A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF SUBTITLING RELIGIOUS WORDS INTO ARABIC

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Abstract –

Hollywood films are produced in an open and liberal context, and when subtitling for a more conservative and closed society such as an Arabic society, religious words can pose a thorny challenge for subtitlers. Using a corpus of 90 Hollywood films released between 2000 and 2018, and applying insights from Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury, 1995, 2012) and the dichotomy of domestication and foreignization, this paper investigates three main research questions: (1) What are the dominant religious terms and functions in the English subtitles? , (2) What are the dominant translation strategies used in the translation of religious words?, (3) Do these strategies tend to be SL-oriented or TL-oriented (domesticating or foreignising)?

To answer the research questions above, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the corpus is conducted, in which the researcher adopts a self-designed, parallel, aligned corpus of ninety films and their Arabic subtitles. A quantitative analysis is performed to compare the frequencies and distribution of religious words, their functions, and the translation strategies employed by the subtitlers of ninety films, with the aim of identifying similarities or differences in addition to identifying the impact of functions of religious terms on the use of subtitling strategies. Based on the quantitative analysis, a qualitative analysis is performed to identify any translational patterns in Arabic translations of religious words and the possible reasons for subtitlers' choices. The results show that the function of religious words has a strong influence on the choice of subtitling strategies. Also , it is found that foreignization strategies are applied in about two-thirds of total occurrences of religious words.

Keywords - Religious Terms, Subtitling, Audiovisual Translation, Modern Standard Arabic, Subtitling Strategies, English-Arabic Subtitling.