture differs as well, which, in turn, makes it problematic for the subtitler/translator to communicate the meaning of the source cultural references into the TL. Larson (1998) accentuates that "[o]ne of the most difficult problems in translating is found in the differences between cultures" (p. 149). Teilanyo (2007, p. 16) concludes that culture-bound concepts are considered insurmountable translational problems and a challenging task for the translator. He attributes this difficulty to "the problem of finding adequate target language equivalents for terms conveying culture-sensitive notions in the source language as a result of the fact that the two languages have different meaning subsystems and cultures" (2007, p. 16). Similarly, Pedersen (2011, p. 3) says, "cultural references . . . could be said to present a symptomatic translation problem".

Accordingly, many Arab audiences consuming subtitled English media will not be familiar with the English cultural references; therefore, the subtitler's job is to eliminate the distance between two cultures by finding a meeting point where the cultural differences can be bridged.

Henceforth, the terms 'cultural references', 'extralinguistic culture-bound references', 'culture-specific references', 'cultural elements' or 'cultural items' are used interchangeably in this paper, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

2.6.1 Classification of cultural references.

At the level of written text translation, a number of translation scholars have suggested different classifications of cultural references. Newmark is considered one of the leading scholars to provide a classification of cultural references. His classification is based on Nida's (1945) classification of cultural references (Ramière, 2007, p. 49). Newmark's (1988, pp. 96–102) classification of cultural references is illustrated as follows:

1. Ecology (viz. flora and fauna, climate, geographical features, etc.);

2. material culture (such as artefacts, food, clothes, towns, dwellings, transport);

3. social culture (everything that relates to work, places of work, trades, crafts, sport and leisure activities);

4. social organisation (any term that refers to political titles, countries, political institutions, public bodies, customs, historical words, international institutional words, legal, religion, artistic terms such as movements, processes, organisations, names of buildings, museums, etc.; and

5. gestures and habits (smiling, spitting, nodding one's head, ways of greeting, etc.).

Furthermore, Oltra-Ripolle (2005, pp. 77–78) proposes a more detailed taxonomy of cultural references based on Newmark's (1988), Katan's (1999) and Mallafrè's (1991) typologies of cultural items:

1. Nature (i.e. fauna and flora, natural phenomena, etc.);

2. leisure, feasts and traditions (i.e. food, feasts, recreational games, places for people's leisure, etc.);

3. artificial products (i.e. trademarks, clothes, perfumes, etc.);

4. religion and mythology (such as religious figures, places of worship, saints, Greek mythology, mythological creatures, etc.);

5. geography (such as toponyms , demonyms, etc.);

6. politics and economy (such as institutional organisations, political theories and parties, ideologies, banks, trade unions, etc,);

7. history (such as historical and contemporary figures, wars, battles, etc.);

8. art and literature (cinema, literature, painting, press, music, literature of oral tradition etc.); and

9. science (such as natural science, scientific fields, etc.).

At the level of AVT, on the other hand, several scholars have endeavored to provide an extensive typology of culture-bound references. Nedergaard-Larsen (1993, p. 211) suggests the following classification:

Extralinguistic culture-bound problem types		
Geography etc	geography meteorology biology	mountains, rivers, weather, climate, flora, fauna

	cultural geography	regions, towns, roads, streets etc.
History	buildings	monuments, castles etc
	events	wars, revolutions, flag days
	people	well-known historical persons
Society	industrial level (economy)	trade and industry, energy supply etc
	social organisation	defence, judicial system, police, prisons, local and central authorities
	politics	state management, ministries, electoral system, political parties, politicians, political organisations
	social conditions	groups, subcultures, living conditions, problems
	ways of life, customs	housing, transport, food, meals, clothing, articles for everyday use, family relations
Culture	religion	churches, rituals, morals, ministers, bishops religious holidays, saints
	education	schools, colleges, universities, lines of education, exams
	media	TV, radio, newspapers, magazines
	culture, leisure activities	museums, works of art, literature, authors, theatres, cinemas, actors, musicians, idols, restaurants, hotels, nightclubs, cafés, sports, athletes

Table 1. Nedergaard-Larsen's Classification of Cultural References

However, Nedergaard-Larsen's classification has been criticised by Ramière (2007, p. 51) for being problematic. She justifies her criticism by explaining that the lexical items in the third column may cause confusion, since some lexical items may refer to a category and others may refer to words that are taxing to render; there are particular headings that to some extent are viewed as cryptic. In addition, the term

'culture' in the first column is misleading, as it carries a more restricted meaning than when utilised in the heading of the table itself (Ramière , 2007, pp. 51-52). In a similar vein, Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) present a more updated taxonomy based on Grit's (1997) classification of cultural items, as shown below:

- Geographical references
    - □ Objects from physical geography: savannah, mistral, tornado.
    - □ Geographical objects: downs, plaza mayor.
    - □ Endemic animal and plant species: sequoia, zebra.
- Ethnographic references
    - □ Objects from daily life: tapas, trattoria, igloo.
    - □ References to work: farmer, gaucho, machete, ranch.
    - □ References to art and culture: blues, Thanksgiving, Romeo and Juliet.
    - □ References to descent: gringo, Cockney, Parisienne.
    - □ Measures: inch, ounce, euro, pound.
- Socio-political references
    - □ References to administrative or territorial units: county, bidonville, state.
    - □ References to institutions and functions: Reichstag, sheriff, congress.
    - □ References to socio-cultural life: Ku Klux Klan, Prohibition, landed gentry.
    - □ References to military institutions and objects: Feldwebel, marines, Smith & Wesson. (p. 201)

The category of geographical references embraces Nedergaard-Larsen's category of geography and Newmark's ecology. The religious references can be found in references to art and culture; however, Nedergaard-Larsen dedicates a subcategory for religious references which makes it easier and avoids any overlapping. The remainder of socio-political references are covered by Nedergaard-Larsen's category of society and Newmark's social organisation. The category of ethnographic

references covers two categories of Newmark's taxonomy (material culture and social culture) and overlaps with Nedergaard-Larsen's culture and society.

Oltra-Ripolle (2005, p. 77) emphasises the point that providing a thorough classification of cultural references is considered a daunting task since "[i]t is difficult to establish an all-inclusive classification of ECRs to cover every aspect of community life" (Cheng, 2014, p. 52). Broadly speaking, there is no taxonomy of cultural references better than the other, though "some may be more useful than others for specific analyses" (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 201).

2.7 Translation Strategies

Although the notion of translation strategy is used by various scholars of translation, there has been no unequivocal definition of this term in translation theory (Lörscher, 1991, as cited in Płońska, 2014, p. 67). It is also noted that the term 'strategy' is used by academic researchers in translation studies interchangeably with the terms procedures, techniques, methods and principles (Schäffner, 1995, p. 5; Sun, 2012; Palumbo, 2009, pp. 134–135; Guerra, 2012, p. 6).

Palumbo (2009, p. 131) defines translation strategy as referring "either to a general mode of text transfer or to the transfer operation performed on a particular structure, item or idea found in the source text". Translation strategies can also be seen as "potentially conscious plans for solving a translation problem" (Krings, 1986, p. 268). Furthermore, Jääskeläinen (1993) defines translation strategies as "a set of (loosely formulated) rules or principles which a translator uses to reach the goals determined by the translating situation in the most effective way" (as cited in Palumbo, 2009, p. 132).

Some language scholars have attempted to differentiate between translation strategy and its synonymous terms in translatology. Piotrowska (1995, p. 210), for instance, distinguishes between strategy and technique. Translation strategy – also referred to as strategic decision – is text-oriented and considers the text as a whole; in other words, it is defined as "a comprehensive purpose- and context-oriented procedure, or the policy a translator uses to make the transfer from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL), which is consistently followed by specific techniques". Translation technique – also called decision of detail – is problem-oriented and concerns tactics "in which translators should mentally proceed if faced with translation problems when they are engaged in the process of translating"

(Piotrowska, 1995, p. 210). Similarly, Munday (2016, p. 88) uses the term 'strategy' to refer to the "overall orientation of the translator" towards a text, while the term 'procedure' refers to a particular technique a translator resorts to when translating lexical problems found in a text. In the same vein, Newmark (1988, p. 81) distinguishes between translation methods, which are applied to the whole text, and translation procedures, which can be applied at the level of sentences and smaller linguistic items.

Thus, from the above-mentioned definitions it can be discerned that when translation strategies and procedures are employed during the process of translating a text, the translation is seen as a deliberate and conscious act, otherwise it would be an arbitrary process, possibly leading to the pitfalls of mistranslation.

Succinctly, regardless of the exact term used by language scholars, they all "serve both to analyse and catalogue translation equivalence and to improve the acquisition of translation competence, since knowing and comparing them is definitively necessary to obtain an adequate translation" (Guerra, 2012, p. 6). Moreover, the term 'strategy' is designated in translatology to refer "to the mechanisms used to solve problems during the translation process" (Romero, 2011, p. 28).

2.7.1 Foreignisation and domestication.

The two macro translation strategies, foreignisation and domestication , were coined by the American translatologist Lawrence Venuti (1995). Foreignisation is a SL-oriented translation approach, in which the translator attempts to preserve the cultural elements of the ST in the translation. As a result, the target reader can promptly recognise that the text is a translation and it is foreign or alien to his/her own culture. Conversely, domestication is a TL-oriented translation approach, in which the target reader may not immediately recognise that the text is a translation at all. As a result, the translator becomes the second author of the ST. Foreignisation had been "formulated first in German culture during the classical and romantic periods" (Venuti, 1995, p. 20; Venuti, 2008, p. 16). On the other hand, domestication has been used since the Roman era, where the translators chose to replace Greek cultural items of a poem with Latin allusions and deleted any cultural items that alluded to the Greek culture, including replacing the name of the actual author with the name of the

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translator: namely the Latin translator became the actual author of the poem (Venuti, 2001, pp. 240–241).

A more elaborate definition of domestication and foreignisation is given by Klaudy (2012):

> Domestication means translation strategies which result in transparent, natural-sounding, fluent TL style, minimize the strangeness of TT by the removal of SL realia, and require less effort on the part of the receptor. Foreignization means using translation strategies which retain the foreign flavour of the original. Foreignization, which results in a nonfluent style, deliberate breaking of TL conventions and retention of SL realia in the TL text, requires more effort on the part of the receptor. (p. 40)

For Venuti (1995, p. 20; 2008, p. 16) domestication is an approach adopted by the translator in an attempt at "bringing the author home", wherein the translator becomes invisible (Venuti, 1995, p. 2; 2008, p. 1). Conversely, foreignisation is an approach adopted by the translator in an attempt at "sending the reader abroad" (Venuti, 1995, p. 20; 2008, p. 16), wherein the translator becomes visible (Venuti, 1995, p. 2; 2008, p. 1). According to Ramière (2007, p. 84) foreignisation can also be referred to as exoticism/exoticisation, exotic/foreign, other, source-culture bias and overt; on the other hand, domestication can be referred to as naturalisation/assimilation, familiar, self, target-culture bias and covert. This can be illustrated through Ramière's (2007, p. 84) continuum of typical translation strategies:
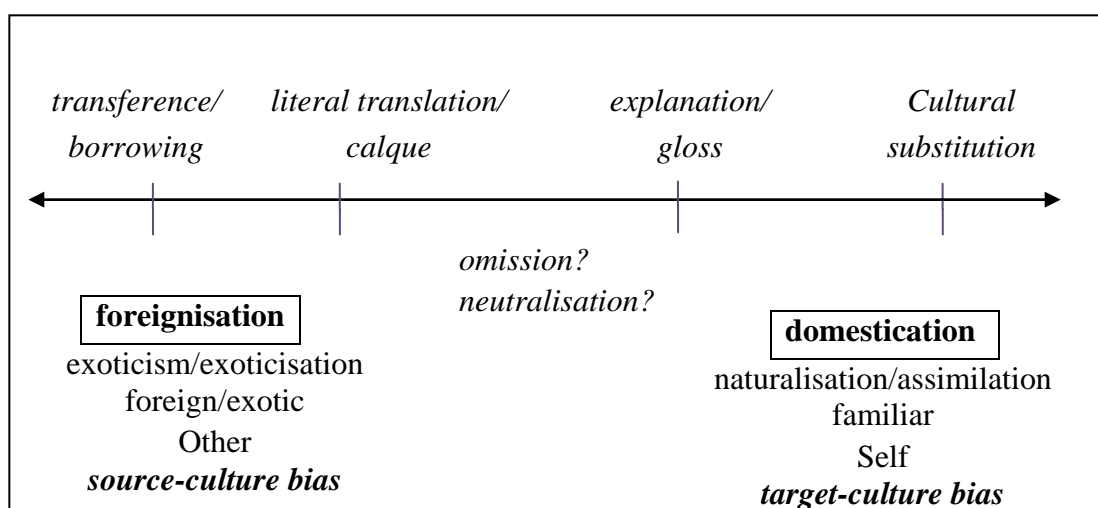
Figure 1. Ramière's Continuum of Typical Translation Strategies

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Moreover, if the subtitling of a film is foreignised then "it transports the audience to the film world. Through subtitles, members of the audience make an effort to acculturate themselves and to become immersed in the film world" (Fong 2009, p. 101). Domestication or naturalisation, however, "takes the film world to the audience" (Fong 2009, p. 101), so the understanding of a film will be easier for the audience and will not require as much effort to decode the message of the source cultural items.

2.7.2 Translation strategies for cultural references.

What actually makes the process of translating cultural references a challenging task is "when no similar item [cultural reference] exists in the target culture and/or if it is unknown to the majority of the target audience" (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 201). Thus, the subtitler's or "the translator's duty is to leave no stone unturned in efforts to convey the communicative goal of the ST into the TL, especially when culture is related" (Alrosan 2012, p, 47). In order to reduce the cultural gap of communication or "to fill in the target culture gap as adequately as possible" (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 201) the translator/subtitler "can rely on various procedures, techniques or strategies to deal with such translation problems" (Guerra, 2012, p. 5).

Furthermore, Nedergaard-Larsen (1993, p. 215) stresses the fact that "[i]n all types of translation work, some kind of strategy will be employed, intuitively or consciously".

In seeking solutions for the problems a subtitler/translator may encounter when translating cultural items, several translatologists have attempted to compile various typologies of translation strategies for both written texts and subtitling.

In written texts, the French scholars Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet were early pioneers in devising a detailed taxonomy to tackle cultural items. However, their model, first published in 1958, gained more notoriety in 1995, after it was issued in English (as cited in Munday, 2016, p. 88). The model is divided into two strategies: direct translation and oblique translation. The former, direct translation, is split into three techniques, namely borrowing, calque and literal translation; the latter, oblique translation, consists of four methods, namely transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995/2004, as cited in Munday, 2016, pp. 88–91). In addition, Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) provided ancillary translation techniques

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viz., amplification, false friend, compensation, explicitation and generalisation (as cited in Munday, 2016, pp. 92–93). Nevertheless, the authors' taxonomy has been criticised, despite the fact that it has inspired many scholars (Pym, 2014). Munday (2016, p. 95) argues that "[o]ne criticism of Vinay and Darbelnet's model is that it can less easily be applied to non-European languages". However, Mansor (2015) refuted this criticism when he conducted a case study to identify which of Vinay and Darbelnet's translation procedures have been applied to translate Arabic cultural elements into Malay. The results substantiated that "although Vinay and Darbelnet's approach is based on comparative stylistics between French and English, their approach provides a theoretical basis for the study of other language pairs" (Mansor, 2015). It is worth mentioning that the most influential translation methods to deal with cultural references are the ones which have been proposed by Newmark (1988, p. 103), upon which many scholars have built their own translation strategies, including Ghazala (1995) and Oltra-Ripoll (2005). Ramière (2007, p. 73) explains these strategies as follows:

(1) transference (i.e. the process of transferring *verbatim* the SL word[s] into the target text)

(2) cultural equivalent (use of an 'equivalent' in the TC; e.g. 'baccalauréat' [French]➤'A-level' [British English])

(3) neutralisation (functional equivalent and descriptive equivalent, i.e. use of a 'culture free' word suggesting the function of the SL term or describing it)

(4) literal translation (also referred to as 'through-translation' or 'calque', i.e. literal translation of each word of the SL expression)

(5) label (according to Newmark, used when a new term/expression in the TL is created to describe a SL item – usually in inverted commas)

(6) naturalisation (same as transference but with an adaptation to the TL's pronunciation and morphology)

(7) componential analysis (description of each sense component of the SL expression)

(8) deletion (omission of the culture-specific term in the TL)

(9) couplet (combination of procedures)

(10) accepted standard translation (use of a standard translation when it exists, e.g. for institutional terms)

(11) paraphrase, gloss, notes (addition of information by the translator)

(12) classifier (no explanation is provided by Newmark, but consists in the addition of a generic term; e.g. 'Speyer' [German]�'the city of Speyer' [English]).

Newmark (1995) compiled these translation procedures to tackle "proper names and institutional and cultural terms" (p. 70), and dedicated a full chapter in his book, *Approaches to Translation*, to how to deal with those three domains. However, this classification has been criticised for being "asystematic and contain[ing] some incongruities" (Ranzato, 2013, p. 95) and a confusing taxonomy to some extent (Pedersen, 2011, p. 72).

In the context of subtitling, there are too few translation scholars who have focused their research on the subtitling strategies that can be used in tackling cultural references, let alone the fact that all key subtitling strategies have been proposed based on European studies and their applicability has been examined by few Middle-Eastern researchers. According to Ramière (2007, p. 78) there are only a few scholars "who have discussed the general strategies available to translators in the case of AVT (exclusively in subtitling)". One of the eminent translatologists whose work focused on dealing with extralinguistic culture-bound references and not intralinguistic culture-specific elements such as idioms, taboo expressions, etc., is Pedersen (2005; 2011), who suggests seven strategies a subtitler may resort to when dealing with extralinguistc culture-bound references. He divides the strategies based on Venuti's scale (2005, p. 3). SL-oriented strategies (foreignising) include retention (can be either complete or TL adjusted), specification (can be either addition or completion) and direct translation (can be either calque or shifted); on the other hand, TL-oriented strategies (domestication) include generalisation (can be either superordinate term or paraphrase), substitution (can be either cultural or situational) and omission (2011, pp. 74–75). In addition, he suggests a seventh technique, which is "official equivalent"(2005, p. 3; 2011, p. 76).

In the same vein, Nedergaard-Larsen (1993, p. 219) introduces six main translation strategies viz. transfer/loan, direct translation, explicitation, paraphrase,

adaptation to TL-culture and omission; and four minor translation procedures, namely identity/exoticism, imitation, situational adaptation and cultural adaptation, which can be used in rendering culture-specific elements. Moreover, Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007, p. 202) propose nine subtitling techniques very similar to Nedergaard-Larsen's and Pedersen's typology. They are as follows: loan, calque or literal translation, explicitation, substitution, transposition, lexical recreation, compensation, omission and addition.

Each of the previously mentioned translation/subtitling strategies are scrutinised and explained as follows:

1. Retention, identity/exoticism, borrowing or transference: the culture-bound lexical item (word) or an expression is taken from one language and added into another without being translated, resulting in a transliteration process (Newmark, 1988, p. 81). Pedersen (2011, p. 77) refers to it as complete retention. Nedergaard-Larsen's (1993) imitation is not applicable to this strategy. For example, 'bon appétit' is borrowed from French into English. In addition, naturalisation is also considered borrowing where some alteration occurs to the spelling, pronunciation or structure of the lexical item when adapted to the TL, such as 'strategy' becoming استراتيجية. Pedersen (2011, p. 77) refers to it as TL adjusted retention. Naturalised terms can be viewed as neologisms (Newmark, 1988, p. 82).

2. Specification or explicitation: According to Pedersen's specification, the culture-bound lexical item of the original is borrowed, without being translated, into the TL, after which additional information is added to the loan word, such as a superordinate term (hypernym), hyponym or deleted term(s) of the original (Pedersen, 2011, pp. 79–80). For example, 'I studied at Macquarie' can be translated into درست في جامعة ماكواري (literally, I studied at *Macquarie University*); thus the translation becomes more specific than the original and can be easily comprehended by the target recipient. In addition, the expansion of acronyms in the TL falls under this procedure (Pedersen, 2011, p. 79); for example, 'VW' can be expanded and borrowed into Arabic, without being translated, as فولكس واجن (literally, Volkswagen). On the other hand, Díaz-Cintas and Remael's (2007) and Nedergaard-Larsen's (1993) explicitation subsumes generalisation (i.e. hypernym) and specification (i.e. hyponym). It can be said that their sub-strategy of specification is relatively similar to Pedersen's specification. Here, however, the culture-bound lexical item(s) of the ST is not

necessarily retained in the TL and can be replaced by a hypernym or hyponym; for example, 'cola' can be translated into مشروب غازي (literally, carbonated drink) instead of مشروب الكولا (literally, cola drink). Pedersen (2011) differentiates between both generalisation and specification and considers each one of them as a translation method per se.

3. Pedersen's direct translation, imitation or calque (literal translation): it is a kind of loan translation, or in other words, the literal translation of a culture-bound reference of the SL is borrowed into the TL. The target audience may find the translation of a culture reference unfamiliar to them or alien to their culture (Pedersen, 2001, p. 84; Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 202). To some extent this may be true; however, the loan translation will become more common in the target culture over time and the target audience will inevitably overlook the fact that it is merely a translation. Broadly speaking, the subtitler will not face any difficulty in translating the cultural reference here, because the TL already has its equivalent. For example, the coined expression 'Arab Spring' translation of الربيع العربي (literally, Arab Spring) has become common and not foreign in the Arab culture, and people have forgotten it is a loan translation.

4. Generalisation: the cultural reference of the original text is either paraphrased in the TT or replaced with a more general cultural reference such as a superordinate term (Pedersen, 2011, p. 85), with the specific being rendered to a generic term in the TT. For example, 'cousin' can be rendered into قريب (literally, relative).

5. Paraphrase: the cultural reference of the original text is explained or described in the TL. The subtitler can resort to this procedure when generalisation by using a superordinate term or specification fails to deliver an adequate translation of the SL cultural reference and may not be understood by the target recipients (Pedersen, 2011, p. 88). For example, 'Sari' can be translated into رداء تقليدي ترديه المرأة الهندية (literally, traditional dress worn by Indian women).

6. Substitution or transposition: the cultural reference of the original is substituted with a different cultural reference in the TL. For Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007, p. 204), transposition is when "a cultural concept from one culture is replaced by a cultural concept from another"; for example, 'Fahrenheit' can be replaced with centigrade. When there is something in common between both cultural references, it

is referred to as cultural substitution (Pedersen, 2011, p. 89) or cultural adaptation (Nedergaard-Larsen, 1993); for example, 'A-level' can be translated into شهادة الثانوية العامة (literally, general secondary certificate). However, when the cultural reference is replaced to imitate a similar situation in the TL, it would be referred to as situational substitution (Pedersen, 2011, p. 89) or situational adaptation (Nedergaard-Larsen, 1993); for example, 'Hungry Jack' can be rendered to 'Burger King'. It can be said that Díaz-Cintas and Remael's transposition is similar to situational substitution/adaptation.

7. Díaz-Cintas and Remael's substitution: the cultural reference of the original is replaced with another cultural reference that is shorter and more known to the target recipient than the original due to the spatial constraint imposed in subtitling; in other words, the subtitler will avoid "insertion of long term, even if it exists in the target culture and a hypernym or hyponym would therefore not really be required" (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2007, p. 204). To clarify the strategy, Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007, p. 204) mention the example 'Hungarian goulash' which can sometimes be translated into *stew* rather than 'goulash' because the word 'stew' has fewer characters than the latter option. This procedure is similar to Pedersen's generalisation but the subtitler takes spatial restriction into account and opts for a condensed translation of the foreign item in the TL.

8. Lexical recreation: the coined foreign item is replaced with another coined term (neologism) in the TL (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 206), as the coinage may exist in neither the monolingual dictionaries of the SL nor the TL. For example, the term 'Smurfs' can be rendered into سنافر (pronounced as Sanafer) which does not make sense at all in Arabic; nevertheless, Arab audiences consider it an acceptable neologism.

9. Compensation: it is used to mitigate "the loss of important ST features by approximating their effects in the TT through means other than those used in the ST" (Dickins, Hervey & Higgins, 2017, p. 48). In other words, the subtitler attempts to provide "a SL element of information or stylistic effect in another place in the TL text because it cannot be reflected in the same place as in the SL: the translation of dialects, irony, politeness values, etc." (Guerra, 2012, p. 9). For example, the French pronoun 'vous' can be translated into English by using a form of address (i.e. Mr.,

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Mrs., etc.) plus the surname of the addressee, in order to reflect a similar level of formality in the TL.

10. Addition: it is considered as a type of explicitation where the subtitle adds some information to the foreign item in the TL, so as to make the meaning more clarified or easily comprehended by the target recipient (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 207). For example, 'black iris' or 'Canberra' can be rendered into زهرة السوسنة السوداء (literally, black iris flower) and العاصمة الأسترالية كانبرا (literally, the Australian capital Canberra), respectively.

11. Omission: the cultural reference of the original is deleted in the TL, leaving no trace of the foreign item whatsoever in the translation. This can be attributed to the spatial and temporal constraints or the non-existence of an equivalent term in the TL (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 206).

12. Official equivalent: it can be referred to as "entrenched equivalent" (Pedersen, 2011, p. 98) since it is formed "through common usage or by some administrative decision" (Pedersen, 2011, p. 76); it is similar to Newmark's accepted standard translation strategy. According to Pedersen (2001, p. 74), it is not much of a translation strategy because an official equivalent can produced by any translation strategy (i.e. substitution, retention, direct translation, etc.). Therefore, he has excluded it from the Venutian scale. For example, 'Senate' is rendered into مجلس الشيوخ (literally, council of sheikhs). Accordingly, the subtitler will not encounter any translational dilemmas because there is a pre-existing solution to the problem (Pedersen, 2005, p. 3).

2.8 Summary

To recap, subtitling can be considered one of the important modes in AVT due to the different types which can be applied in various fields (i.e. learning, news etc.) and polymedial texts (i.e. films, etc.). Despite the fact that there is a great demand for subtitling in the Middle East, the depth of academic research in the field is still unsatisfactory.

Regarding the concept of *culture*, it can be said that it is very difficult to interpret since it is associated with various aspects of people's life. Since cultural aspects are manifested in language, translational hurdles emerge and require arduous effort to overcome, especially when dealing with cultural references. Even with cultural references, numerous scholars have essayed to propose classifications of

cultural references. Cheng (2014, p. 52) elucidates that the reason behind the several attempts made by translation scholars to establish exhaustive classification of cultural references is that it is sometimes difficult and perplexing to decide which category a cultural item should fall into.

Accordingly, many translatologists such as Nedergaard-Larsen (1993), Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) and Pedersen (2011) provided translation strategies in order to find appropriate solutions for these problematic cultural references. However. it has been noted that there has been definitional overlap, absence of clarity and disparity in their suggested classifications of translation strategies, which makes it difficult to identify which method has been adopted to translate a cultural reference, especially between explicitation and paraphrase, or among transposition, substitution or compensation. Moreover, the examples used by the scholars to clarify their strategies have made things more confusing as the same example may fall under another method. This can be attributed to the "different focuses and aspects of analysis while overlapping to a certain degree" (Cheng, 2014, p. 48). Therefore, a number of translation strategies have been tailored by the researcher to avoid any ambiguity and to meet the requirements of the analysis of this research.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Proposed Translation Strategies for Cultural References

3.1 Overview

The main purpose of this chapter is to shed light on the methodical procedures adopted in this study to answer the questions of the research (see section 1.4). The main aims of the study are to identify the main cultural references that appear in the two American films *300* and *Gladiator*, determine the most widely employed translation strategies in rendering these cultural references into Arabic, verify if the orientation of subtitling these cultural references is towards foreignisation or domestication and discuss any possible factors that may have influenced the decision-making by subtitlers to favour particular strategies over others. Moreover, the chapter touches upon the classification of cultural references, classification of translation strategies and the continuum of SL-oriented and TL-oriented translation strategies set forth for the purpose of the current study.

3.2 Research Methodology

The analysis is based on the films *300* and *Gladiator* that have been subtitled into Arabic. The data of the analysis is limited to the cultural references found in those films.

3.2.1 Materials.

These two films were selected as case studies for this study because of their popularity throughout the Middle East as well as the Western world. In addition, theses two films possess a plenitude of cultural references which may be considered problematic when rendering into Arabic. Furthermore, the existence of ancient Roman and Greek culture as interpreted by American Hollywood presents an even more challenging task in translation to bridge the historical and cultural gap of communication among three cultures: Roman/Greek, English and Arabic.

300 won the 34th Saturn Awards for Best Action, Adventure and Thriller Film; it was directed by Zack Snyder and released in 2007. The film looks at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, between the Empire of Persia and the Spartan Kingdom. The King of Sparta (Leonidas) led *300* Spartan soldiers into battle against hundreds of thousands of Persian soldiers who were led by the tyrant Emperor Xerxes. The film sheds light on various values, including sacrifice, bravery, dignity and patriotism.

Gladiator won an Oscar for best picture at the 73rd Academy Awards; it was directed by Ridley Scott and released in 2000. The story starts with the Roman emperor (Marcus Aurelius) on his deathbed, asking a Roman General (Maximus) to be his successor instead of the Emperor's son (Commodus). However, when Commodus discovers the intentions of his father, he chokes him to death to take over the throne. He orders the execution of Maximus, who manages to escape. Later on, Maximus is captured by a slave trader and sold to a merchant, who forces him to battle to the death against other men to amuse audiences. His skills on the battlefield make him famous. Finally, the decisive day comes when Maximus challenges Commodus in order to take revenge for his family and gain his freedom as well.

3.2.2 Procedure.

To achieve the aims of this study the following procedures have been followed:

Firstly, in order to achieve the first aim of the thesis (detecting the types of cultural references in the two films), the dialogue of each film was transcribed separately. Then, the cultural references were identified from the film scripts. The identification of cultural references was based on a classification put forth by the researcher which is derived from other scholars' classifications of cultural references viz Oltra-Ripolle's (2005), Newmark's (1988), Nedergaard-Larsen's (1993) and Díaz-Cintas and Remael's (2007) typologies of cultural items.

Secondly, after the source cultural references have been identified and transcribed, the researcher classified the translation strategies used based on Pedersen's (2011), Nedergaard-Larsen's (1993) and Díaz-Cintas and Remael's (2007) translation strategies in order to obtain the second aim, which is to determine the most commonly applied translation strategies in dealing with the identified cultural references. This was done by tabulating both source cultural references and their corresponding Arabic translations in order to be examined. Then the instances of each strategy were quantified.

Thirdly, the classification of translation strategies that was created for the purpose of this study was categorised in terms of the orientation of translation, namely SL-oriented or TL-oriented. The categorisation was adapted based on the translatologist Pedersen's scale that used Venuti's principles of foreignization and domestication as the point of departure. Subsequently, the instances of SL-oriented

strategies and TL-oriented strategies were quantified. This method was selected in order to achieve the third aim of the present study, which is to determine whether subtitlers opted to foreignise or domesticate the cultural references.

Finally, the most prevalent translation strategies used in the two films to render cultural references into Arabic were chosen for the purpose of analysing the patterns adopted by the subtitlers of the two films. The analysis of these instances was crucial in order to realise the final aim of this thesis, which is to observe if any specific factors could be identified that may have played a role in the selection of one strategy over another.

3.2.2.1 *Classification of cultural references for the purposes of study.*

Based on the classifications of cultural references by Oltra-Ripolle (2005), Nedergaard-Larsen (1993) and Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007), it was determined that some categories of cultural references may cause some ambiguity or overlap during the process of categorising the instances of cultural references found in the two epic films (see section 2.6.1). For the purpose of this study, the following typology of cultural references will be used to identify the cultural references within the films *300* and *Gladiator*:

1. Material references: words which refer to physical objects which are produced, manufactured or formed by humans rather than by nature viz, food, clothes, weapons, vehicles, tools, etc.

2. Religious and mythological references: words that refer to folktales (imaginary creatures, monsters, etc.), ancient mythologies (e.g. Greek gods, mythological creatures, etc.), as well as references that allude to religion (names of prophets, saints, prayers, etc.).

3. Honorific references: all types of religious and social titles (e.g. Saint, Lord, Mr., Duke, etc.) and forms of address (e.g. My Lord, Your Honour, Your Excellency, etc.).

4. Proper names: names of people viz. historic, contemporary and layman characters; epithets and nicknames given to humans, animals or inanimate objects.

5. Geographical references: including a) toponyms of regions, provinces, countries, natural ground features (e.g. mountains, rivers, lakes, plains, straits, etc.) and cultural geography (e.g. roads, blocks, railways, buildings, stations, etc.); b)

natural phenomena (e.g. Tsunami, Hurricanes, etc.); c) ecology (e.g. flora, fauna, climate, weather, etc.); and d) demonyms (Aussie, Londoner, etc.).

6. Institutional references: words that allude to police, political, governmental, Judiciary and military institutions or organisations (e.g. SWAT, republican party, civil status department, magistrates court, marines, etc.), people who operate within these institutions (e.g. emperor, sheriff, lawyer, solicitor, senator, sergeant major, etc.) and military hierarchies(e.g. General, Major, etc.).

7. Educational and labour references: words that are associated with fields of science (e.g. philosophy, medicine, pharmacology, etc.), education (e.g. boarding school, GCSE, vocational institutions, etc.) and training (i.e. agoge etc.). This category also includes any reference to work, job titles, trades and crafts which have been obtained by acquiring the knowledge of a specific field (philosopher, etc.) or by experience and training (e.g. jester, apiarist, shoemaker, etc.).

8. Event and leisure references: all types of references associated with festivities, dates, rituals, battles, games, sports, etc.

9. Genealogical references: all references that are related to the family relationship (kinship) viz. cousin, uncle, niece, nephew, etc.

3.2.2.2 *Classification of translational strategies for the purposes of study.*

Several translation strategies have been proposed for the present study, based on the classifications of translation strategies by Nedergaard-Larsen (1993), Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) and Pedersen (2011). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the following typology of translational strategies is not an exhaustive model: it is put forth to facilitate the process of identifying the translation strategies employed by the subtitlers in the chosen films:

1. Borrowing: here, a foreign item is borrowed, not translated, into the TL either by transliteration or naturalisation. The foreign item is modified based on the alphabet, phonology and morphology of the TL. For example, the term 'Sparta' can be rendered into إسبرطة (literally, Sparta).

2. Specification: the foreign item is borrowed, untranslated, into the TL, after which information is added to the translation to disambiguate the foreign item of the original for the target viewers. Hence, the translation of the foreign item becomes more specific in the TL text than it was in the SL text. For example, 'the Turnbull

Government' can be rendered into تيرنبول مالكولم الأسترالي الوزراء رئيس حكومة (literally, Government of the Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull).

3. Direct translation: a foreign item/expression is translated literally into the TL, with the context and the structure of the SL being taken into account. Calque falls within this strategy as well; however, it can be argued that calque could become a recognised translation over a period of time and the cultural reference may become commonplace to the target audience, for example سندباد (pronounced as Sindibad) into 'Sinbad'.

4. Explicitation: the foreign item which is implicit in the SL is translated literally into the TL, after which it is supported by adding an explicating element to make the foreign item of the original more accessible and explicit to the target audience. It is similar to Newmark's *classifier*. For example, 'black widow' can be rendered into السوداء الأرملة عنكبوت (literally, black widow spider) and 'stork' into اللقلق طائر (literally, stork bird). In addition, this strategy can be extended to cover acronyms and abbreviations where they are expanded and transferred into the TL; thus the implicit becomes explicit. For example, the abbreviation 'UN' is rendered into المتحدة الأمم (literally, United Nations), and 'BBC News' which into البث هيئة قناة البريطانية الإخبارية (literally, British Broadcasting Cooperation News Channel).

5. Generalisation: the foreign item of the original is replaced with a hypernym in the TL. In other words, a more neutral or generic lexical item is used in a bid to eliminate the ambiguity of the source cultural reference. Guerra (2012, p. 10) states that the translator normally resorts to this strategy "for stylistic reasons, or to avoid unnecessary repetitions or ambiguity". For example, 'my cousin' can be rendered into قريبي (literally, my relative).

6. Particularisation: the foreign item of the original is replaced with a hyponym or more particular black-and-white lexical item in the TL based on the context of the ST. This procedure is very helpful to disambiguate the cultural reference of the original for the target audiences, especially when dealing with gender issues. For example, 'I saw my friend' can be translated into Arabic as سام رأيت (I saw Sam) or 'person' into رجل (man); or 'nephew' which can be translated into الأخ ابن (literally, son of the brother) or الأخت ابن (literally, son of the sister).

7. Description: the foreign item is replaced by a clause that describes or explains the meaning or the function of this term into the TL. For example, 'Phoenix'

can be translated into طائر أسطوري يولد من النار (literally, legendary bird born out of fire).

8. Substitution: the foreign lexical item is either replaced by another cultural item that matches the TL or by a paraphrase, not necessarily a cultural one, that matches the target context. In other words, the TL cultural reference can have a similar function (intended meaning) as the one used in the SL; for example, 'Coles' can be translated into 'Carrefour', 'Tarzan and Jane' into عنتر وعبلة (meaning, Antar and Ablah), a 'toothbrush' into 'floss'.

9. Omission: the foreign item is omitted in the TL, that is, there is no sign whatsoever of the SL element in the TL. For example, the sentence 'he bought a boomerang and a hat' can be translated as اشترى قبعة (literally, he bought a hat).

3.2.3 Continuum of SL-oriented and TL-oriented translation strategies for the purposes of study

The suggested translation strategies for this research have been situated along a continuum which consists of two poles, namely foreignisation/SL-oriented and domestication/TL-oriented. The model shows the proposed strategies being arranged from the most foreignising to the most domesticating. This will help in identifying if the subtitler has been inclined to use SL-oriented or TL-oriented strategies when dealing with cultural references.

Borrowing Specification Direct translation Explicitation Generalisation Particularisation Description Substitution Omission

Foreignisation

Domestication
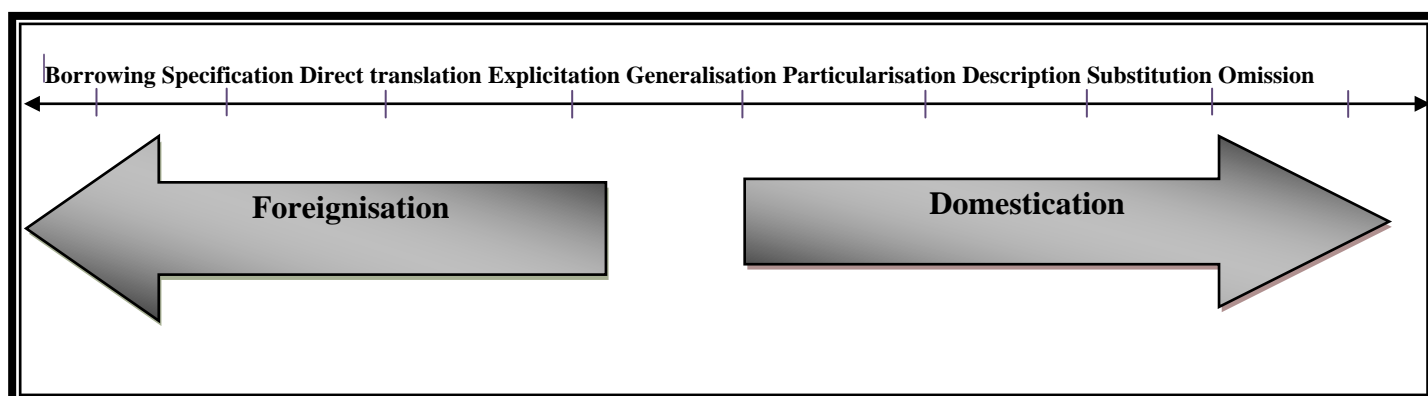
Figure 2. Continuum of Translation Strategies

Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Discussion and Findings

4.1 Overview

This chapter identifies the instances of cultural references found in the two films *300* and *Gladiator* based on the proposed classification of cultural references mentioned in Chapter 3. Then, the Arabic translations of the identified English cultural references are examined according to the following suggested translation methods: borrowing, specification, direct translation, explicitation, particularisation, generalisation, description, substitution and omission. The chapter divides these microstrategies into two categories, SL-oriented and TL-oriented, so as to determine whether the subtitler mostly resorted to foreignisation or domestication of the cultural references into Arabic in both films. Finally, the reasons behind favouring specific strategies over others are highlighted. Since this thesis is limited in scope, only a few examples from each film are used to illustrate the translation methods adopted by the subtitler to deal with the cultural references from English into Arabic. A number of cultural references are presented in complete sentences to clarify their meaning when they appear in context.

4.2 Types of Cultural References in *300* and *Gladiator*

This section seeks to answer the first question in this study. To do so, the types of cultural items were classified according to the nine proposed categories discussed in chapter 3. Moreover, the cultural items of both films were tabulated in order to identify their mostly visible instances in the genre of sword-and-sandal. In addition, a pie chart was created to show the overall percentage of each category in both films.

Film	Types of Cultural References									
	Material References	Religious and Mythological References	Honorific References	Proper Names	Geographical References	Institutional References	Educational and Labour References	Event and Leisure References	Genealogical References	Total
300	5	6	4	13	19	13	6	3	0	69
Gladiator	9	6	6	31	27	13	4	1	2	97

Table 2. Number of Instances of Cultural References in *300* and *Gladiator*
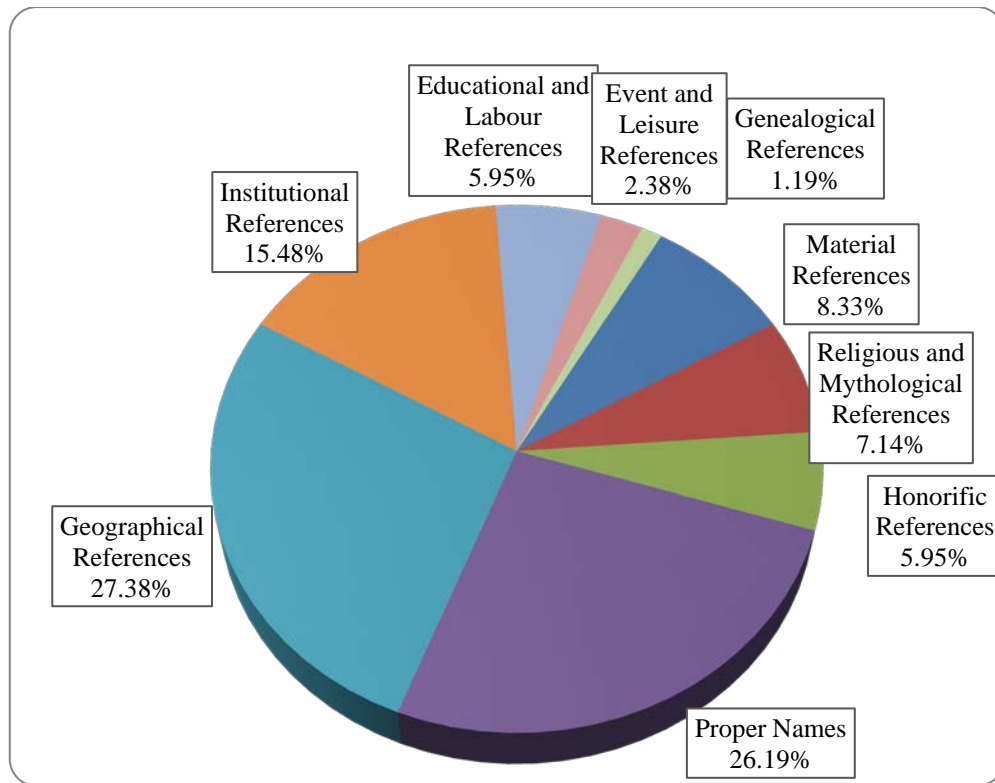
Figure 3. Percentage of Overall Cultural References Found in Both *300* and *Gladiator*

As shown in Figure 3 and Table 2 above, more than three quarters of the occurrences of cultural references are contained in only three categories, that is, geographical references comprising 27.38% (46 occurrences), proper names accounting for 26.19% (44 occurrences) and institutional references with 15.48% (26 occurrences) of the total cultural references appearing in *300* and *Gladiator*. Four of the remaining 6 categories constituted between approximately 6% and 8% of the references with material references representing 8.33% (14 occurrences), religious and mythological references constituting 7.14% (12 occurrences), honorific references with 5.98% (10 occurrences), and educational and labour references accounting for 5.98% (10 occurrences). The two strategies used least frequently were genealogical references with 1.19% (two occurrences) and event and leisure references with 2.38% (four occurrences). Given the fact that these are period films, it comes as no surprise that geographical references and proper names had such high occurrence, and the same applies to institutional references.

4.3 Translation strategies used to deal with cultural references in the Arabic subtitles of *300* and *Gladiator*

Having identified the instances of cultural references in both films, those cultural references are investigated based on the continuum of translation strategies proposed in Chapter 3, which will assist in determining the foreignisation and domestication strategies employed to tackle those problematic cultural references from English into Arabic. The SL-oriented microstrategies include borrowing, specification, direct translation and explicitation; on the other hand, TL-oriented microstrategies cover particularisation, generalisation, description, substitution and omission. Table 3 and Figure 4 illustrate the frequency and percentage of each translation strategy employed in subtitling the cultural references appearing in *300* and *Gladiator*.

Translation Strategy	*Film*			
	300		*Gladiator*	
	Number of Instances	**Percentage of total**	**Number of Instances**	**Percentage of total**
Borrowing	29	42.02%	37	38.14%
Specification	2	2.89%	0	0%
Direct translation	13	18.84%	32	32.98%
Explicitation	2	2.89%	5	5.15%
Particularisation	0	0%	2	2.06%
Generalisation	3	4.34%	1	1.03%
Description	2	2.89%	8	8.24%
Substitution	17	24.63%	12	12.37%
Omission	1	1.44%	0	0%
Total	69		97	

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage of Each Translation Strategy employed in Subtitling the Cultural References Appearing in *300* and *Gladiator*
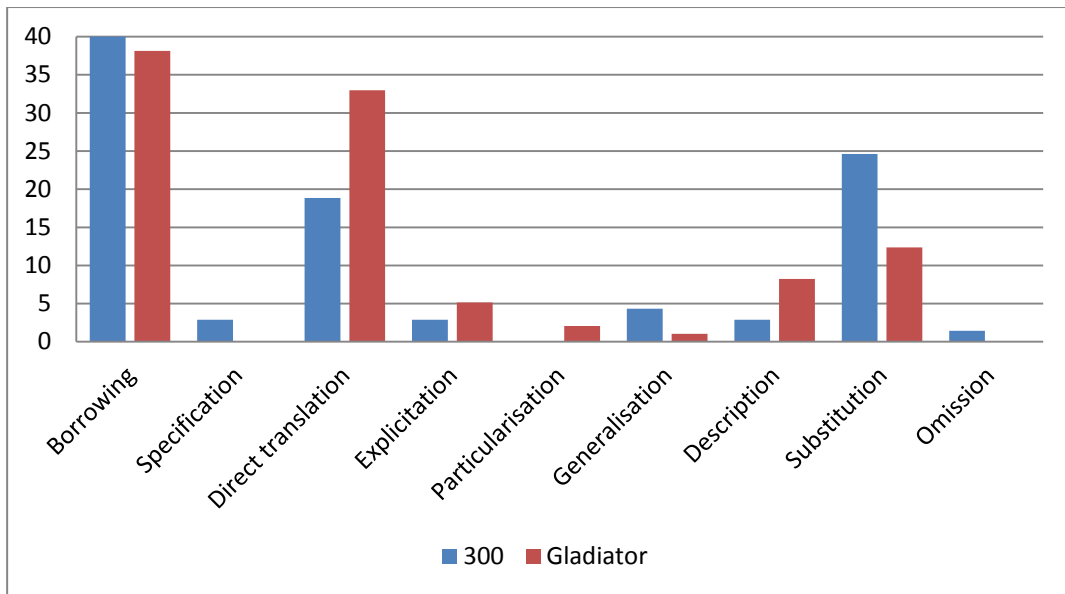
Figure 4. Percentage Distribution of Each Translation Strategy Used in *300* and *Gladiator*
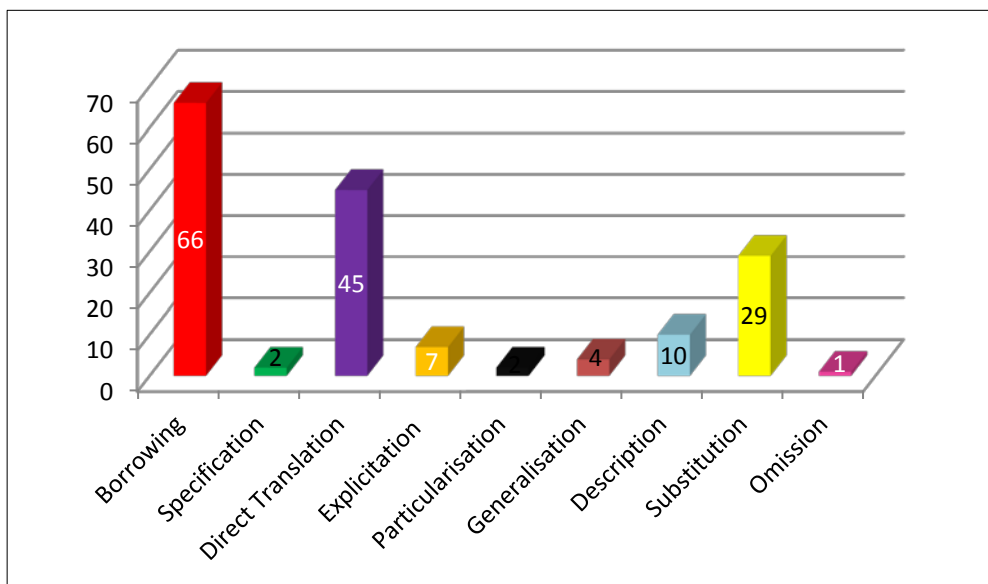
Figure 5. Overall Frequency of Translation Strategies Adopted in Subtitling the Cultural References of *300* and *Gladiator*
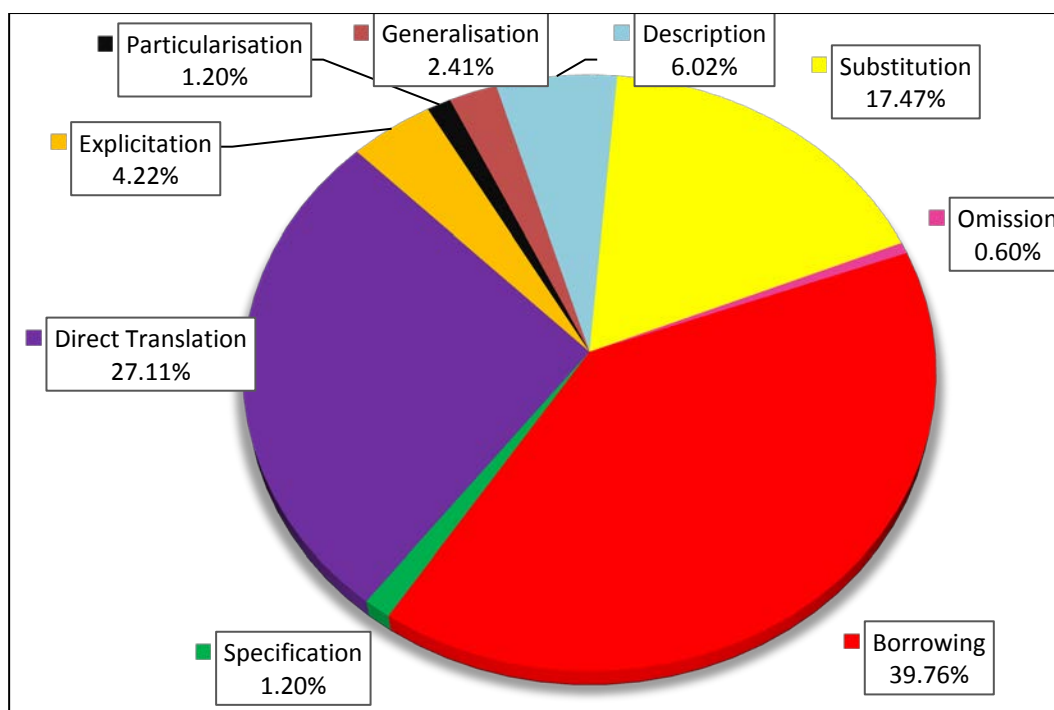
Figure 6. Overall Percentage of Each Translation Strategy Used in Subtitling the Cultural References of *300* and *Gladiator*

In this overall view of the strategies used, it would seem that the subtitlers depended most on borrowing, direct translation and substitution, with the subtitler of *300* seeming to have a preference for substitution over direct translation, and the subtitler of *Gladiator* opting for direct translation over substitution. However, since this is a case study, this descriptive data will be given more meaning in the qualitative discussion below.

4.3.1 SL-oriented translation strategies.

Translation Strategy	*Film*			
	300		*Gladiator*	
	Number of Instances	Percentage of total	Number of Instances	Percentage of total
Borrowing	29	42.02%	37	38.14%
Specification	2	2.89%	0	0%
Direct translation	13	18.84%	32	32.98%
Explicitation	2	2.89%	5	5.15%
Total	46		74	

Table 4. Number of Instances of SL-Oriented Translation Strategies in *300* and *Gladiator*

Based on Table 4, there were 46 and 74 instances of SL-oriented translation strategies employed to tackle cultural references from English into Arabic in the two films *300* and *Gladiator*, respectively. This section discusses a number of those instances that appeared in both films. They are illustrated as follows:

4.3.1.1 *Borrowing.*

Film	Borrowing									Total
	Material References	Religious and Mythological References	Honorific References	Proper Names	Geographical References	Institutional References	Educational and Labour References	Event and Leisure References	Genealogical References	
300	0	3	0	13	8	3	2	0	0	29
Gladiator	1	0	0	28	7	1	0	0	0	37

Table 5. Number of Instances of Borrowing in *300* and *Gladiator*

Based on Table 5, it is clear that borrowing was the translation strategy chosen most frequently with 65 instances of borrowing in both films to deal with different types of cultural references from English into Arabic, constituting 42.02% (29 instances) of the choices in *300* and 38.14% (37 instances) in *Gladiator*. It would seem that this strategy was used most often to translate references in the categories of proper names and geographical references. Twelve examples have been chosen from both films.

Film	Cultural Reference	ST	TT
300	(1) Geographical reference (toponym)	This is **Sparta**!	هذه **إسبرطة**!
	(2) Geographical reference (demonym)	Why do you smile? **Arcadian**.	لماذا تبتسم؟ أيها **الأركادي**.
	(3) Religious and mythological reference	We must consult **the oracle**.	سنستشير **الـ أوركال**.
	(4) Geographical reference (demonym)	Dispatch the **Phocians** to the goat path.	أخرج **الفوسيانز** إلى ممر الماعز.
	(5) Religious and mythological reference	**The ephors**, priests to the old gods.	**ايفورز**، كهنة الأجداد.
	(6) Proper name and geographical reference	You are wrong. **Xerxes** brought it forth and before that, his father **Darius** at	أنت مخطئ. **زركسس** من جلب الحرب ومن قبله والده **داريوس** في **ماراثون**.

	(toponym)	**Marathon**.	
Gladiator	(7) Geographical reference (toponym)	**Carthage**.	<u>**كارثيج**</u>.
	(8) Material reference	A long time ago, the emperor presented me with a **rudis**. It's just a wooden sword. The symbol of your freedom.	منذ زمن بعيد، الإمبراطور قدّم لي <u>**"روديس"**</u>. إنه مجرّد سيف خشبي. رمز حرّيتك.
	(9) Proper name	Or was it **Hercules**?	ام أنه <u>**هيرقل**</u>؟
	(10) Proper name	**Maximus Decimus Meridius**.	<u>**ماكسيمس ديسمس ماريديوس**</u>.
	(11) Proper name (epithet)	Caesar is pleased to bring you the only undefeated champion in Roman history, the legendary **Tigris of Gaul**!	يسر القيصر أن أن يعيد إليكم البطل الوحيد الذي لم يقهر في تاريخ روما الأسطورة <u>**تايغرس غول**</u>!
	(12) Proper name (epithet)	The Emperor is pleased to bring you the legionnaires of **Scipio Africanus**.	إن من سعادة الإمبراطور أن يحضر لكم فيالق <u>**سكيبيو أفريكانوس**</u>.

Table 6. Instances of Cultural References in *300* and *Gladiator* Tackled by Borrowing from English into Arabic

In example 1, the geographical reference (toponym) 'Sparta' is borrowed and naturalised into the TL based on the phonological or orthographical rules of Arabic as إسبرطة. In Arabic, 'Sparta' can be rendered into either إسبارطة or إسبرطة, and they are considered to be recognised translations.

In example 2, the geographical reference (demonym) 'Arcadian' is borrowed and naturalised into the TL based on the phonological or orthographical conventions of Arabic as الأركادي. However, there has been an instance where this term is rendered into الأوركادي, which is not used by Arab historians.

In example 3, the religious reference 'oracle' is transliterated into أوركال, which is considered alien to the Arab culture and would not be understood by Arab recipients. The Greeks believed an oracle had the ability to communicate with the gods of their ancient culture (Williams, 2009, p. 143). Most likely, the subtitler has purposely opted for this strategy either to familiarise the Arab viewer with the name which the Greeks used to refer to a soothsayer; or has been reluctant to exert more efforts to find a solution for this problematic cultural item.

In examples 4 and 5, the geographical reference (demonym) 'Phocians' and the religious reference 'ephors' are transliterated into فوسيانز and ايفورز, respectively. Here, the subtitler has adopted the phonology of English but applied the orthographical convention of Arabic. Literally, it does not make sense in Arabic. This

can be attributed to the fact that both terms may not have recognised translations in Arabic and there may be a difficulty in finding them in Arabic historical books. Moreover, both translations are unacceptable in Arabic because the plural morpheme in English is always naturalised based on the orthographical rules of Arabic. Since the cultural item 'Phocians' is associated with the Greek region Phocis, it would have been better to borrow the toponym of the region into Arabic and then add the Arabic plural suffix to the transliteration to sound natural; thus it would be rendered into فوسيسيين. On the other hand, the subtitler resorted to retain 'ephors' in Arabic because the cultural reference has been followed by a clause defining its meaning.

In example 6, the two proper names 'Xerxes' and 'Darius' are transliterated into Arabic as زركسس and داريوس, respectively. Here, the English pronunciations of both proper names have been represented in Arabic. It is worth noting that the majority of Anglophone Proper names are transferred into Arabic by imitating a similar pronunciation of an English proper name in Arabic. As for the geographical reference 'Marathon', it has been borrowed into Arabic as ماراثون. Here, the context is referring to the Battle of Marathon, which took place at the site of Marathon; and the inference of the cultural reference would be understood from the context that Marathon is a place.

In example 7, the geographical reference (toponym) 'Carthage' is transliterated into Arabic as كارثيج. Surprisingly, the subtitler has imitated the English pronunciation of 'Carthage' in Arabic rather than using a more recognised translation which the majority of Arabs are familiar with, that is, قرطاجة. The translation كارثيج will misguide the viewers and they may presume that it is a different city from قرطاجة. Apparently, the subtitler has not exerted any efforts to search for the Arabic equivalent of the source cultural reference, but decided to resort to the common method, that is, transliteration.

In example 8, the material reference 'rudis' also been borrowed from Latin to English and transliterated in turn into Arabic as روديس. The subtitler may have opted for this strategy of keeping the term untranslated in Arabic because the dialogue of the original has given a brief description of 'rudis' (a wooden sword given to a gladiator to liberate him from slavery) and the image also shows it is a wooden sword; thus, the subtitler may see that there is no point of paraphrasing the term as it becomes redundant.

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Figure 7. Appearance of the Cultural Reference 'Rudis' in the Film *Gladiator*

In example 9, the proper name 'Hercules' is borrowed into Arabic as هيرقل
(pronounced as Hiraql). The proper name هيرقل is considered a recognised translation
and it has been naturalised based on the phonological or orthographical rules of
Arabic. It can be argued that if 'Hercules' had been transcribed into Arabic based on
the English pronunciation the majority of Arab viewers, if not all, would have
understood that the translation was referring to a person's name. It is worth
mentioning that the proper name هيرقل may evoke the mental image of two characters,
that is, هرقلthe mythical Greek Hero known for his super strength and هرقل ملك الروم
(literally, *Heraclius*, King of the Romans) whom Messenger Mohammed (PBUH)
sent a letter to invite him to Islam.

In example 10, as with most instances of proper names, 'Maximus Decimus
Meridius', the gladiator's name, has been transcribed into ماكسيمس ديسمس ماريديوس
according to the phonological or orthographical rules of Arabic. Seemingly, proper
names are tackled by employing the borrowing technique, unless there is a recognised
translation for the proper name, especially with historical figures.

In example 11, the proper name (epithet) 'Tigris of Gaul' has been transcribed
into Arabic as تايغرس غول. Here, the subtitler has mistranslated the epithet by not using
a recognised translation for 'Gaul' in Arabic, which is بلاد الغال (literally, countries of
Gaul) and has failed to manifest the semantic meaning of 'Tigris', which means tiger.
The subtitler might be either unaware that this cultural reference is an epithet rather
than an actual name for a gladiator, or no conscious efforts have been made to
research it in historical Arabic books to bridge the gap of communication between the
two cultures. An alternative translation would have been نمر بلاد الغال (literally, the
tiger of the countries of Gaul).

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In example 12, the proper name 'Scipio Africanus' has been transcribed into Arabic as سكيبيو أفريكانوس. *Scipio* is a Roman General received the nickname 'Africanus' (meaning, the African or the conqueror of Africa) after he defeated Hannibal at Zama (Grossman, 2007, p. 315). Arab viewers may be misguided by this translation assuming that سكيبيو أفريكانوس is a name of a legion rather than the legionnaires who were under the command of the Roman General *Scipio the African*. The subtitler should have manifested the semantic meaning of 'Africanus' in Arabic and specified the cultural reference by adding the word 'commander' to clarify the meaning.

4.3.1.2 *Specification.*

Film	Specification									Total
	Material References	Religious and Mythological References	Honorific References	Proper Names	Geographical References	Institutional References	Educational and Labour References	Event and Leisure References	Genealogical References	
300	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Gladiator	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 7. Number of Instances of Specification in *300* and *Gladiator*

Based on Table 7, it has been found that two instances of specification dealing with cultural references from English into Arabic, accounting for 2.89% (two instances) of the choices in *300* and 0% in *Gladiator*. It would seem that this strategy was applied to translate references in the categories of event and leisure references, and educational and labor references. The two examples are illustrated as follows:

Film	Cultural Reference	ST	TT
300	(1) Event and leisure reference	Sparta wages no war at the time of the **Carneia**.	إسبرطة لا تبدأ حربًا في فترة احتفالات **كارنيا**.
	(2) Educational and labor reference	Your son starts the **agoge** next year.	ابنك سيبدأ عزلة **الأغوج** غداً.
Gladiator	--	--	--

Table 8. Instances of Cultural References in *300* and *Gladiator* Tackled by Specification from English into Arabic

In example 1, the event and leisure reference 'Carneia' has been rendered into احتفالات كارنيا (literally, celebrations of Carneia). 'Carneia' is a kind of Greek festival

celebrated by Spartans to honour their Greek god Apollo (Roy, 2005, p. 47). The subtitler has transliterated 'Carneia' into Arabic and preceded it with the word احتفالات (literally, celebrations) to provide additional information to specify its meaning since the target viewers are not familiar with this cultural reference.

In example 2, the educational and labor reference 'agoge' has been rendered into عزلة الأغوج (literally, agoge's isolation). Here the subtitler has opted for the specification strategy in which s/he has kept the foreign item of the original untranslated and then borrowed into Arabic the term عزلة (literally, isolation), which is added to disambiguate the meaning of the source cultural reference for the Arabic recipients. Despite the fact that the translation may not convey the intended meaning of the foreign item, it can be said that the subtitler has resorted to this strategy because in another instance the same cultural reference has been translated previously in the film by using the description strategy; hence, the target audience would have a preconceived meaning of the foreign item (see section 4.3.2.3, example 1).

4.3.1.3 *Direct translation.*

Film	Direct translation									Total
	Material References	Religious and Mythological References	Honorific References	Proper Names	Geographical References	Institutional References	Educational and Labour References	Event and Leisure References	Genealogical References	
300	0	0	2		7	3	1	0	0	13
Gladiator	4	4	4	3	10	4	3	0	0	32

Table 9. Number of Instances of Direct Translation in *300* and *Gladiator*

Based on Table 9, it has been found that there are 45 instances of direct translation in both films to deal with cultural references from English into Arabic, comprising 18.84% (13 instances) of the choices in *300* and 32.9% (32 instances) in *Gladiator*. It would seem that this strategy was mostly used to translate references in the categories of geographical references in both films. However, the strategy was also used in various categories of cultural references except for event and leisure, and genealogical references. The subtitler of *Gladiator* in particular used this strategy for one in three cultural references across most categories, possibly in a foreignising attempt to evoke the period culture of ancient Rome. The following seven examples were chosen from both films:

Film	Cultural Reference	ST	TT
300	(1) Honorific reference	We are with you, **sire**.	نحن معك يا **سيدي**.
	(2) Geographical reference (toponym)	Now, we will block the Persian coastal assault by rebuilding the great **Phocian Wall**.	الآن علينا أن نصد الهجوم البحري بواسطة إعادة بناء **جدار فوسيان** العظيم.
	(3) Geographical reference (toponym)	And from there, we will funnel them into the mountain pass we call the **Hot Gates**.	ومن هناك سنجبرهم على المرور في ممر جبلي نسميه **البوابات الساخنة**.
	(4) Institutional reference	And with a little Spartan help your Persian **scouts** supplied the mortar.	وبمساعدة قليلة من الإسبرطيين **كشافتكم** أمنوا الدعائم لنا.
Gladiator	(5) Material reference	**White and red wine**.	**نبيذ أبيض وأحمر**.
	(6) Religious and mythological reference	**Blessed mother**, come to me with the Gods' desire for my future. **Blessed father**, watch over my wife and son with a ready sword. Whisper to them that I live only to hold them again, for all else is dust and air	**الأم المباركة** **الأب المبارك**
	(7) Material reference	Commodus, drink this **tonic**.	لتشرب هذا **المقوي**.

Table 10. Instances of Cultural References in *300* and *Gladiator* Tackled by Direct Translation from English into Arabic

In example 1, the honorific reference 'sire' has been rendered into سيدي (literally, sir/my master). The term 'sire' is derived from the Latin term 'senior' (elder) which was used in old French to mean lord or seigneur; it was limited in use to kings until the late twelfth century, and over time for nobles (Wilson, 2004, p. 178). In the film *300*, the term 'sire' is used by Spartan soldiers to address the king of Sparta, that is, Leonidas. In Arabic, the term سيدي, (literally, sir/my master) is a form of address which can be used in addressing kings and figures holding high military rank. In this scene, 300 soldiers are standing on parade inspected by Leonidas. With the help of the image, the term سيدي (literally, sir/my master) conveys the military connotation and the intended meaning of addressing a king and leader; however, the archaic connotation of 'sire' is inevitably lost in translation.

Figure 8. Appearance of the Cultural Reference 'Sire' in the Film *300*

In example 2, the geographical reference (toponym) 'Phocian Wall' has been rendered into جدار فوسيان. The subtitler opted to translate the reference literally so the target audiences would understand that the speaker is referring to a wall in particular, rather than merely a place. However, the term 'phocian' is mistranslated in Arabic (see section 4.3.1.1, example 4).

In example 3, the geographical reference (toponym) 'Hot Gates' has been rendered into البوابات الساخنة. The term 'Hot Gates' is derived from local hot springs and a literal translation for the Greek term 'Thermopylae', which is a narrow path situated between a series of mountains and the sea where Xerxes' army had to go in order to invade Athena (Bowden, 2014, p. 78). The Arab viewers may not be familiar with the location or the hot springs; however, the semantic load of the cultural reference which has been maintained in the translation may help them in understanding the meaning.

In example 4, the institutional reference 'scouts' has been translated literally into كشافة. According to the film context, the term 'scouts' refers to Greek soldiers who conduct a reconnaissance to glean as much information as possible on Xerxes' troops. The translation does not deliver the military connotation of the source cultural reference; however, the meaning would still be understood by the target recipients. Arguably, the subtitler may have opted for foreignising the cultural reference in Arabic to familiarise the Arab viewers with what the Greeks used to refer to reconnaissance soldiers in that period.

In example 5, the material reference 'white and red wine' has been rendered literally as نبيذ أبيض وأحمر. Here, the translation would be clearly understood by the Arab viewers even though forbidden for Muslims to drink alcohol. It is worth

mentioning that some satellite channels in the Middle East do not translate this material reference literally for religious reasons, especially in cooking programmes and a few films. Such Channels would rather substitute it with another reference such as عصير العنب (literally, grape juice) or generalise the term as شراب (literally, drink). Arguably, the subtitler is being unbiased and the intervention of a censor is absent.

In example 6, the religious references 'blessed mother' and 'blessed father' have been rendered literally into الأب المبارك and الأم المباركة, respectively. The scene shows Maximus in his tent praying to his wife and son using very small effigies of them. Roman families used to practice religious rites by worshiping the family spirit, known as *genius*, and the spirit of their own ancestors and so-called 'penates' (household guardian gods) (Cyrino, 2005, p. 251). It is worth mentioning that if the Arab recipients were not aware of these Roman religious rites the source translation may cause confusion since they would associate 'blessed mother' and 'blessed father' with Christianity. Arguably, the religious connotation of both cultural references has been successfully conveyed to the target audiences. With the help of the image and to avoid any ambiguity a better translation would have been الآلهة المباركة (literally, blessed gods).

Figure 9. Maximus Praying to Effigies of His Wife and Son in the Film *Gladiator*

In example 7, the material reference 'tonic' has been rendered into مقوى (literally, strengthener). According to the scene, Commodus was thinking seriously contemplating the idea of dissolving the Senate. Lucilla, Commodus's sister, is exerting every effort to keep the functional integrity of the Senate inviolable. To this end, she had brought him a kind of tonic, which could help him to sleep and make him stop thinking, hoping that he would abandon his idea. Arguably, both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries failed to convey the intended meaning of

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'tonic' in this scene. Lucilla told her brother to drink the tonic to help him rest rather than giving him something that would grant him energy. The term مقوي (literally, strengthener) may misguide the Arab viewers based on the context. A better translation to deliver the implied meaning of the source cultural reference would be دواء or شراب مهدئ (literally, medicine or soothing drink, respectively).

4.3.1.4 *Explicitation.*

Film	Explicitation									Total
	Material References	Religious and Mythological References	Honorific References	Proper Names	Geographical References	Institutional References	Educational and Labour References	Event and Leisure References	Genealogical References	
300	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0		2
Gladiator	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	1		5

Table 11. Number of Instances of Explicitation in *300* and *Gladiator*

Based on Table 11, it has been found that there are seven instances of explicitation used in both films to tackle cultural references from English into Arabic, accounting for 2.89% (two instances) of the choices in *300* and 5.15% (five instances) in *Gladiator*. The strategy was not used in many categories of cultural references. The following six examples were chosen from both films:

Film	Cultural Reference	ST	TT
300	(1) Geographical reference (ecology)	Windswept **pines** moving against the coming night.	أشجار **الصنوبر** المتمايلة بالريح صوب الليل الآتي.
	(2) Geographical reference (toponym)	You rode all the way from **Persia** for earth and water?	قطعت كل المسافة من **بلد فارس** ن أجل الماء والأرض؟
Gladiator	(3) Geographical reference (ecology)	Through the gate is a giant **poplar**.	وعبر البوابة **شجرة حور** ضخمة.
	(4) Institutional reference	**Infantry** form up for advance.	**كتيبة المشاة** في تشكيلة للتقدم.
	(5) Material reference	The beating heart of Rome is not the **marble** of the Senate.	إن القلب المقهور لروما ليست **تماثيل رخام** لمجلس الشيوخ.
	(6) Event and leisure reference	In the winter of 180 **A.D.**	بشتاء عام 180 **بعد الميلاد.**

Table 12. Instances of Cultural References in *300* and *Gladiator* Tackled by Explicitation from English into Arabic

In example 1, the geographical reference (ecology) 'pines' has been rendered into أشجار الصنوبر (literally, pine trees). Here, the subtitler has chosen to add the word أشجار to specify the term 'pines' to clarify the meaning to the Arab audience. In Arabic, the term 'pines' may refer to edible seeds or the trees themselves. Nevertheless, if the subtitler has not specified the term 'pines', it still would make sense because of the context; however, the translation would sound awkward.

In example 2, the geographical reference (toponym) 'Persia' has been rendered into بلد فارس (literally, country of Persia). In this example, the subtitler has added the term بلد (literally, country) to signal to the Arab recipients that 'Persia' is a country. However, the correct translation of 'Persia' in Arabic is بلاد فارس (literally, countries of Persia). In Arabic, the singular form بلد (country) does not collocate with فارس (Persia). Arguably, the translation provided by the subtitler is considered eccentric and Arab viewers will easily notice the mistake, as they are aware that Persia was an empire in the old times and fought Muslims at the Battle of Al-Qadisiyyah.

In example 3, the geographical reference (ecology) 'poplar' has been rendered into شجرة الحور (literally, poplar tree). The subtitler has opted for this strategy since حور (poplar) is an uncommon term and not known by many Arab audiences; thus adding the term شجرة (tree) is required to clarify the meaning; otherwise, the sentence would be meaningless.

In example 4, the institutional reference 'infantry' has been rendered into كتيبة مشاة (literally, infantry battalion). The subtitler may have added the term كتيبة (battalion) because s/he has resorted to the image where it shows hundreds of Roman soldiers from the infantry corps being given an order to form up and march forward to wage an attack against the enemy. It can be argued that the subtitler has opted to specify the meaning of 'infantry' to manifest the military meaning since مشاة (infantry) is a polysemous term in Arabic meaning infantry or pedestrian. Nevertheless, not adding the term كتيبة (battalion) would not have caused any problem to the target recipient in order to comprehend the intended military meaning of 'infantry' since the image is self-explanatory.

Figure 10. Appearance of the Cultural Reference 'Infantry' in the Film *Gladiator*

In example 5, the material reference 'marble' has been rendered into تماثيل رخام (literally, marble statues). According to David Franzoni's (n.d.) original screenplay of *Gladiator*, the term 'floor' precedes the word 'marble'; but in the actual film the word 'floor' has been deleted; seemingly the script has been modified for particular purposes. The subtitler has taken an unconscious act to add the term تماثيل (statues) in order to clarify the meaning. Furthermore, the films shows a scene for the hall of the Roman Senate with no signs whatsoever of statues; all that can be seen are marble columns, floor and seats. An alternative translation would have been الأرضية الرخامية لمجلس الشيوخ (literally, marble floor of the Senate) which carries the intended meaning of the actor.

Figure 11. Images of 'Senate' in the Film *300*

In example 6, the event and leisure reference 'A.D.' has been rendered into بعد الميلاد (literally, after the birth). The abbreviation 'A.D.' which means after the birth of Christ, from Medieval Latin Anno Domini meaning in the year of the/our Lord, is used to show number of years after the birth of Christ, especially in the Gregorian and Julian calendars (Killian, 2011, p. 11). In the Arab countries, there are two types of

year-numbering systems, namely الميلادي (A.D.) and الهجري (A.H., stands for after/anno Hijra). The commonly used one is the الميلادي (A.D.). It can be argued that the foreign abbreviation has been expanded and translated into Arabic by using a recognised (lexicalised) loan translation that is clearly understood and well-familiarised by Arab viewers.

4.3.2 TL-oriented translation strategies.

Translation Strategy	Film			
	300		*Gladiator*	
	Number of Instances	**Percentage of total**	**Number of Instances**	**Percentage of total**
Particularisation	0	0%	2	2.06%
Generalisation	3	4.34%	1	1.03%
Description	2	2.89%	8	8.24%
Substitution	17	24.63%	12	12.37%
Omission	1	1.44%	0	0%
Total	23		23	

Table 13. Number of Instances of SL-Oriented Translation Strategies in *300* and *Gladiator*

There were 23 instances of TL-oriented translation strategies each used in *300* and *Gladiator*, in a bid to tackle cultural references. This section sheds light on a number of those instances that appeared in both films.

4.3.2.1 *Particularisation.*

There are only two instances of particularisation, both occurring in *Gladiator*:

Film	Particularisation									
	Material References	Religious and Mythological References	Honorific References	Proper Names	Geographical References	Institutional References	Educational and Labour References	Event and Leisure References	Genealogical References	Total
300	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gladiator	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2

Table 14. Number of Instances of Particularisation in *300* and *Gladiator*

It would seem that this strategy was used only to translate references in the category of genealogical references. The two examples are illustrated as follows:

Film	Cultural Reference	ST	TT

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300	--	--	--
Gladiator	(1) Genealogical reference	**My uncle** says it makes me strong.	**عمي** يقول أنها تجعلني قوي.
	(2) Genealogical reference	And what of my **nephew**?	وماذا عن **إبن أختي**؟

Table 15. Instances of Cultural References in *300* and *Gladiator* Tackled by Particularisation from English into Arabic

In example 1, the genealogical reference 'uncle' has been rendered into عم (meaning, paternal uncle). Although the subtitler particularising the relationship, the cultural reference has been mistranslated. The subtitler could have identified the relationship easily since there are scenes in the film which indicate that Commodus, the emperor's son, is the maternal uncle of Lucius. Unlike in English, Arabic distinguishes between عم (meaning, paternal uncle) and خال (meaning, maternal uncle). It is worth noting that when the subtitler fails to identify the relationship of the person addressed, s/he can resort to generalisation by using the term قريب (literally, relative) to avoid any misguidance.

Figure 12. Appearance of the Cultural Reference 'Uncle' in the Film *Gladiator*

In example 2, the genealogical reference 'nephew' has been rendered into ابن اخت (literally, son of sister). Here, the subtitler has particularised the genealogical reference into Arabic correctly. Unlike Arabic, the term 'nephew' in English may refer to a brother's or sister's son; Arabic, however, distinguishes between ابن الأخت (literally, son of the sister) and ابن الأخ (literally, son of the brother).

4.3.2.2 *Generalisation.*

Film	Generalisation	ه ل

	Material References	Religious and Mythological References	Honorific References	Proper Names	Geographical References	Institutional References	Educational and Labour References	Event and Leisure References	Genealogical References	
300	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
Gladiator	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Table 16. Number of Instances of Generalisation in *300* and *Gladiator*

There were four instances of generalisation. This accounts for 4.34% (three instances) of the choices in *300* and 1.03% (one instance) in *Gladiator*. This strategy was used in *Gladiator* one time to translate references in the category of material references only, and one time each in three different categories of cultural references in *300*.

Film	Cultural Reference	ST	TT
300	(1) Geographical reference (demonym)	**The Athenians** have already turned you down.	إن **اليونانيين** رفضوا الاستسلام.
	(2) Event and leisure reference	It was **his initiation**.	كانت **طقوسه**.
	(3) Institutional reference	King Xerxes is displeased with his **generals**.	الملك زركسس غاضب من **قادته**.
Gladiator	(4) Material reference	This column to the **chariot**! This column stay with me.	هذا الرتل نحو **العربة**! هذا الرتل يبقى معي.

Table 17. Instances of Cultural References in *300* and *Gladiator* Tackled by Generalisation from English into Arabic

In example 1, the geographical reference (demonym) the 'Athenians' has been rendered into اليونانيين (literally, the Greeks). Presumably, the subtitler may have opted for generalisation since some Arab viewers may not be familiar with the people who belong to the capital of Greece (Athens); but the majority of Arabs are familiar with the term 'Greeks'.

In example 2, the event and leisure reference 'initiation' has been rendered into طقوس (literally, rituals). According to the *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary (n.d.) the term 'initiation' can be defined as "the rites, ceremonies, ordeals, or instructions with which one is made a member of a sect or society or is invested with a particular function or status". The scene depicts that in order for a Spartan boy to be

recognised by his community, he must be sent to the wilderness and kill a vicious black wolf. This test is considered an initiation rite into adulthood by Spartans. Semantically speaking, the subtitler has opted only to render the surface meaning of the foreign item, which may indicate an incomplete meaning. Broadly speaking, in Arabic the term طقوس (literally, rituals) normally requires another term, especially religious and marriage, that collocates with it to deliver the intended meaning, unless it has been previously addressed in the context. Arguably, the subtitler may have resorted to this strategy due to lack of cultural background of the term. A better translation would have been طقوس اثبات جدارته كمحارب (literally, rituals to prove his worth as a warrior). Consequently, the number of characters used in the recommended translation كانت هذه طقوس اثبات جدارته كمحارب (literally, these were rituals to prove his worth as a warrior) consists of 33 characters for a one-liner, which is still within the average number of characters according to the recognised standards (see section 2.3.3).

In example 3, the institutional reference 'generals' has been rendered into قادة (literally, commander/leader). The term 'general' is considered one of the highest military ranks whether in ancient or modern times. By definition, a general is a leader/commander; hence, it can be argued that the subtitler may have opted to generalise the foreign item into Arabic in order to make it fit the context of Arabic and be read naturally by Arab viewers without distorting the meaning of the source cultural reference. It is worth mentioning that the term 'general' is commonly transliterated into Arabic by Arab film channels such as MBC2, MBC Max, etc. For instance, in the film *Gladiator* the subtitler opted for borrowing to tackle the cultural reference *general* into Arabic, namely جنرال (pronounced as giniraal).

In example 4, the material reference 'chariot' has been rendered into عربة (literally, wagon). According to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2008, p. 227) 'chariot' is "a two-wheeled vehicle that was used in ancient times for racing and fighting and was pulled by a horse". Based on the film scene, all chariots were used for fighting and were drawn by two horses rather than one; however, the lexical meaning of عربة (literally, wagon) in Arabic refers to a two or four-wheeled vehicle drawn by a horse, mule or donkey used for carrying things. It can be argued that if it were not for the non-verbal visual channel (image) the semantic meaning of the foreign item would have been lost in translation. It can be said that the subtitler may

have opted for generalisation since Arabic does not have an equivalent for the term 'chariot'; by relying on the image of the film the intended meaning of 'chariot' was clarified without adding extra information; hence, the typical mental image of عربة (literally, wagon) would not be evoked by the Arab viewers.

Figure 13. Appearance of the Cultural Reference 'Chariot' in the Film *Gladiator*

4.3.2.3 *Description.*

Film	Description									Total
	Material References	Religious and Mythological References	Honorific References	Proper Names	Geographical References	Institutional References	Educational and Labour References	Event and Leisure References	Genealogical References	
300	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Gladiator	0	0	0	0	5	3	0	0	0	8

Table 18. Number of Instances of Description in *300* and *Gladiator*

Description was used 10 times to tackle cultural references from English into Arabic, comprising 2.89% (two instances) of the choices in *300* and 8.24% (eight instances) in *Gladiator*. It would seem that this strategy was only used to translate references in the categories of geographical references and institutional references in *Gladiator*; and to tackle the references in the category of educational and labour references in *300*. Five examples were chosen for discussion.

Film	Cultural Reference	ST	TT
300	(1) Educational and labor reference	The **agoge**, as it's called, forces the boy to fight.	<u>**التنشئة كما تسمى عزلة التدريب**</u> <u>**للجنود**</u>، تجبر الصبي على القتال.
Gladiator	(2) Geographical reference (ecology)	Wild **ponies** play near my house. They tease my son.	<u>**خيول**</u> بريّة **صغيرة** تلعب قرب بيتي. يغيظون إبني.

(3) Institutional reference	**Praetorian**!	<u>**الحرس الإمبراطوري**!</u>
(4) Geographical reference (cultural geography)	we're finally going back to where we belong, the **Colosseum**.	نعود أخيراً إلى حيث ننتمي، **المدرّج <u>الروماني القديم</u>**.
(5) Institutional reference	I'm not a **legionnaire**.	أنا لست <u>**عضواً في فيلق**</u>.

Table 19. Instances of Cultural References in *300* and *Gladiator* Tackled by Description from English into Arabic

In example 1, the educational and labor reference 'agoge' has been rendered into التنشئة كما تسمى عزلة التدريب للجنود (literally, upbringing, also called isolation training for soldiers). The 'agoge' is a strict and disciplined military training for Spartan children from the age of seven to twenty-nine, in which they learn how to fight, hunt, dance and become strong and loyal to Sparta so they can become members of the Spartan Army (Williams, 2010, p. 81). This source cultural reference is somewhat difficult to translate into Arabic because it is semantically loaded and requires a description to deliver the meaning to the target viewers. This translation may misguide the target viewers because the training is not designed for Spartan soldiers; rather, it is designed for children. A better translation would have been تدريب التنشئة العسكرية للإسبرطيين (literally, military upbringing training for Spartans). The number of characters for the suggested translation is equal to the characters of the original translation, namely 36 characters.

In example 2, the geographical reference (ecology) 'ponies' has been rendered into خيول صغيرة (literally, small horses). The translation somewhat reflects the intended meaning of the SL cultural reference; however, the translation may misguide the target audiences by assuming that the ST is referring to actual small or baby horses rather than horses of small breed. Here, the loss of meaning is inevitable.

In example 3, the institutional reference 'Praetorian' has been translated into الحرس الإمبراطوري (literally, imperial guards). According to *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary (n.d.) 'Praetorian' is a "Roman imperial bodyguard". The subtitler has opted to describe the intended meaning of the source cultural reference into Arabic since the Arab audiences are not familiar with this institutional reference. In this scene, Maximus was calling out a member of the Praetorian guards to draw his attention so he can kill him. Here, the translation does not correspond with the image

because Arabic is in the plural form; however, both the ST and the image refer to a single Praetorian. This may cause confusion to the target viewers.

Figure 14. Appearance of the Cultural Reference 'Praetorian' in the Film
Gladiator

In example 4, the geographical reference (cultural geography) 'Colosseum' has been rendered into المدرّج الروماني القديم (literally, ancient Roman amphitheatre). The translation reflects the intended meaning of the source cultural reference and would be understood easily by the target audiences, as most Arabs are familiar with the translation.

In example 5, the institutional reference 'legionnaire' has been translated into عضواً في الفيلق (literally, member in the legion). The translation would make clear sense to Arab viewers; however, the word عضو (literally, member) neither reflects the military meaning in Arabic nor collocates with military formations. A better translation would have been فرد or جندي (literally, an individual or a soldier), because they purely collocate with military formations in Arabic rather than using the term 'member'.

4.3.2.4 *Substitution.*

Film	Substitution									Total
	Material References	Religious and Mythological References	Honorific References	Proper Names	Geographical References	Institutional References	Educational and Labour References	Event and Leisure References	Genealogical References	
300	5	3	2	0	1	5	0	1	0	17
Gladiator	1	2	1	0	4	3	1	0	0	12

Table 20. Number of Instances of Substitution in *300* and *Gladiator*

This is the third most commonly used translation strategy in the two films to tackle cultural references from English into Arabic, with 24.63% (17 instances) of the choices in *300* and 12.37% (12 instances) in *Gladiator*. In *300*, this strategy was mostly used to translate references in the categories of geographical references and institutional references. In *Gladiator*, however, substitution was mostly employed to tackle the material references and institutional references.

Film	Cultural Reference	ST	TT
300	(1) Religion and mythological reference	Xerxes dispatches his **monsters** from half the world.	زركسس يرسل <u>**فيلته الضخمة**</u> من نصف العالم.
	(2) Material reference	Every piece of Greek **parchment** shall be burned.	كل <u>**قطعة من الثقافة اليونانية**</u> ستحرق.
	(3) Institutional reference	Your father should have taught you how our **phalanx** works.	كان على والدك أن يعلمك <u>**طريقة قتالنا.**</u>
	(4) Material reference	You wear the **crimson** of a Spartan.	أنت ترتدي <u>**خوذة**</u> الإسبرطي.
Gladiator	(5) Geographical reference (toponym)	What do they care about **Germania**?	ولماذا يكترثون لأمر <u>**ألمانيا؟**</u>
	(6) Institutional reference	I could announce the dissolution of the **Senate**.	أستطيع أن أعلن عن حلّ <u>**مجلس الشيوخ.**</u>
	(7) Religious and mythological reference	For you are in **Elysium.**	فستكونوا في <u>**الجنة.**</u>

Table 21. Instances of Cultural References in *300* and *Gladiator* Tackled by Substitution from English into Arabic

In example 1, the religious and mythological reference 'monsters' has been rendered into الفيلة الضخمة (literally, giant elephants). Here, the subtitler's choice is not arbitrary as the scene depicts giant elephants used by the Persians fighting Spartan soldiers. Accordingly, the subtitler made his/her decision to make the implicit meaning of the original explicit in the TL by using the verbal visual channel (subtitles) and non-verbal visual channel (image). However, this is considered intersemiotic redundancy.

Figure 15. Appearance of the Cultural Reference 'Monsters' in the Film *300*

In example 2, the material reference 'parchment' has been rendered into قطعة من الثقافة اليونانية (literally, piece of Greek culture). The term 'parchment' is a piece of scraped and stretched goat, calf, or sheep skin used as writing material, especially when papyrus is not available (Hansen & Curtis, 2016, p. 144). The subtitler has substituted the foreign lexical item with a sort of non-cultural paraphrase in Arabic that does not actually convey the intended meaning. According the to the film scene, Xerxes wanted to burn every Greek parchment so that the history of Sparta would be forgotten. A better translation would have been مخطوطات يونانية (literally, Greek scrolls) which conveys the meaning of pieces of material which contain writing to some extent.

In example 3, the institutional reference 'phalanx' has been rendered into طريقة قتال (literally, method of fighting). Here, the cultural reference has been substituted with a non-cultural reference into Arabic in order to suit the context of Arabic. However, 'phalanx' is an ambiguous term in English since it may refer to a unit of troops or a battle line in a linear formation (Wheeler, 2007, p. 192). From the context, one cannot tell if Maximus was referring to a military unit or a single file formation. Arguably, despite the fact that the Spartan army consists of several phalanxes, Maximus used the term 'phalanx' in singular form to refer to a general statement, that is, 'how our phalanx'. This means he was referring to a linear formation rather than a unit of troops. To deliver the nearest meaning of the source cultural reference into Arabic a better translation would be تشكيلة الصفوف (literally, lines formation). In addition, the same cultural reference has been translated in another scene as فرقة (literally, division). Normally, the military division consists of more than 10,000

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soldiers and in the scene Maximus is referring to his 300 soldiers; hence, it can be said that the subtitler mistranslated the term based on an arbitrary choice.

In example 4, the material reference 'crimson' has been rendered into خوذة (literally, helmet). In this scene, Maximus is asking Ephialtes, a deformed Spartan, where he got his crimson from. Basically, Maximus was referring to the crimson cloak because it was the only piece of clothing scarlet in colour that Ephialtes was wearing. Arguably, the translation is erroneous since it does not deliver the intended meaning of the cultural reference in Arabic and would misguide Arab viewers. This can be attributed to the fact that the subtitler is probably unaware of the source cultural reference and opted for the substitution strategy as an arbitrary choice. A better translation would have been العباءة القرمزية (literally, the scarlet cloak) which would be clearly understood by the target recipients.

Figure 16. Appearance of the Cultural Reference 'Crimson' in the Film *300*

In example 5, the geographical reference (toponym) 'Germania' has been translated into ألمانيا (literally, Germany). According to *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary (n.d.) 'Germania' is a Roman province "just west of the Rhine in what is now northeastern France and part of Belgium and the Netherlands". Based on the definition, 'Germania' is associated with an ancient period of time and does not refer to the concept of modern Germany. Hence, the subtitler misinterpreted the intended meaning of the source cultural reference, and furthermore, failed to take into account the historical era in which the film is set. Arab audiences probably would find it awkward to read ألمانيا (literally, Germany) as the translation for 'Germania' since it is not in alignment with the historical events of the film. A better translation would have been to transliterate 'Germania' into Arabic as جيرمينيا, which is a commonly used translation in many historical Arabic books.

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In example 6, the instructional reference 'Senate' has been translated into مجلس الشيوخ (literally, the council of sheikhs). The subtitler tended to replace the cultural reference of the original with another cultural reference that is recognised by Arab viewers. The translation would not result in any confusion or misunderstanding to the target viewers since it is the conventional equivalent of the foreign item 'Senate'.

In example 7, the religious and mythological reference 'Elysium' has been rendered into الجنة (literally, the Paradise). According to the Greek and Roman mythology, 'Elysium' also called Elysian Fields, is an island where heroes and those who are blessed by gods will be sent after their death (Bolton, 2002, p. 102). The concept of الجنة (literally, the Paradise) in the Arab world for both Muslims and Christians is different from the one in ancient Rome or Greece. It can be argued that in order to achieve the communicative purpose, the subtitler may have opted for the closest equivalent of the term 'Elysium' in Arabic, that is, الجنة (literally, the Paradise) to evoke a similar impact on target viewers as it has on the English recipients.

4.3.2.5 *Omission.*

Film	Omission									Total
	Material References	Religious and Mythological References	Honorific References	Proper Names	Geographical References	Institutional References	Educational and Labour References	Event and Leisure References	Genealogical References	
300	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Gladiator	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 22. Number of Instances of Omission in *300* and *Gladiator*

Omission is only used once, namely in *300* to translate an institutional reference.

Film	Cultural Reference	ST	TT
300	(1) Institutional reference	**Tuck tail**!	- -
Gladiator	--	--	--

Table 23. Instance of Cultural Reference in *300* and *Gladiator* Tackled by Omission from English into Arabic

The institutional reference 'Tuck tail' has been omitted altogether. This may be as a result of the fact that it is a non-standard English expression and the translator was unfamiliar with. To clarify the meaning of the term, the scene shows the Captain of the 300 Spartans shouting at his men to assume tactical military positions, or *ta*'Tuck tail', so they can take cover from Persian arrows showering them by tucking themselves behind their shields. The target viewers would no doubt notice the absence of a subtitle when the Captain gives his military order. It would be preferable if 'Tuck tail' was rendered into تشكيلة الذيل (literally, tail formation).

4.4 Findings

Having investigated the cultural references manifested in two films, namely *300* and *Gladiator*, 166 cultural elements were identified based on the classification of cultural references proposed for the purpose of this research (see section 3.2.2.1). The frequency of SL-oriented and TL-oriented translation strategies used to render the source cultural items into Arabic are listed in Tables 24 and 25.

Film	SL-Oriented Translation Strategies			
	Borrowing	**Specification**	**Direct Translation**	**Explicitation**
300	29	2	13	2
Gladiator	37	0	32	5
Total	66	2	45	7

Table 24. Number of Instances of SL-Oriented Translation Strategies in *300* and G*ladiator*

Film	TL-Oriented Translation Strategies				
	Particularisation	**Generalisation**	**Description**	**Substitution**	**Omission**
300	0	3	2	17	1
Gladiator	2	1	8	12	0
Total	2	4	10	29	1

Table 25. Number of Instances of TL-Oriented Translation Strategies in *300* and *Gladiator*
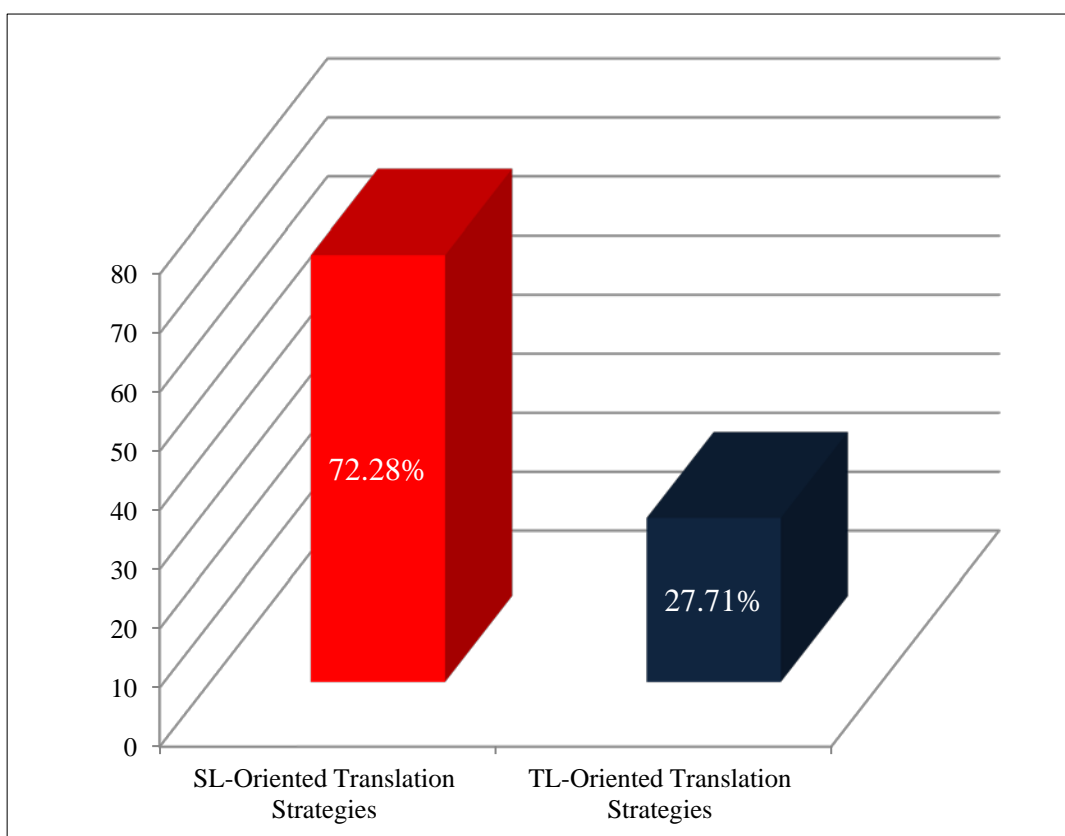
Figure 17. Overall Percentage of SL-oriented and TL-oriented Translation Strategies Applied in Subtitling the Cultural References of *300* and *Gladiator*

4.5 Discussion of Findings

As discussed above, the statistical analysis clearly shows that the SL-oriented translation strategies (borrowing, specification, direct translation and explicitation) are used more regularly than TL-oriented strategies to tackle 120 cultural items out of 166 found in two films, namely *300* and *Gladiator* comprising 72.28% (120 instances) of the total instances of translation strategies used. On the other hand, TL-oriented translation strategies (particularisation, generalisation, description, substitution and omission) accounted for 27.71% (46 instances) of the total strategies employed. The findings also indicate that borrowing and direct translation are the most commonly employed microstrategies in the films *300* and *Gladiator* constituting 39.76% (66 instances) and 27.11% (45 instances), respectively. Another important point can be drawn from the results, which is substitution has occupied third place among the other translation strategies and the first among the TL-oriented translation strategies with 17.47% (29 instances). The least widely used translation strategy is omission with 0.60% (one instance).

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In terms of other translation strategies, description has come in fourth place comprising 6.02% (10 instances), followed by explicitation with 4.22% (seven instances). Generalisation has been ranked the sixth most commonly applied translation strategy constituting 2.41% (four instances), whereas specification and particularisation have occupied the penultimate place with 1.20% (two instances) and 1.20% (two instances), respectively.

It can be deduced from the current empirical analysis that the majority of the proper names have been borrowed into Arabic. It is no wonder that the subtitlers opted for borrowing since this strategy is considered the most popular solution to tackle this type of cultural reference. Pedersen (2011, p. 203) observes that "[r]etention [borrowing] is by far the most common strategy for rendering proper names". Moreover, the subtitlers also opted for borrowing to deal with most of the religious and mythological references, and geographical references, especially toponyms and demonyms. However, the majority of toponyms and demonyms that appeared in both films have recognised translations in Arabic and can be found in historical books. In addition, the plural form suffix of some cultural references has been naturalised into Arabic based on the phonology of English which is not acceptable in Arabic. Arguably, this can be attributed to the fact that the subtitlers probably did not exert a lot of effort in tackling those cultural references; moreover, they may lack knowledge of Roman and Greek cultures.

A point worth mentioning here is that one of the main factors which determines the type of translation strategy to be used in rendering cultural references is "transculturality" (Pedersen, 2011, p, 106). In other words, if the recipients of two different cultures are familiar with a certain cultural reference, then less intervention is undertaken by a subtitler; hence s/he may opt for borrowing or direct translation. On the other hand, if the foreign item is restricted only to the source culture and the recipients of the target culture are not familiar with such a foreign item, then the subtiter is required to intervene by employing any other strategy, excluding borrowing and direct translation, to make the foreign item accessible to the target audience. In the view of this study, the Roman and ancient Greek civilisations are well known and many historians, whether from the Middle East or the Western world, have authored or translated books about the history of those two ancient cultures. Therefore, many foreign items from the Roman and ancient Greek cultures would be known in Middle

Eastern and Western cultures, especially toponyms and demonyms. However, though the cultural references may be known in both cultures, the recipients of the TL may not be familiar with them. Hence, subtitlers would attempt to use translation strategies to clarify the meaning to the target recipients.

In addition, cultural references such as 'agoge', 'carneia', 'legionnaire', 'praetorian' and 'colosseum' have been subtitled into Arabic by employing the description strategy. This can be attributed to fact that since those cultural references are restricted to a third culture, namely the Greek or Roman culture, the SL viewers (English) and the TL viewers (Arabic) may not be familiar with them. Hence, the subtitler opted for the interventionist strategy of description to make it accessible to the target viewers. It also has been noted that a number of cultural references have been rendered by using interventionist, and therefore domesticating, strategies such as description and substitution in some cases and in other instances with much less interventionist, and therefore more foreignising, strategies such as specification and borrowing. For example, the first time 'agoge' appeared in the film, the subtitler used the description strategy and later on, in another scene, specification. This can be attributed to the factor of "co-text" (Pedersen, 2011, p. 114), namely the rest of the subtitled dialogue. In other words, if a cultural reference "is disambiguated or explained at some point earlier or later in the co-text, the subtitler does not have to perform the task at every point" (Pedersen, 2011, p. 114). Arguably, the co-text factor may influence the subtitler to resort to borrowing, specification and direct translation since other strategies are space consuming.

Furthermore, a few instances of cultural references such as 'monsters' and chariot were rendered into Arabic by employing substitution and generalisation, respectively. This can be attributed to what Pedersen (2011) refers to as "polysemiotics" (p. 113). In other words, when the non-verbal visual channels (image) or non-verbal audio channels (music and sound effects) are capable of explicating the cultural reference, then the subtitler can opt for a translation strategy where the translation is shorter than the original. However, in the cultural reference 'monsters' the subtitler produced a translation which is longer than the item of the original resulting in consuming more space as well as intersemiotic redundancy.

In terms of agency or ideological aspects, the data analysis based on the films of *300* and *Gladiator* concluded that the decisions made by the subtitlers to employ

one strategy over another when dealing with cultural references are not ideologically motivated but rather arbitrary decisions.

Finally, it can be argued that the subtitlers mostly opted for foreignisation strategies because they took into account the historical aspect of the sword-and-sandal genre. In other words, since the films of *300* and *Gladiator* were set in Ancient Greece/Rome which is quite far removed from Arab viewers culturally and historically, the subtitlers attempted to preserve as much as possible of the foreignness of the SL cultural items in Arabic in order to shift Arab audiences from an Ancient Rome/Greece setting to the heart of modern-day Middle East; hence, domestication would have worked against that.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The thesis focused on identifying the most common types of culture-specific references in two American feature films that are associated with the sword-and-sandal genre. It also investigated the dominant translation strategies used in subtitling those pertinent cultural references into Arabic. The study further aimed to verify the orientation of subtitling those cultural references, namely whether they tended towards foreignising or domesticating the cultural references, and to establish whether any specific reasons can be identified for the selection of one strategy over another. To reach these aims, two American films, namely *300* and *Gladiator* were selected. The cultural items were identified based on a classification of cultural references created for the purpose of this study. Then, a classification of translation strategies was established and the translation strategies used to address the cultural references in the Arabic subtitles were identified and categorised according to a continuum between foreigisation and domestication. Based on the quantified instances of each strategy a number of justifications were produced to elucidate the tendency of the two films' subtitlers to opt for a certain strategy instead of another.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Although a broad range of strategies were used (see Figure 5), it is evident that there were two dominant strategies closer to the foreignising end of the spectrum (SL-oriented) and one towards the domesticating end of the spectrum (TL-oriented). Only Omission. Overall, Figure 17 shows that the translation of cultural items in these movies tend dramatically towards the foreignising end of the spectrum with more than 70% of the choices falling in this range and less than 30% in the domesticating range. Even more interesting is the fact that there were really only three dominant strategies, namely borrowing (almost 40%) and direct translation (just under 27%) on the foreignising end and substitution on the domesticating end. This pattern is present in both movies although *300* made more use of substitution than direct translation, and *Gladiator* made more use of direct translation than substitution.

We can conclude from the findings that subtitlers of *300* and *Gladiator* have widely resorted to foreignisation strategies, particularly borrowing and direct translation. These two dominant strategies have been mostly employed to deal with most of the cultural references. This can be attributed to the fact the historical genre of

the two films has played an essential role in opting for foreignisation in order to retain a historical portrayal of ancient Greek/Roman cultures in Arabic; hence, allowing Arabic audiences to experience the foreignness of these cultures through the lens of Hollywood. It can be said that foreignness is a bedrock in the genre of sword-and-sandal.

In terms of favouring one strategy over another by subtitlers, it can be said that transculturality, co-text and absence of agency have been the most influencing factors which determined the decision-making of how to deal with cultural references in both films. Accordingly, providing additional information by resorting to interventionist strategies (over-informing the TL viewers) or tending to preserve the foreignness of the SL cultural references in the TL (under-informing the SL viewers) by resorting to less interventionist strategies is left to the arbitrary choices of subtitlers.

Finally, the study has detected numerous cultural references that have been erroneously rendered into Arabic, or contained grammatical errors and typos. This seems to indicate that the translation was not verified (reviewed) by an Arabic native speaker to detect any mistakes before releasing the subtitles officially.

5.2 Limitations and Recommendations

While the findings of this research tend to be promising in terms of addressing the cultural references in subtitling, there were some limitations in this study, partly due to the limited scope of this format as a pathway into a PhD. In this context, one of the main limitations of this research lies within its boundaries to address other forms of AVT. Moreover, the research is hovering over one aspect of translational issues, namely extralinguistic culture-specific references which may face subtitlers during the process of subtitling; leaving aside the intralinguistic culture-specific references such as idiomatic expressions, dialects, etc.

In addition, the examples selected in the data analysis have been taken from only two films and covered 48 examples out of 166. Arguably, they are not sufficient to reflect all types of cultural references that appeared in the two films, and the research is considered a case study of two films restricted to one film genre, namely sword-and-sandal.

The inaccessibility to the subtitlers of the films *300* and *Gladiator* is another limitation to the research, as both films have not provided any contact information of the subtitlers or subtitling company who created the Arabic subtitles. Hence, the

reasoning behind the tendency of choosing one strategy over another in tackling cultural references have been analysed hypothetically rather than from a solid base of information retrieved from the actual subtitlers.

Strictly speaking, very few studies in the field of AVT have been conducted in the Middle East. Hopefully, the findings of this research will contribute to a better understanding of AVT and provide the impetus for further research on this domain, especially subtitling, dubbing, voice-over and audio description. In light of the research limitations, it is recommended that other aspects be explored from a cultural perspective such as idioms, dialects etc. In addition, in order to strengthen the generalizability and the empirical validity of future research it must be build on a wider corpus of films and TV programmes. It would be a more plausible approach if the corpus were to be created based on different genres to investigate if the tendencies for choosing translation strategies differ from one film genre to another.

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