

Research Article

Omair Al-Zgoul, Saleh Al-Salman*

Fansubbers' Subtitling Strategies of Swear Words from English into Arabic in the *Bad Boys* Movies

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Abstract: This research investigates the strategies used by fansubbers to translate English culture-bound expressions into Arabic. It further investigates the functions of swear words and how the fansubber regenerated their functional connotations. The corpus of the study consists of English subtitles and Arabic fansubs of the *Bad Boys* movies. The researchers analyzed the data both quantitatively and qualitatively. The frameworks adopted in this research are the strategies proposed by Diaz-Cintas and Remael and the classification model of swear words presented by Ljung. The findings showed that the fansubber rendered the culture-bound expressions using seven strategies, the most dominant of which is omission at almost 37%. Other strategies varied in their percentage with: transposition, second-most utilized at 29%, followed by explicitation (25%), calques (8%), loanwords (0.2%), lexical creation (0.5%), and compensation (0.13%). The results showed that these strategies were sometimes wrongly used due to the lack of guidelines for fansubs. On the other hand, the dominant function of swearing used in the movie is the standalone one. Noticeably, the connotation of functional elements was often neglected by the fansubber. Thus, the fansubs were sometimes lacking in accuracy. Finally, the current research provides some implications and recommendations for translators when handling culture-bound expressions.

Keywords: culture-bound expressions, subtitles, functions, swearing, fansubbers, audiovisual translation

Introduction

Translation is the transformation of a complete idea from one language into another by which the source language (SL) is rendered into the target language (TL), taking into consideration the intentions and style of the writer of the original text. Newmark stated that translation is the rendering of meaning into another language the way it is intended by the author. Therefore, the first aim of a translator is to understand the message expressed in the original text and subsequently convey it to the target audience. Understanding the message includes analyzing the meaning of each word and each unit of a sentence context and how to render a meaningful functional equivalent in the TL.

Audiovisual translation (AVT), also known as screen translation, is a type of translation that is utilized to render multimedia works. Au defined AVT as a discipline that represents more than a transfer of audiovisual products as there are nonverbal aspects involved to make it a multi-semiotic translation. AVT embraces three main modes, namely, subtitling, dubbing, and voice-over or half dubbing.

* **Corresponding author: Al-Salman Saleh**, Department of English Language and Translation, Applied Science Private University, 11931, Amman, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, e-mail: salehalsalman2000@gmail.com
Al-Zgoul Omair: Applied Science Private University, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Subtitling, both interlingual and intralingual, is the rendering of the spoken dialogue into a caption form that is shown on the screen (Al-Abbas and Haider; Al-Abbas et al.). A taboo is a word, or sometimes an expression, that could be considered offensive or inappropriate.

Rendering taboos is regarded as one of the most challenging issues that a subtitler might face since taboos have different functions due to cultural differences. Jay and Jay (1) maintain that “taboo words are used because speakers cannot find better words with which to express themselves.” Swearing is a type of taboo that is used to express the emotions of the speaker impolitely. Swear words are “the expression of anger, hostility, surprise or similarly intense emotions” (Moore (3)).

The current study explores the subtitling strategies that fansubbers use in translating swear words from English into Arabic in the *Bad Boys* movies. Such an undertaking is quite significant in resolving some of the most sensitive issues in AVT, especially when cultural issues are at stake. Diaz-Cintas and Sánchez described fansubs as subtitles that are carried out by non-professional translators. First, they covered the process of fansubbing as a whole. Second, they addressed the ethical aspect of fansubs which relates to the uncensored subtitles. Third, they focused on the features of fansubs’ translations, such as using notes and some effects. Finally, their study reflected on fansubs and the possibilities that emerged from them, while this piece of research focuses on the strategies used in rendering fansubs.

In this work, the research problem lies in the fact that rendering culture-bound expressions is a demanding task requiring sophisticated translation strategies (Al-Khalafat and Haider). These expressions carry a function in the language, and the subtitler needs to be aware of these functions to be able to render the message correctly. The reason behind conducting this research is to raise subtitlers’ awareness of how to render swearing through applying relevant and effective strategies. Furthermore, this research aims to shed light on the most viable translation strategies fansubbers use to render swear words. Likewise, it will investigate the extent to which the connotative functions of the SL (English) swear words are maintained in the TL (Arabic) rendering.

The purpose of this study is to investigate and identify the strategies the fansubber opted for while subtitling swear words in the *Bad Boys* movies. This undertaking is significant to translation studies (TS) in general, and to AVT in particular, as it addresses a culturally sensitive domain of swear words. An accurate TL rendering of this category of words often poses problems to translators searching for denotative and connotative equivalents, on top of the socio-cultural differences embedded in Arabic and English. Consequently, with the massive spread of social media platforms and applications without strict censorship and scrutiny, devising and adopting adequate translation strategies for the connotative functions of swear words has become a necessity to bridge a gap, pertaining to accuracy, which was often neglected by fansubbers. To this end, the current research addresses the following questions:

1. What are the strategies used by subtitlers to render the TL equivalent of swear words?
2. Were the connotative functions of the swear words in the *Bad Boys* movies maintained in the translation?

Review of Related Literature

The review consists of two main sections, namely the theoretical background and the empirical studies. The first section includes some background information on the classification of translation strategies and the categories of swearing functions. The second section sheds light on some empirical research and studies related to the current work.

Theoretical Framework

AVT

In addressing subtitling as a primary AVT mode, the current research draws on the categorization of swear words adopted by Ljung and the strategies classified by Diaz-Cintas and Remael.

Table 1: Slot filler function

Major function		Slot filler
# 1	Sub-function	Examples
a	Noun supporters	Jack is a very quiet son of a bitch.
b	Emphasis	Who the hell are you?
c	Anaphoric use of epithets	Give the mother-f...er his money.
d	Modal adverbials	They f...ing can't buy a book.
e	Adjectives of dislike	I hate that f...ing book!
f	Adverbial/adjectival intensifiers	She is a f...ing idiot!

Pardo discussed the historical aspect of translation and how it evolved into TS. By referring to translation as a discipline, the present study sheds light on AVT as a field that came into existence in the 1920s and 1930s, presenting some of the translation strategies. On the other hand, this study identifies the subtitling strategies used by fansubbers, a trend that has become quite popular lately.

Considering AVT a tool for social integration, Remael and Neves (14) argue that “subtitling has become increasingly entangled in utilitarian-commercial forms of localisation, but it has also contributed to enhancing social cohesion, e.g. among the d/Deaf and hard of hearing.” The importance of subtitling to the SDH (subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing) group resides in superimposing subtitles of the translated text, on the screen, unlike dubbing which is an oral presentation of the translated text, per Malenova.

Chaume reported that the AVT difficulty lies in creating a dialogue that implies all discourse modes, mainly spoken and written utterances. Nevertheless, forms of nonverbal meaning need to be considered as well. In addition, space and time limitations pose other challenges.

Matkivska presented the idea of AVT, including its characteristics and its types. He showed that synchronism, of all other components, verbal or nonverbal, is the main characteristic of AVT, and translation strategies must construct the meaning of the whole audiovisual product.

Antonini suggested that the dialogue is reduced in subtitles. This reduction strategy is due to the time needed for the viewers to read and focus on the screen. Thus, the loss of some parts of the dialogue is inevitable, being attributed to the omission strategy investigated in this research.

Swear Words: Typology and Functions

Ljung defined swearing with reference to four main criteria: the use of taboo in an utterance, the non-literal meaning, swearing as a set form of words, and relation to emotions. According to Ljung, swearing has three major functions: slot fillers, standalone, and replacive swearing.

Slot fillers: These are swear words that are placed in a certain position in the sentence for an intended function as shown in Table 1.

Standalone function: These are swear words that are unattached to a word or a sentence, as shown in Table 2.

Replacive swearing: This type of function is used to replace more than one object and it is up to the receiver to decide what is being replaced, as shown in Table 3.

Translating Culture-bound Expressions

Diaz-Cintas and Remael categorized the strategies used for rendering culture-bound expressions as foreignization and domestication strategies. Foreignization strategies are loan and calque whereas domestication strategies cover explicitation, substitution, transposition, lexical creation, compensation, omission, and addition. The most commonly used strategy was determined according to the frequency of occurrence.

Table 2: Standalone function

Major function		Standalone
# 2	Sub-function	Examples
a	Oaths	For God's sake.
b	Expletive interjections	Shit!
c	Curses	F... you!
d	Emphatic denial	Lucky my ass.
e	Name-calling	Pig!
f	Ritual insults	"If ugliness were bricks, your mother would be a housing project."
g	Unfriendly suggestion	Go to hell!

Table 3: Replacive function

Major function		Replacive swearing
# 3	Sub-function	Examples
a	Multiple/context-based	How much did this shit cost you?

Following is a summary of the strategies represented in the data compiled in this study:

Loan (direct transfer): Putting the cultural reference in the target text as is. Example:

Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation
- Big cojon*s too.	و تستلزم "كوهوناس".	It needs Kohona's

Calque (literal translation): Minimizing the change that can affect the source text. Example:

Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation
You look like Jesus.	تبدو مثل "يسوع"	You look like Jesus.

Explicitation: Opting for the semantic meaning to make it easy for the viewers. Example:

Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation
<i>I bring you in, to consult, and you go cowboy on me.</i>	... ادخلتك بصفة استشارية لكنك عصيت اوامري	<i>I bring you in, to consult, and you disobeyed my orders.</i>

Transposition (cultural adaptation): Replacing the cultural reference with an accessible or neutral reference from the TL. This strategy is close to domestication. Example:

Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation
You drive almost slow enough to drive Miss Daisy.	. يليق بك ان تكون سائفا للعجزة	It suits you to drive elderly people.

Lexical creation: Coining or inventing a new lexical item in the TL to stand for the SL term. Example:

Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation
- Julie. You like Al Capone, don't you?	تحبين ال كابون , صحيح؟	You like Al Capone, don't you?

Compensation: Over translating to make up for a translational loss. Example:

Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation
Yeah, they would have been up in here with Uzis.	هم كانوا اتوا برشاشات و حطموا كل شيء.	They would have been up in here with machine guns and destroyed everything.

Omission (deletion): Excluding the culture-bound expression from the target text. Example:

Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation
What's this "having a picnic" sh*t in my car?	"هل تحول سيارتي الى " غرفة طعام	Are you changing my car into a dining room?
Get your damn finger out my face.	ابعد اصبعك عن وجهي.	Get your finger out of my face.
I staked out all night in that jalopy too. I earned a peek.	انا انتظرت مثلكم و يحق لي ان القى نظرة	I staked out too. I earned a peek.

Empirical Studies

AVT: Subtitling

Together with dubbing and voice-over, subtitling is a third pillar in the AVT triangle. However, of all three modes, subtitling remains the most commonly used due to its speed and low processing cost. According to Łabendowicz (259) "audiences approach a given AV material with a prior set of expectations, which often include AVT mode preferences... various modes of AVT affect viewers' reception of a given production." Kruger argued that the skills required to create subtitles are greater than those in other modes of translation. A subtitler needs to have a better context awareness, expertise in the topic, and be able to analyze the text.

Furgani investigated the quality of Arabic subtitles for English works. The purpose of the study was to improve the skills of subtitlers and their performance by shedding light on the challenges of subtitling films moving from English into Arabic. Special emphasis was placed on the cultural constraints that can hinder the AVT process. It also combined the theories of translation which are used to overcome the different types of challenges. The data of the study were collected through a thematic questionnaire. The study contributed to improving the quality of subtitles by identifying strategies used by Diaz-Cintas and Remael, namely loan (direct translation), calque (literal translation), explication, transposition, lexical creation, compensation, and omission, to translate the culture-bound expressions according to their functionality.

In his study about the functions of taboo words and their translation in subtitling: a case study in "The Help," Pratama (1) argued that "the translator may choose the source language norms to produce adequate target text or follow the target language norms. In subtitling English taboos into Indonesian, the strategies applied were omission, transfer, and euphemism."

Al-Yasin and Rabab'ah (22) investigated the connotative equivalence between taboo words in American hip hop/musical movies and their Arabic subtitles. Their research findings led to the conclusion that the

subtitling of taboo words poses challenges to translators who often find it difficult to render one-to-one translational equivalents between the SL norms and the TL socio-cultural norms. Consequently, the researchers “noticed that the Arab fan subtitler managed to translate the tabooed terms in Arabic using certain translation techniques viz. euphemism and omission.”

Discussing the subtitling strategies, Altahri described how cultural factors might be of influence to subtitling and its readers. The study also sheds light on the problems and challenges that subtitlers could face due to translating different cultural references from verbal into written form.

Hosseinnia discussed how AVT could bring cultures together, which is of great relevance to what this research is addressing. The study followed a corpus-based analysis of the omission strategy in subtitling three English TV series along with their translations in Persian. The researcher found that omission is one of the strategies opted for by the fansubbers concerning the culture-bound expressions under investigation.

Using a descriptive qualitative method, Simanjuntak and Basari investigated the subtitling strategies used to subtitle the movie *Real Steel* from English into Indonesian. The results showed that the translation strategies opted for were expansion, paraphrasing, transferring, imitation, transcription, and deletion. The most dominant process was deletion.

Cultural Issues in Subtitling: Taboos and Swear Words

Alwan discussed how translation is related to cultural representation. By analyzing a set of randomly picked samples, the study examined how subtitling the Emirati dialect of an Emirati cartoon represented the culture of Emirates. The research findings showed that cultural loss could not be avoided, which would lead to a misconception of culture and that the context determines the strategy used.

ElShiekh presented some of the problems related to culture regarding the subtitling, from English into Arabic, of religious movies. The research investigated two TV channels: the MBC Channel group and Dubai One. The data were compiled from a TV series and a movie, including religious terms such as God, demon, angel, and Satan. The study discussed the reasons behind the absence of certain religious terms in Arabic. The findings showed a distortion of the SL by avoiding the translation of taboo expressions. Instead, the subtitler opted for deleting the problematic segments over the distortion made by the outrageous transformation (see Debbas and Haider).

Discussing the role of euphemism as a major strategy in subtitling taboo words from English into Arabic, Al-Adwan outlines three main components of a revised model of euphemization, namely widening, implication, and metonymy.

Chiaro identified culture-specific references, pointing out that they could be particular to the culture and even nonverbal in nature like an image or a certain dance. This makes translating them a bit difficult and can be considered awkward in some cases. Examples of these are found in measurement units, national sports, food, celebrities, and so on. As the findings of the current study show, the level of difficulty in translating such unfamiliar terms is relatively high, which makes fansubbers resort to the abovementioned strategies.

Discussing taboos and swear words, Jay and Janschewitz pointed out that swearing is a means to express emotions such as frustration and anger and that the primary meaning of a swear word is connotative, which makes it a suitable means of expressing emotions. The study found that the appropriateness of swear words depends on the relationship between the listener and speaker, social and physical context, and the type of words used. However, offensiveness depended on gender for natives and the English language cultural familiarity for non-natives. The results showed that speakers need time to learn when, where, and with whom swear words may be used. On the other hand, this research focuses on the strategies rather than the cognitive framework.

Nasery and Pishkar stated that, in the translation of taboos, familiarity with cultures of the first language and the second language is a must. The study examined the translation of taboo words from Persian into English. It stressed the importance of placing extra emphasis on the translation of taboo words. It also investigated the possibility, correctness, and acceptability of elements that need to be rendered into the other culture appropriately.

Cuenca analyzed different strategies in translating taboo words from English into Spanish in subtitles of films. The data were extracted from a multilingual corpus of subtitles. The study showed that the most commonly used strategy in translation is “literal translation,” but in the case of taboo words, some additional strategies have been employed, such as omission, euphemism, and neutralization. It also found that the grammatical category of the taboo affects its translation. In addition, it uses another framework for the typology of swearing and translating strategies.

Methodology

This section explores the research method and design adopted in this study. It shows the methods of designing corpora, the constraints involved in compiling corpora, and the analytical software used for compilation.

Data Selection

The digital revolution played a significant role in influencing the availability of audiovisual materials. Many factors affect the choice of the AVT mode. In Arabic-speaking countries, movies tend to be subtitled more than dubbed. The widespread use of subtitled movies could create a sense of awkwardness in case a film was dubbed.

Bad Boys is a movie series consisting of three films. The first movie, *Bad Boys*, was released in 1995. The film had three nominations and won one award. The movie's plot is about two cops who are protecting a witness during one of their investigations. The second movie is *Bad Boys II*, which was released in 2003. It won five awards and was nominated 13 times. The movie's plot is about investigating drug flow into Florida supplied by a drug dealer from Cuba. The third movie is *Bad Boys for Life*, which was released in 2020. It was nominated 14 times and won three awards. The plot of the movie is about confronting drug lords who are destroying the city.

The genre of the movie sequel is action/comedy, and the main two characters are Mike Lowrey and Marcus Burnett. As well-known comic characters with a highly energetic approach, the movie stars, Martin Lawrence and Will Smith, talk a lot, interrupt each other, with a lot of action going on through lively and enjoyable dialogue. *Bad Boys* movies have affected the action genre for over a decade. Marcus Burnett was portrayed by Martin Lawrence, and Mike Lowrey was portrayed by Will Smith. The two main protagonists of the *Bad Boys* franchise Martin and Mike are good cops who are willing to do all what it takes to have their job done most efficiently. The two had years of success as they have proved themselves a great team on screen, especially when the *Bad Boys* movies went so well in all stages.

Data Collection and Corpus Compilation

For this study, a parallel corpus of *Bad Boys* movies was compiled from scratch and analyzed using corpus-based software SketchEngine and Wordsmith. The subtitles were extracted from a website, www.subscene.com, popular for fansubs, which was first launched in 2005. The website has multiple subtitles for every version of a movie download. This means that if the user downloads from any source, they will be able to find multiple subtitling options, including in different languages. The source script was downloaded from the same website as a transcription. The subtitles and transcription of the movie were downloaded as an SRT (or SubRip Subtitle) file, and then converted to text format to be processed by corpus linguistics (CL) software packages.

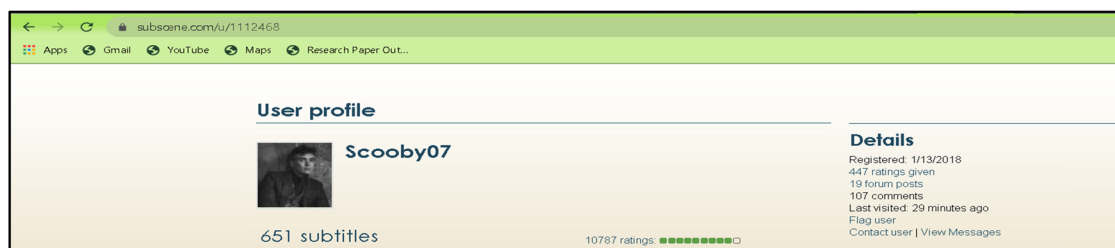


Figure 1: Screenshot from the website showing the profile of the fansubber.

The selected fansubs are of a user who uploaded 651 subtitles of different movies, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows details on ratings for the fansubber as receiving 10,787 ratings graded at a 9 out of 10. Thus, the number of subtitles and the ratings of the fansubber were the reasons why this particular user's fansubs were considered.

English and Arabic Sub-corpora Size

The researchers used a Wordsmith 6 software package to generate a word list of all words in the corpus and to check the size of the sub-corpora.

Table 4 shows the total number of words in the movie sequel in English and Arabic.

Table 4 shows that the size of the corpus built for this research is 57,708 words. The English word count is 34,588, corresponding to 23,120 in Arabic. This difference in the number of words used in an accurate translation is indicative of lexical differences between English and standard Arabic.

Software Packages

The researchers used two software packages, WordSmith and SketchEngine, to analyze the data.

Wordsmith is a software package used for corpus-based analysis (Scott). The software interface enables researchers to use various functions (Haider). With this software a researcher can check on the frequency list of words. The software is set to provide specific data when a word list is created. It will give statistics on the word count and the length of words in the corpus.

SketchEngine is an online software which provides access to various corpora (Kilgariff et al.). For the parallel corpus, it is of great importance as it has the function of parallel concordance.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the quantitative analysis using the compiled corpus and the strategies used by the fansubber to render the culture-bound expressions under investigation.

Table 4: Tokens in the movie series

Movie	Word count		Total word count
	English	Arabic	
Bad boys	11,010	6,879	17,889
Bad boys II	13,622	8,950	22,572
Bad boys for Life	9,956	7,291	17,247
Size	34,588	23,120	57,708

Quantitative Analysis

Each incident of culture-bound expressions was searched using the software to check its parallel concordance. The parallel concordance showed how an expression was rendered in all its occurrences, which enhanced the data analysis.

The frequencies of the culture-bound expressions were provided to categorize the most frequent culture-bound expressions used in the movies. Most of the culture-bound expressions were swear words, so their typology needed to be analyzed according to their functions. According to Ljung, the main functions of swearing are slot fillers, standalone, and replacive swearing.

Frequencies of the Culture-bound Expressions

The culture-bound expressions in the movie were analyzed and scrutinized one by one through the lines of the script of the movies (the source text). The following chart explains the typology of the culture-bound expressions in the movies.

No.	Culture-bound expression	Frequency
1	Swearing	636
2	Religious remarks	84
3	Slang	23
4	Proper nouns	15
5	Idiomatic expressions	7

Figure 2 shows the percentage of the frequency of usage of culture-bound expressions in the source script.

Table 5 represents a list of the incidents and functions of swearing.

The most frequent swear word in the movie sequel was “sh*t,” with 248 incidents. The most frequent function of the swear word is the standalone function. After checking all the incidents, the translation strategies used by the fansubber to render the swear words were categorized and checked one by one. To make sure that our classification is correct and valid, we consulted three highly experienced professors of linguistics and English-Arabic-English translation, from different universities, for verification and feedback. Their suggestions and remarks, mainly about the accurate classification of translation strategies, and functions of swear words, were taken into consideration.

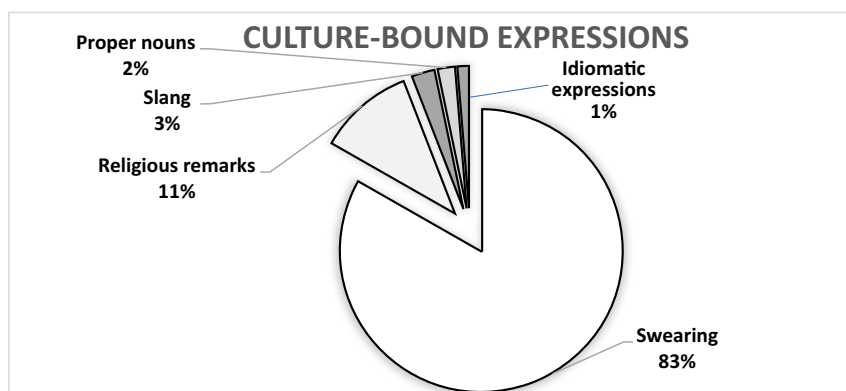


Figure 2: The frequencies of the culture-bound expressions.

Table 5: Swear word frequencies and functions

Swear word	Frequency	Function		
		Slot filler	Standalone	Replative
Sh*t	248	56	105	87
F**k	189	99	75	15
A*s	66	8	28	30
Mother f**ker	41	—	19	22
Bi*ch	26	1	12	13
Bullsh*t	23	—	23	—
Sc**w	10	—	10	—
S*x	7	—	7	—
D*ckhead	7	—	7	—
B*lls	6	—	6	—
D*ck	4	—	4	—
Co**nes	3	—	3	—
Sh*thole	2	—	—	2
Hu*ping	2	—	2	—
Kn**klehead	1	—	1	—
D*ng-a-l*ng	1	—	1	—
Total	636	164	303	169

* indicates that one character is deleted.

** indicates that two characters are deleted.

Table 6 lists the translation strategies used to render swear words.

The most frequent strategy used by the fansubber is omission. Since the rendition of swearing is not preferable, the fansubber chose the omission strategy although they do not have any constraints when compared to professional subtitlers. Transposition was the second-most frequent strategy used to render swearing; explicitation came in third with 141 incidents.

Qualitative Analysis

Each incident of culture-bound expressions was checked in all the occurrences. The strategies applied by the fansubber were highlighted and examined. The analysis of culture-bound expressions included the effectiveness of the strategies used by the fansubber. In addition, the functions of swearing were placed into three main categories and examined thoroughly.

Back translation of the Arabic subtitles was provided for each cited example since it is a very effective method to use while paying special attention to critical translation difficulties across cultures. It also helps in keeping a close eye on the conceptual and cultural correspondence of the source and target texts.

Table 6: Swearing and translation strategies

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Loan	1	0.16
Calque	36	5.66
Explicitation	142	22.33
Transposition	207	32.55
Omission	250	39.31
Total	636	100

It is important to know how subtitlers deal with culture-bound expressions, especially in fansubs, as they mostly do not have any form of censorship. As indicated earlier, the culture-bound expressions – analyzed according to Diaz-Cintas and Remael – were categorized as foreignization and domestication strategies. The most commonly used strategy was determined according to the frequency of occurrence.

Strategies Used for the Movie Series

According to the classification of Diaz-Cintas and Remael, the strategies used by fansubbers are omission, transposition, explicitation, calque, lexical creation, loan, and compensation. The results of the analysis in the present study reflected similar outcomes, with no signs of using the strategies of substitution and addition in the data. Examples of the five strategies listed in Table 6, namely loanwords, calques, explicitation, transposition, and omission used in rendering swear words in the investigated fansubs in the current study are given below.

Omission

This domestication strategy was used overwhelmingly in the fansubs. The reasons behind the heavy use of this strategy varied. Hosseinnia showed that there is a tendency to omit segments. Simanjuntak and Basari pointed out that omission was also the dominant strategy in their study. Likewise, ElShiekh reported that even in the professional subtitles omission was dominant.

Table 7 gives some examples of the omission strategy used as well as demonstrating some back translation.

The examples in Table 7 are taken from 250 incidents of the omission strategy in the movies and as we can see from the back translation of the first example, the whole sentence was changed and the meaning was distorted due to the deletion of the lexical item “sh*t.” The fansubber took the liberty to rewrite the script as he saw fit. This, of course, is not acceptable as the translation is not faithful to the source text. Translation needs to be as faithful to the original as possible. In principle, the best translation is one that reads so natural, non-literal, renders the linguistic and cultural equivalence, without loss of essential information.

In the second example, the utterance was not affected by the omission of the religious remark “damn.” Nevertheless, the loss of the speaker’s tone is quite clear. The source text shows emphasis, while the Arabic translation does not.

The third example is using the slang expression “jalopy,” which means an old car that is not working very well. It is nearly impossible for the fansubber to render all that into Arabic due to the technical constraints of time.

Transposition (cultural adaptation)

Table 7: Omission strategy examples

No.	Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation
1	What’s this “having a picnic” sh*t in my car?	هل تحول سيارتي الى “غرفة طعام”؟	Are you changing my car into a dining room?
2	Get your damn finger out my face.	ابعد اصبعك عن وجهي.	Get your finger out of my face.
3	I staked out all night in that jalopy too. I earned a peek.	انا انتظرت مثلكم و يحق لي ان القي نظرة	I staked out too. I earned a peek.

Table 8: Transposition strategy examples

No.	Source text	Arabic Translation	Back translation
4	– Your country, my a*s	- بنس بلادك	– Shame on your country.
5	Oh, great. It's the goon squad.	عظيم. وصلت الفرقة كلها	Great. It is the whole band/gang
6	I ain't Wesley Snipes.	انا لست بطلا	I am not a hero.
7	You drive almost slow enough to drive Miss Daisy.	يليق بك ان تكون سائقا للعجزة	It suits you to drive elderly people.

There were 222 incidents of this domestication strategy. This strategy is close to euphemism and neutralization.

Table 8 gives some examples on the use of the transposition strategy in the movie series, along with back translations.

Table 8 shows examples of incidents of the transposition strategy. In example 4, the intended meaning of swearing was to indicate that what has been said is nonsense. As the back translations stand, the function of the swearing word, emphatic denial, was wrongly rendered.

Transposition was used in the fifth example on the use of the slang expression “goon squad,” which means a group of criminals hired and used to do ruthless acts. The fansubber opted for this strategy to avoid translating the slang expression as it carries particularities that cannot be rendered due to the limitation of space.

Proper nouns can form a difficulty in translation, especially when they refer to the actions of the referent. The proper noun in example 6, “Wesley Snipes,” is an actor of action movies in which he is normally the hero. The fansubber used the strategy of transposition to indicate the heroism of the actor instead of just mentioning his name, thus disambiguating the utterance.

Idiomatic expressions tend to be an obstacle in translation. In subtitling, we have to add to that other technical constraints. The idiom used in the seventh example, “to drive Miss Daisy,” is referring to a movie in the late 1980s. The plot of the movie is about an elderly lady who wants the driver to drive very slowly. There is no possible way for the fansubber to explain the metaphorical meaning of the utterance due to space and time limitations. Thus, he used the transposition strategy.

Explicitation

The incidents of this domestication strategy in the movies are 187. It was used in all types of culture-bound expressions.

Table 9 provides some examples on the explicitation strategy used in the movie sequel with back translation.

Table 9: Explicitation strategy examples

No.	Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation
8	They know that we're here -This is f**ked.	يعرفون اننا هنا , هذا سيئ.	They know that we're here – This is bad.
9	Goddamn.	كارثة.	A disaster.
10	I bring you in, to consult, and you go cowboy on me.	... ادخلتك بصفة استشارية لكنك عصيت اوامري	I bring you in, to consult, and you disobeyed my orders.
11	This is real cop stuff, okay? This is not Charlie's Angels	. هذه ليست لعبة , ولا يجب ان تخاطري ابدا	This is not a game, and you should not risk yourself.
12	Her rocker's gone.	فقدت صوابها.	She lost her mind.

Mastering the explicitation strategy is of great importance. It focuses on the underlying meaning and it is appropriate for subtitling culture-bound expressions.

In example 8, and as previously clarified, swearing functions are vital for the rendering process. The meaning denoted by the swearing is what the fansubber rendered.

The offensiveness of the religious remark “goddamn,” in example 9, was neutralized by the use of this strategy. The fansubber opted for the intended meaning according to the context.

The slang expression in example 10 relates to going against the rules. The best strategy to render this expression is explicitation.

Proper nouns can indicate an implicit meaning which cannot be recognized by the TL audience. The proper noun in example 11 is referring to the movie *Charlie's Angels* in which three young women fight crime and do risky tasks for a guy called Charlie. The indication in the sentence is that the conversation is made between a cop and a lady who is putting herself in a risky situation.

The idiomatic expression in example 12 is an alteration of the idiom “go off one's rocker,” which means to become mentally unsound or foolish.

The fansubber utilized this strategy remarkably. He had overcome the obstacle of swearing inappropriateness by using explicitation. The context is very important while translating. Alwan marked the context as one of the factors determining the translation strategy. This led to a good translation of the utterance. Example 10 sheds light on the strength of the fansubber in translating slang expressions. He rendered the meaning of the expression accurately. In the case of proper nouns, it is important to differentiate between a normal noun and an implicit noun. Abdelaal (6) pointed out that explicitation “occurs for the purpose of rendering some implicit meaning explicit.” In the case of idioms, the best strategy to opt for is explicitation. In light of the above, this strategy was used accurately by the fansubber.

Loanwords

This foreignization strategy is used only twice. In subtitling, this strategy is opted for due to technical or cultural constraints. The two incidents of the use of loanwords in which the fansubber used this strategy are listed in Table 10.

Calques

This foreignization strategy was used in 61 incidents. In the case of culture-bound expressions, using calques brings the TL audience closer to the source culture.

Table 11 shows some examples of calques in the movies.

As far as the translation strategies used in this piece of research, we found them consistent with the research findings obtained in previous studies. Antonini concluded that the dialogue is reduced in subtitles. This feature is due to the time needed for the viewers to read and focus on the screen. Thus, the loss of some parts of dialogue is inevitable. This is due to the omission strategy which has been investigated and confirmed in the current research findings.

Table 10: Loanword strategy examples

No.	Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation
13	– Big cojon*s too.	و تستلزم “كوهوناس”.	It needs Kohonas
14	What the f**k is all this? Looks like Beirut.	ما هذا، كأننا في بيروت.	What is all this? Looks like Beirut.

Table 11: Calque strategy examples

No.	Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation
15	Should I scr*w your young wife?	ايجب ان اضاع زوجتك الشابة	Should I sleep with your young wife?
16	You look like Jesus.	تبدو مثل "يسوع"	You look like Jesus.
17	Probably hook up with a lot of cute guys.	لا بد انك عاشرت اوسم الرجال	Probably slept with the cutest guys.
18	That is Scarface limping around in there.	انه المشطوب يعرج في الداخل.	That is the scarified limping around in there.

On the use and importance of the exploitation strategy in subtitling, our findings lend support to those of Alsharhan (20) who pointed out that one of the roles of explicitation “entails replacing a slang or made-up words in the ST with the intended meaning in the TT.”

In their study of the subtitling strategies of swear words and taboo expressions in the movie *Training Day*, Abdelaal and Al Sarhani (1) argued that “Two of the most common strategies were found to be translating the swear and taboo words euphemistically, and by omission.”

In the same vein, Almijrab (25) stated that to elicit the translation of taboo words from English taboo words into Arabic “the translator may use four strategies: (i) censorship, (ii) substitution, (iii) rendering taboo for taboo, and (iv) applying euphemism.” Incidentally, the term censorship here is used as the equivalent of omission, where the translator tends to omit the SL taboo.

Functions of Swear Words

As indicated above, swearing has three main functions, namely slot filler, standalone, and replacive.

Slot Filler

As clarified by Ljung, this type of swearing functions as noun support, emphasis, anaphoric use of epithets, modal adverbial, adjectives of dislike, and adverbial/adjectival intensifiers. With reference to Table 5, on swear word frequencies and functions, only four swear words in the movies are slot fillers.

Table 12 shows some examples of the four swear words of this function.

In Table 12, the swearing functions are emphasis, adjectives of dislike, anaphoric use of epithets, and noun support. The frequency of these swear words is 164 incidents, which equals more than 25% of all swearing expressions.

Almost 88% of the slot fillers are omitted because, due to the function of slot fillers, the connotative function in the SL is not maintained in the TL.

Table 12: Slot filler – swearing

Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation	Function
This sh*t's got to stop.	يجب وضع حد لهذا.	This should be stopped	Emphasis
That attract f**king attention.	تجذب الانظارا!	It attracts attention	Adjective of dislike
Yeah, his a*s bleeds too.	و هو ايضا ينزف	He is bleeding, too.	Anaphoric use of epithets
Get your b*tch hands off.	لا تلمسني	Don't touch me	Noun support

Table 13: Standalone – swearing

Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation	Function
Johnny Tapia. Sh*t.	"جونى تايبا" سحقا.	Jonny Tapia, damn!	Expletive interjection
I love You, man. – F**k You, Marcus.	. احبك يا رجل -. واللعة عليك يا ماركوس -	I like you, man. Damn you, Marcus.	Curse
Your country, my a*s!	! - بنس بلادك	What a wretched country of yours.	Emphatic denial
I'm gonna kill you, mother f**ker!	! ساقطك ايها السافل	I will kill you, bastard!	Name-calling
- Freeze, b*tch!	. لا تتحركى	Don't move!	Expletive interjection
This is bullsh*t.	. هذا هراء	This is bullshit	Expletive interjection
Should I scr*w your young wife...	ايجب ان اض*جع زوجتك الشابة	Should I sleep with your young wife?	Ritual insult
Not enough s*x	قلة الج*س؟	Lack of sex.	Ritual insults
What you got, d*ckhead?	ماذا وجدت ايها الاخرق؟	What did you find, idiot?	Unfriendly suggestion
Neither one of my b*lls wanna be here with your stupid a*s.	لست مستقلا لكون معك ايها الغبي	I am not dying to be with you, idiot.	Ritual insult
Why you going home? You got shot in your leg, your d*ck don't work.	. عائد ل ترى زوجتك ؟ لا اعتقد ان التك تعمل	Are you back to see your wife? I don't think your sex organ is working.	Ritual insult
Big coj*nes too	" و تستلزم " كوهوناس	You need the guts.	Ritual insult
There's a papa rat hu*ping the sh*t out of this mama rat.	. هناك جرد ذكر يعاشر انثى الجرد	There is a male rat having sex with a female rat.	Ritual insult
Don't even breathe, you kn*cklehead.	. امتنع حتى عن التنفس	You should even stop breathing.	Name-calling
King D*ng-a-l*ng.	. ملك الج*س	King of sex.	Unfriendly suggestion

Standalone

According to Ljung, this typology of swearing includes the following functions: oaths, expletive interjections, curses, emphatic denial, name-calling, ritual insults, and unfriendly suggestions. In these movies, 15 swear words were categorized as having a standalone function.

Table 13 shows examples of the 15 swear words of this function.

The frequency of these swear words is 303 incidents, which equals more than 47% of all swear words in the series. The fansubber used the strategy of transposition to render 55% of the standalone functions of swearing. This is because the standalone functions, expletive interjection, curse, emphatic denial, name-calling, ritual insult, and unfriendly suggestions are used alone. Thus, the movie viewer listened to the dialogue and that part of the dialogue needed to be rendered.

Replacive

This category of swearing functions as a replacement for a lexical item. In the movies, six swear words used this function. According to Ljung (1), "understanding the illocutionary force of a swear word depends on linguistic and situational factors as well as the context of the utterance." This suggests that the intended force of an utterance is not clear enough as it depends on the intention of the speaker. Table 14 shows examples of the six swear words of this function whose illocutionary function is not well defined, as it conveys a multiple/context-based function.

Table 14: Replative – swearing

Source text	Arabic translation	Back translation	Function
If I was, I'd change the drapes in this motherf**ker.	لو كنت مثليا , لكنت غيرت الستائر هنا.	If I were gay, I would change the curtains here.	Replative
It's Mama's, and it's a sh*t hole built a f**king million years ago.	انه لامى. وهو منزل تم بناءه منذ مليون سنة	It is my mother's. It is a house that was built million years ago.	Replative

The number of incidents of these swearing words is 169. The percentage of this function is more than 26%. It is quite obvious that in the movie the most frequently used strategy to render replative swearing was omission with 64%. In our opinion, the excessive use of the strategy of omission may not be the best or ideal technique in translation. Instead, we recommend using the actual entity or referent for rendering TL meaning.

Discussion of Results

This research used a qualitative and quantitative approach. First, the taxonomy of Diaz-Cintas and Remael was applied to identify the subtitling strategies for translating culture-bound expressions. In addition, this research inspected the connotative functions of swearing words used in the movies by applying the swearing typology presented by Ljung.

With the help of corpus-based analysis, frequency lists were made for each expression of the five types of culture-bound expressions. The dominant kind of expression was swearing. Swear words hold a connotative meaning, which is why a subtitler needs to be careful when dealing with these expressions.

With regard to research question 1: What are the strategies used by subtitlers to render the TL equivalent of swearing words? The results showed that the domestication strategies used in the movies are omission 37.3%, transposition 29.06%, explicitation 24.74%, calques 7.98%, lexical creation 0.52%, loanwords 0.26%, and compensation 0.13%. Two of the strategies were not used, namely substitution and addition. As the percentages show, the omission strategy was used in more than a third of the culture-bound expressions. The fansubber resorted to this strategy as an escape, thus affecting the meaning and leading to a poor translation. Technical and cultural constraints justified the use of omission in a small number of cases. Nevertheless, using this strategy requires a more profound knowledge of the linguistic elements and their connotative functions in order to compensate for the loss affected by the act of deletion.

As for research question 2: Were the connotative functions of swear words in the movies maintained in the translation? The results showed that, under the first category of slot fillers, the fansubber omitted most of the expressions under this function. However, in the second type, standalone function, the fansubber used transposition, explicitation, calques, loanwords, and omission. In the third function, replative swearing, the strategy of omission was used along with explicitation, transposition, and calques.

The most frequently used function of swearing is standalone. Slot fillers and replative swearing were almost the same in their frequency of occurrence. The functions of swearing shall not be neglected as mistranslating the functions leads to a distortion of the utterances.

To sum up, the fansubber used the foreignization strategies of calques and loanwords sporadically. The domestication strategies, such as explicitation, compensation, and transposition, were utilized differently. Other strategies, such as omission and lexical creation, were wrongly used.

The research also suggested that many factors could affect the choice of a subtitling strategy, such as the limitation of time and space and the adherence of the subtitler to cultural constraints. For example, omission affects utterances due to what Matkivska explained as the synchronism of the characteristic, which entails delivering the meaning of the whole audiovisual product within the technical constraints.

Most subtitlers think that, due to the inappropriateness of swearing in conservative Arab societies, they are entitled to use the omission strategy.

As for the standalone function, this function is usually uttered alone. This makes it unlikely to be omitted. In the cases here, the fansubber used transposition to render almost 55% of the incidents.

Replacive swearing plays a role in building the context by replacing a semantic element in the sentence. The omission strategy was used in almost 46% of the incidents, resulting in incongruity in the context. Nevertheless, the percentage of explicitation is almost 39%. Other strategies are: transposition (14%) and clagues (6%).

Our findings lend support to those of Koponen (1), reporting that, "The most common strategy was leaving the swear word out, as, on average, nearly half of the swear words found in the movie were left out in the subtitles. The second most common strategy was, indeed, toning down the swear word." Adequate strategies to opt for when rendering swearing words are transposition and explicitation. In transposition, the subtitler opts for a neutral expression to replace the source text expression. As for explicitation, it opts for the semantic element of the expression. Both can lead to an absorbable result. Omission can be resorted to if the aforementioned two strategies cannot be implemented. The last strategies to approach are those of loan and calque.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of the current research, the results, and the discussion have most succinctly shown how fansubs and fansubbers play a vital role in the translation of culture-bound expression, especially those of swear words and taboos.

This study has investigated the strategies used by a fansubber to subtitle the culture-bound expressions in the *Bad Boys* in the modern American action/comedy genre. The culture-bound expressions were of five categories: swearing, religious remarks, slang expressions, proper nouns, and idioms.

While the research findings obtained in the present study have been aligned with the research problem and research questions, there have been some limitations and recommendations arising from those limitations. The study was based on fansubbing, as there is limited access to professional subtitling for these movies. Future research can investigate the norms of professional subtitling.

Although the data investigated are the fansubs of the *Bad Boys* trilogy that exists firmly in the action/comedy genre, it does not necessarily represent the entire genre. Other movies of the genre can offer good sources of data for further research using different language pairs. The analysis of larger chunks of data may even lead to identifying certain norms of fansubbing.

To conclude, the current research provides some implications and recommendations for translators when handling culture-bound expressions. Insofar as it has shed light on the typology of swearing and its functional connotations, additional research in this direction will be of great help to translators, researchers, students of translation, and translation training programs.

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