English Translation of Verbal Humour in Egyptian Comedy Films

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Abstract

Humour is deeply rooted in culture and may differ remarkably across societies. Translating humour interlingually necessitates navigating cultural variations and references, mainly because humour often relies on language-specific elements such as puns, idiomatic expressions and wordplay. Translating these linguistic features while preserving the comedic effect can be particularly challenging. This study investigates the complexity of translating humour that depends on a combination of both cultural and linguistic elements involving play with words and sounds from the Egyptian Arabic vernacular into English. To explore this area, the researchers examine three films in which humour is deemed by viewers as unique. The verbal humour investigated depends heavily on the replacement of words and sounds in a vast array of expressions that include puns, irony, jokes, spoonerisms, malapropisms, collocations, and proverbs. The results of the analysis of 34 examples extracted from the three films demonstrate that the translators of the films rejected several puns in the sense that they disregarded the translation of most puns, while resorting to communicative translation with some other puns. However, with other linguistic humorous devices such as malapropisms, irony, jokes, and spoonerisms, the translator used strategies including explicitation, transposition, literal translation (calque), and omission.

Keywords: verbal humour, interlingual translation, translation strategies

1. Introduction

Interlingual translation, the process of translating a text from one language into another, often involves a certain degree of loss in the intended meaning or message of the source text (Weld-Ali, Obeidat, & Haider, 2023). Venuti (2002) posits that translated texts suffer a degree of loss in either form or meaning, and sometimes both. This assertion becomes more even relevant when the text is replete with culture-bound terms and expressions. In such cases, the translation process transcends mere linguistics and becomes a cultural transfer of references from the source culture to equivalent ones in the target language.

Translating texts that are closely tied to their producing culture requires an awareness of both the source culture and the culture of the target language (Haider, Saideen, & Hussein, 2023). A proficient translator must be mindful of the culture-bound items, such as foods, attire, social occasions, social practices, and jobs, as well as linguistic expressions like collocations, proverbs, metaphors, and humorous expressions present in the source text. The goal is to find suitable translations that preserve the source culture or at least convey an equivalent meaning. This task becomes particularly challenging when dealing with texts rich in cultural references, and even more so when humorous expressions like jokes, irony, and puns are involved (Haider & Al-Abbas, 2022).

The challenge of interlingual translation, especially in the context of audio-visual translation (AVT), becomes even more complex due to technical constraints (Haider & Hussein, 2022; Jarrah, Haider, & Al-Salman, 2023). Audio-visual (AV) content, such as films, is typically either subtitled or dubbed when translated for foreign audiences (Alrousan & Haider, 2022; Samha, Haider, & Hussein, 2023). However, the direction of translation, whether from Arabic into English or vice versa, can significantly impact the process. This study focuses on the translation of humour in Egyptian comedy films that are originally in the Egyptian Arabic vernacular (EV) and subtitled in English on Netflix, an international online streaming service.

The chosen films feature the renowned Egyptian actor, Mohammad Saad, known across the Arab world for his unique sense of humor, primarily conveyed through wordplay, funny acrobatic body language, and facial expressions. In many of his comedic roles, Saad tends to cleverly manipulate famous sayings and expressions, transforming them into humorous variations. His distinctive style, characterized by playing with words, endears him to audiences, making his films particularly engaging.

Translating Saad's verbal humour poses a considerable challenge, necessitating a careful consideration of the context in which it is delivered. Egyptian comedy films enjoy substantial popularity in Egypt and the Arab world, where the Egyptian Vernacular (EV) dialect is well-suited for comedic purposes. However, when EV is translated into another language or vernacular for comedic films, the impact may differ, potentially leading to creative loss. During the coronavirus outbreak, Netflix experimented with using Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in subtitles for certain Egyptian films to make them comprehensible to Arabic speakers from various dialect backgrounds.

While several researchers have addressed the translation of humour in the context of English and Arabic, there is a noticeable gap in research when it comes to AV content translated from EV into English. This study aims to fill this void by exploring the intricacies and

strategies employed in translating humorous expressions from EV to English. The findings of this research will benefit translation practitioners, companies specializing in subtitling, and researchers, providing valuable guidelines for dealing with the complexity of humour in the context of AVT, specifically subtitling.

In summary, this study delves into the process of translating humour in Egyptian comedy films from EV into English subtitles on Netflix. The unique comedic style of Saad presents challenges for translators, requiring a nuanced approach that considers the cultural context in which humour is expressed. By addressing the complexities of subtitling humorous expressions, this research aims to enhance the understanding and application of AVT strategies in the translation of culturally rich content.

2. Review of Theoretical Literature

This section discusses the intricacies and complexities of translating humour in existing literature. Furthermore, it reviews some empirical studies relevant to the translation of humour interlingually and intralingually in specific contexts.

2.1 Translation of Humour

The process of translation involves conversion and recreation of a text while preserving its original meaning and key messages. Theoretically, a successful translation ought to convey to the reader the same idea the original would convey to a native speaker. According to Nida (2001), a successful translation is determined by the recipient's response, which must then be contrasted to how the recipient would have responded had the message been delivered in its original context. According to Jakobson (2000), translation is more than just changing symbols into another language; it is a process of information substitution.

However, in this process of substitution, and when humour is involved, Mart ńez-Sierra (2006) argues, both the quantity and the quality of the core material might be lost, the thing that results in regarding humour as challenging to translate. The apparent difficulty with translating humour may be that language and culture define humour in all of its manifestations, including jokes, wordplay, puns, and idioms. Chiaro (2010) asserts that "verbal humour" which is of concern in this study "travels badly" (p.1). In other words, since humorous expressions are deeply rooted in the cultures of the geographical spaces where they are produced, it is mostly a challenging task to render them while successfully obtaining the anticipated reaction of the audience of the target (translated) humour, which should ideally be similar to the reaction of the source humour audience.

The complexity of translating verbal humour arises from the use of wordplay and puns that rely on both the linguistic play and the culture associated with the source text/language. Chiaro explains that because verbal humour is often produced utilising the cultural references or items that are mostly peculiar to the culture they belong to, transferring such humour across geo-cultural boundaries may result in loss of the humorous effect in the target "location". In the context of this study, the verbal humour produced by Saad in his films heavily rely on different types of puns, wordplay, jokes, irony, and swearwords, which virtually refer to events, customs, traditions, and occasions that are typical of the Arabic Egyptian culture with which the Arab audience are familiar. The challenge that translators are faced with in this situation is to render similar humorous effect and laughter in the target English text and culture when translating the various types of Saad's verbal humour.

When engaged in the translation of Egyptian comedy films into a foreign language, mainly English which is the target language of concern in this study, one has to be aware that most humorous expressions have connotative and implicit meanings, which requires translators to have deep knowledge of the Egyptian culture on the one hand and the anglophone, western culture on the other. Such knowledge enables translators of these films to deliver the meaning accurately to the audience of the target text. Furthermore, jokes, wordplay, puns, collocations, and proverbs need particular strategies to be rendered appropriately.

2.2 Review of Empirical Studies

In this review, the researchers discuss a few of the studies that explored humour in both AV and non-AV texts in the context of translation. In these empirical studies, both types of subtitling, interlingual, and intralingual (translation within the same language) are investigated.

Al-Abbas and Haider (2021) investigated how the deaf and hard-of-hearing audience received the service of adding subtitles or captions for the deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers in comedy films. The film's screenplay in the EV was qualitatively compared to the Netflix MSA subtitles. A 12-item questionnaire with four components was given to a sample group of 40 deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who were invited to watch an Egyptian comedy with MSA subtitles. The qualitative findings revealed that more than half of the participants could better understand the various aspects of the film thanks to the MSA subtitles' additional information, which included speaker tags, sound effects, and other non-linguistic qualities. The investigation also revealed that, in some instances, translating dialectal idioms and deliberate verbal errors into MSA appeared strange and less entertaining.

Elayyan and Fejzic's (2021) study investigated Arabic fansubbing of Western stand-up comedy on YouTube, focusing on how fansubtitlers handle cultural references. Analysing fifteen clips, they found out that literal translation is a common challenge. To enhance viewers' engagement, they suggested retaining the original reference alongside a brief explanation. Additionally, the study highlighted how fansubtitlers are reshaping translation by using visuals and contributing to the global spread of Western culture while intertwining it with local discussions on politics, social norms, and ethics. These clips become dynamic platforms for viewers to explore identity and their place in the world. In summary, their study offered a comprehensive examination of Arabic fansubbing in Western stand-up comedy, addressing translation techniques, challenges, and the transformative impact of fansubbers on global and local cultural discourse.

Tuzzikriah and Ardi (2018) conducted a study to determine the students' perception of the problem in translating humorous texts. Descriptive research described the perception of students' problems in translating humorous texts. Data were collected through questionnaires. The researchers used the Likert scale to calculate the perception in analysing the data. The result showed that there are several students' perceptions of the problems in translating a humorous text, "such as experience in translating humor text, knowing translation risk, the tools in translating text, the time needed to translate, the way of translating text, the level of difficulty in translating text, and the source of difficulty in translating text" (p.326).

Harrison's study, (2013), explored the intricate relationship between translation, humour, and culture. Within this study, the author delved into the challenges and complexities of translating humour, particularly from English into Spanish, using the popular British comedy sketch show, Little Britain, as a case study. Harrison emphasized how humour is deeply intertwined with cultural nuances and context, making it a formidable task for translators to convey comedic elements effectively across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The study underscored the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in the translation process, as well as the need for creative strategies to preserve the comedic impact of the original content while adapting it for a different audience. Harrison's examination of this interplay between translation, humour, and culture served as a valuable foundation for understanding the difficulties and strategies involved in translating humour across languages.

Rahmawati (2013) examined the intricate challenge of translating verbal humour within audiovisual (AV) content, particularly subtitling the English animated film Rio in Indonesian. The study categorized three primary types of verbal humour in the animated film, namely wordplay, allusion, and verbal irony, with allusion being the most frequently used to amuse the audience. The research identified eight subtitling strategies employed in translating verbal humour dialogues and assessed their acceptability through a questionnaire, revealing that 27 out of 48 data points are considered acceptable. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, drawing from theories by Spanakaki (2007) on verbal humour and Gottlieb (2001) on subtitling strategies. In conclusion, the research offered valuable insights into the translation of verbal humour in the animated film Rio, categorized humour types, evaluated subtitling strategies, and indicated that the overall quality of verbal humour translation is deemed satisfactory.

3. Methodology

This study examines the types of verbal humour including puns, malapropism, insults, wordplay, jokes, irony, spoonerism, swear words, proverbs, and collocations used by Saad in the three selected films for this piece of research. The investigation of these types of verbal humour casts light on the difficulty of translating Saad's types of verbal humour, especially when 'play' with words and/or sounds is involved in the production of humour on his part. To illustrate the types of verbal humour produced by Saad in these three films, the researchers include a table of these types and their frequency in the investigated films.

3.1 The Comedy Films Investigated

Egyptian comedies, in particular, have large audiences not only in Egypt but also throughout the Arab world in the context of commercial films, which are primarily made in Egypt. The fact that Egyptians are referred to as "awlad al-Nukta" or "Sons of the Jokes" (Dozio, 2021) makes their vernacular ideal for comedic purposes in films. The audience may not respond to comedy films using the Egyptian dialect in the same way if it is translated into another language or dialect. The work could lose many creative aspects, as a result – leaving much to be desired. Von Stackelberg (1988, pp. 12–13) asserts that the translation must ensure "comical writing remains comical writing in translation just as a tragic text must remain tragic." As a result, even if the essence of translation is to transmit meaning, it is desirable to maintain the style used in the original text.

Saad is an Egyptian actor. His artistic career began with a small role in the series The Nile Still Flows, followed by several minor roles in several films, including The Road to Eilat, in addition to the series Who Doesn't Love Fatma? But his real breakthrough was through the character of El Lembi (2002). Saad's roles rolled after depending on an eccentric character that he created himself with strange names like Katkut, Booha, Karkar, Puskas, and many others. In this study, the researcher discusses the translation strategies employed to translate the expressions of humour in Saad`s films Karkar, Katkut, and Booha as a case study. However, before delving into the discussion of the translation strategies, it would be constructive to give a synopsis of the case study films.

The film Karkar revolves around a wealthy young man, Karkar, who survives electrocution but is left brain-damaged. His uncle Assem (played by Hassan Hosni) seeks to con him by marrying him to a fake relative, and so does his aunt Zahira (played by Ragaa Al-Jeddawy). Together they form one front against Karkar, that is when the struggle between good and evil emerges. The film was written by Ahmed Abdullah and directed by Ali Ragab. The characters in the film's story are as follows: Inas al-Najjar, Majed Abdulaziz, Lotfy Labib, Mustafa Abbas, Alaa Morsy, Mahmoud Al Sherbini, and Ismail Farghaly.

In the film Katkout, which is also named after the main character – played by Saad, the plot revolves around Katkout, who is employed by security services in Egypt for a secret mission. The film starts with Katkout preparing to be killed by another family in Upper Egypt for some absurd, unclear reason that neither Katkout nor the audience can fully comprehend. Later on, he is rescued by the police, who transports him to Cairo in order to prepare him for a mission involving national security. It turns out that Katkout possesses an uncanny physical resemblance to a terrorist named Youssef Khoury, who was preparing for a terrorist attack before our always dependable police forces haunted him down. After being set up for the assignment, we learn that a crooked terrorist organization of unidentifiable nationality is preparing to bomb Egypt's subway.

The third film examined in this study is Booha, which is another film that was named after the character played by Saad. In this film, Booha, who is a butcher coming from the countryside to Cairo to find the man whom his late father left his money with, gets tangled in the big city, finds love with Kouta (played by Maie Esseddin), and gets exploited by Farag (played by Hassan Hosni).

3.2 Data Collection and Corpus Size

The humorous expressions were compiled from the three films starring Mohammad Saad. These expressions were all produced by Saad in his dialogue with the characters in the three films. The researcher selected 63 expressions. Table 1 shows the size of the investigated corpus.

Table 1. Type and Number of Humorous Expressions Extracted from the Films

Categories of Humour	No. of frequency
Puns	5
Malapropism	4
Insults	6
Wordplay	10
Swear Words	11
Jokes	7
Spoonerisms	5
Irony	9
Collocation	3
Proverb	3
Total	63

The data of this study was gathered from subtitles of three of Saad's comedy films. The subtitles investigated in this study are based on a translation from (www.subscene.com) fansub or Netflix.

In this part, the researchers analyse 35 humorous expressions. First, the researchers watched the films in Arabic with their English translation. Then, they transcribed the humorous English expressions and wrote them down. Finally, humorous expressions and translation incidents were analysed manually to inspect how these expressions were rendered.

4. Analysis and Findings

EV is an Arabic variety that is rich in humorous expressions, metaphors, collocations, and proverbs. Regardless of their educational level, people from different social classes use these expressions without paying attention to their origin or being aware of their source. Such expressions have various indications; some are used to express remorse, some are used to show humour, some are used during the disaster, and others are for appeal. Moreover, many proverbs are known and used in the Arab world. In this study, the tokens that are collected from Saad's films and seem to be humorous are offered and analysed. Much of the collected tokens are puns, more specifically paronymic puns, which involve phonological processes that changes the shape of the source word. Hence, the majority of the analysis will be dedicated to the target cases of pun. Many swear words are also collected and analysed.

4.1 Translation of Pun

4.1.1 Accepting Pun (Quasi-Translation of Pun)

As shown in Table 2, the excerpt from the Egyptian film *Booha* embeds more than one instance of pun.

Table 2. Subtitling الشرت في البسين Ɂil-ʃurt fi-l-bisiin

Arabic Token	Subtitling
انت قطعتلي الشرت فالبسين الشرطة فالكمين الشك في الكمين	You have confirmed my "bouts" my scouts I confirmed my doubts my "bouts"

First, it should be highlighted that this conversational turn, which is in essence figurative, is established on the Arabic idiomatic expressions in (1) below. In the scene, the interlocutors are inspecting a case and trying to understand the plot. The inspector provides a plausible scenario. At that moment, Booha, the main character, desires to say that the inspector removes all the doubts and makes all the bits and pieces of the plot clear.

(1) يقطع الشك في اليقين

jaqtˤaʕ   *Ɂal-ʃakk*   *b-il-jaqiin*

cut.3SG.M   DEF-doubt   BY-DEF-certainty

Meaningful translation: 'He removes all doubts.'

On this basis, the content of the conversational turn in Table 2 is a kind of wordplay of this idiomatic expression. In other words, the main actor wants to show that he has just realized the plot, yet in a funny way. Therefore, he resorts to *paronymy*, which is one of the main types of pun wherein the speaker manipulates the phonetic component of the source word. The resulting word could be the imperfect

shape of this source word or a totally new word. To illustrate, consider paronymic pairs in Table 3 that are taken from the first line in Table 2. The main actor manipulates the phonetic components of the source words (the 1ˢᵗ sign) and utter phonetically similar existing words in Arabic. The first word is manipulated by changing the rhyme of the word (i.e., *kk > rt*), whereas the second word is manipulated by entirely changing the first syllable and keeping the rhyme of the second syllable, which is *-iin*.

Table 3. The paronymic pairs in الشرت في البسين *ʔil-ʃurt fi-l-bisiin*

The 1ˢᵗ sign of paronymy	The 2ⁿᵈ sign of paronymy
The source word	The substitute/the paronym
الشك DEF-doubt	الشرت DEF-shorts
يقين certainty	بسين swimming pool

However, they are not mere manipulations. The paronyms *ʔiʃ-ʃurt* and *bisiim* are creative and promote humour. They create the image of *cutting the thong* (that holds the short up) *in a swimming pool*. Although this image is a bit embarrassing, it promotes humour. Unexpectedly, the source of humour in these puns also springs from the lack of ties between the images and signs of pun (i.e., lack of contextual relations). Specifically, the image of *two persons inspecting the plot of a case* is by no means related to the image of *cutting the thong in a swimming pool*. This lack of contextual ties between the first image (the 1ˢᵗ sign) and the second image (the 2ⁿᵈ sign) results in strangeness. In other words, some viewers may find it weird and cannot find the connection between the two images (or signs). This strangeness, in turn, will certainly make the process of rendering this pun as it is to the target language (e.g., English) very difficult or even impossible. The foreign (English) viewers will find it non-humorous.

Aleksandrova (2019) suggests that translating pun is a cognitive game. Particularly, a translator may accept the game of translating pun or rejecting it. The acceptance of pun can have one of the following shapes: (1) Free Translation and (2) Quasi-translation. The former is the replacement of the original signs with signs from the target language, whereas the latter is the replacement of one of the signs with one from the target language. Let us turn back to the English translation in Table 2. It is clear that the translator accepts translating the pun by quasi-translation. S/he preserves the Arabic source of the pun by literally translating شك to doubt. As for the 2ⁿᵈ sign of the Arabic pun شرت, it has been replaced with *bouts* and *scouts*. This means that the translator adds two (not one) paronymic words for the English word *doubt*, which is the translation of شك, to raise a sense of humour. *Scouts* is close in meaning to *doubt(s)*, whereas *bouts*, which could be defined as a short period of intense activity of a specified kind, is not related to *doubt(s)* in meaning. This quasi-translation could promote some sense of humour, as the translator resorts to replace the paronym in Arabic with a paronym in English. However, the humorous image created in the source conversational turn (i.e., *the image of cutting the thong in the swimming pool*) is lost in the translation. This means that Quasi-translation, which indicates that the translator accepts the game of translating pun, is a good candidate to raise some (or even little) humorous effect in the target language. Regarding يقين and بيسين, the translator clearly rejects or ignores these signs of the pun. Again, this rejection results in losing the image of cutting the thong.

The previous discussion implies that translating a complex pun, such as the one in Table 3 (it consists of two pairs of signs (two puns)), is very difficult. More likely, the translator would not be able to transfer all the four signs or replace them with four new signs from the target language. Note that in this case, rejecting pun translation is also a possibility due to the level of difficulty and complexity of the pun.

Another pun that exists in the same conversational turn in Table 2 is الشرطة فالكمين. This is another complex pun. It consists of four signs as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The paronymic pairs in الشرطة فالكمين *ʔil-ʃurtˤi fi-l-kamiin*

The 1ˢᵗ sign of paronymy	The 2ⁿᵈ sign of paronymy
الشك DEF-doubt	الشرطة DEF-police
يقين certainty	كمين ambush

The source signs are the same ones used in the first complex pun. As for the second sign of the simple pun, the sign is substituted. Specifically, الشك is replaced with الشرطة and يقين is substituted with الكمين. The complex pun (the sum of the two simple puns) should be treated as a case of paronymy. The first pair of signs are less straightforward, i.e., شك is a monosyllabic word, whereas شرطة is disyllabic. Moreover, the only resemblance between them is the post-alveolar ش. Hence, they have the same onset, and therefore they may sound slightly alike. As for the second pair of puns, it is a more robust pair of paronymy, as يقين and كمين have much resemblance. The rhyme of the second syllable (the nucleus and coda) is exactly the same.

Again, how does the translator deal with this pair of paronymy? First, it should be highlighted that this pun is more relevant to the conversation and the context of inspecting a plot than the previous pun, as the signs of this pun are relevant to homeland security, namely *police* and *ambush*. On this basis, the selection of the English paronymic pair doubts and scouts makes sense and should promote sense of humour more than the first set of paronymy (i.e., *doubts* and *bouts*). This entails that the translator accepts the game of pun translation again by Quasi-translation. The translator keeps one of the signs of the original (Arabic) pun, and replaces the other with one from English, yet this replacement is logical and contextually very relevant, and therefore should promote humour.

4.1.2 Rejecting Pun (Literal Translation of Pun)

In this part, the researchers examine puns that are not translated (tokens that are not compensated in English by Quasi-translation or Free Translation). In other words, they are cases that assert that the translator my reject the cognitive game of pun translation (i.e., ignoring

rendering or replacing some or all of its humorous and figurative load). Similar to the previous conversation between the main character, who is working as a spy at the moment of talking, and the inspector, this conversational turn by Booha embeds more than one pun. The first pun, as shown in the first line of the Arabic token in Table 5, is a complex pun.

Table 5. Subtitling في السوف سيكليس

Arabic Token	Subtitling
في السوف سيكليس	"sof secrifs"
في الشوف شكري	Or is it chef shucrife it is
شفت شكري	

However, this complex pun is created based on a common English phrase (not Arabic), which is *top secret*. As seen in Table 6, this complex pun consists of 2 pairs of paronymy:

Table 6. The two paronymic pairs in في السوف سيكليس

The 1st sign of paronymy	The 2nd sign of paronymy
التوب DEF-secret	*Nonsensical* السوف
سيكريت secret	*Nonsensical* سيكليس

In this regard, an important cultural issue should be tackled. This issue is related to being well-educated. Typically, knowing English (and its skills especially speaking) is linked to being superior to the others (hearers). In the turn in Table 5, the phrase *top secret* is intensively and harmfully manipulated by Booha. At the outer level, this manipulation may indicate that the main character has low level of education. At the deeper level, it has figurative and humorous content. This token is a complex case of paronymy, as it involves many phonological processes, including but not limited to deletion, epenthesis and metathesis. As a result, the translation of this pun is expected to be rejected (or ignored) by the translator. This rejection comes in a form of direct transfer to the target language (let us say it is a kind of transliteration). However, it should be noted that it is clear that the translator could not accurately pick up the target words as pronounced by Booha. For example, *siklis* in the first line is transliterated as *secrifs*. This could indicate that the translator has a lot of trouble dealing not only at the figurative and humorous levels of the pun, but also at the perceptual level. Again, this is what makes the humour and the figurative language in the film *Booha* and all Saad's films hard to translate or compensate.

Likewise, the second line of the turn in Table 6 also contains another complex pun, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. The two paronymic pairs in الشوف شكري

The 1st sign of paronymy	The 2nd sign of paronymy
التوب DEF-secret	الشوف DEF-chef
سيكريت secret	شكري Shukri

These pairs are also very complex paronymic pairs, as they involve various phonological processes. Therefore, the source signs are very different from their paronymic counterparts, yet they can be easily identified as cases of paronymy by native speakers of Arabic (mainly Egyptian Arabic). Again, the translator ignores the pun translation. Nonetheless, the signs of the pun are not lost. This is because the source of the pun is basically English, namely top secret. This means that the literal translation of this complex pun unintentionally preserves the signs of the original pun. In other words, the English viewers will understand that Booha is manipulating the phonetic component of top secret in a humorous way. Note that the inspector corrects the pronunciation of this phrase. This correction will ensure that the English viewers will understand that Booha is missing its pronunciation. This example suggests that the rejection of pun translation by literal translation will not always miss the signs of the pun. They can be maintained, especially when the source pun is originally English (from the target language).

The last complex pun (four signs are included) in the conversational turn in Table 5 is listed in Table 8.

Table 8. The two paronymic pairs in شفت شكري

The 1st sign of paronymy	The 2nd sign of paronymy
التوب DEF-secret	شفت saw
سيكريت secret	شكري Shukri

These two paronymic pairs can also be figured out by English viewers for the same reason provided from the previous complex pun. Therefore, the rejection of pun translation by literal translation will not ruin the signs of the complex pun. Hence, it can be humorous for English viewers.

Another example of pun that involves literal translation (either by claque or transliteration (direct transfer)) is the pun that is found in the conversational turn in Table 9.

Table 9. Subtitling صفة الرحم

Arabic Token	Subtitling
بقى دي صفة الرحم	Is this how you treat your kin?

In this pun, صفة is the paronym of صلة, which is one of the components of the source of the pun. It involves the replacement of the l sound with the f sound. Note that both words exist in Arabic. The former means trait and the second means to strengthen the ties. On this basis, the source Arabic expression is صلة الرحم, which means strengthening the ties of kinship. However, what is the trigger of replacing the l sound with the f sound. It seems that there is no clear reason, even in Arabic. Therefore, not all Arab viewers will find this paronymy funny or

humorous. It is just a mere phonetic replacement. Regarding its English translation, the signs of this pun will also be hard to translate. The translator is expected to ignore the signs of this pun. As can be seen in the English translation, the target Arabic token is literally translated, and the signs of pun are lost (left untranslated or compensated). The translator presumably rejects the pun translation, as it is non-sensical in the source language.

The following tokens in Tables 10 to 16 are examples of puns that are ignored or rejected by the translator while translating the conversational turns to English. They are cases of paronymy. In Table 10, مرسح is the paronym of مسرح. It is formed by metathesis. In the English translation, the source token مرسح is translated literally (i.e., stage), yet the paronymy (and metathesis) is lost. Hence, the English translation has neither figurative nor humorous sense. This example emphasizes that the puns in Saad's films are mainly paronymic. More importantly, these paronyms are not derived on a logical or meaningful basis. This complicates the process rendering the signs of a paronymic pun to English or replacing one of its signs or both signs with a new pair.

Table 10. Subtitling الرجل على المرسح يغني اغنية تانية

Arabic Token	Subtitling
الراجل على المرسح يغني اغنية تانية	Can you tell that man on stage to sing another song

The pair in Table 11, which is derived by replacing the b sound in بكرا with the m sound in مكرا, is also paronymic. Again, no logical or meaningful reason for this substitution. Therefore, the translator ignores the signs of the paronymic pun by literal translation.

Table 11. Subtitling بص سعادتك من مكرا الصبح

Arabic Token	Subtitling
بص سعادتك من مكرا الصبح	Listen sir, tomorrow morning

In Table 12, the paronymic pun is derived by altering the q sound of فاقد in فاقد الذاكرة 'amnesiac' with the x of فاخد. Note that فاخد is not non-sensical in Arabic. It is an existing word in vernacular Arabic that is related to thigh. However, there is no logical connection between the meaning of losing (the memory) and thigh. This complicates the process of translating the signs of this pun to English.

Table 12. Subtitling ايه يعني فاخد الذاكرة

Arabic Token	Subtitling
ايه يعني فاخد الذاكرة	What do you mean? What does that mean, sir?

In Table 13, المافيوزو is the paronym of *mafia*. This source word is an international concept. Therefore, it will be understood by almost all audiences, such as the Arab and the English audiences. Again, this paronym has no logical or meaningful basis. It is just a non-sensical wordplay that promotes some sense of humour. The absence of a logical basis for the paronym will make many Arab viewers treat it as non-humorous. Concerning the English audience, it seems that they will understand the paronymy and may grasp the idea that the actor is trying to make fun by this wordplay. This entails that the rejection of pun translation by literal translation is not expected to result in losing the signs of the Arabic pun. To make sure whether they will perceive it as funny or not, this needs a perceptual study to explore the reactions of English viewers.

Table 13. Subtitling انا رجل وصلت لمكانة في المافيوزو

Arabic Token	Subtitling
انا رجل وصلت لمكانة في المافيوزو	I got into Guinness book of records
دخلت فيها موسوعة زينس	was so obvious

Likewise, the paronymy ززاغو in Table 14 is the product of phonologically manipulating ذكائه. Since the source word of this paronymy is an Arabic one, it is very likely that the translator will ignore it while translating the host text. Another reason why the translator will reject pun translation is the absence of a logical or meaningful (or even contextual) basis for this paronymy.

Table 14. Subtitling لازم الواحد يستخدم ززاغو

Arabic Token	Subtitling
لازم الواحد يستخدم ززاغو	I mean, use my brains

Although the paronymic pun in Table 15 has no logical or meaningful basis, the replacement of the sound b in البرمبة with tˤ of الطرمبة results in the use of an existing word in Arabic, which is الطرمبة 'water pump'. Yet the use of this word is not contextually driven. In other words, it is not triggered by the context. Thus, this example also asserts that the paronyms of Saad have no logical, meaningful or contextual bases. Therefore they are expected to be ignored by translators, as can be shown in the English subtitles in Table 15.

Table 15. Subtitling سبع الطرمبة

Arabic Token	Subtitling
سبع الطرمبة	Mr, lion heart!

The last token in this part is the paronymic pun in Table 16. In this pun, يا سميحة is the paronym of ياسمينة. Again, what is the reason behind changing the name of the original heroine in the tale with another name, keeping the first part of the name يا? The only possible interpretation is that the actor is making fun of the original name, which belongs to standard Arabic, with a name from vernacular Arabic. This could be funny to some Arabic viewers, but not all of them. Note that in the translation, the translator translates the wholistic meaning of the host text, omitting the names of the hero and the heroine of the tale. This omission means that the translator rejects pun translation.

Table 16. Subtitling يا سمحية

Arabic Token	Subtitling
هو انا بحكيلك حتوتة السيد حسن والاميرة يا سميحة	It's not like I 'am telling you a fairytale

In Table 17, حماتك is the paronym of حياتك. It is formed by replacing the j sound with m sound. Both words are existing words in Arabic, but what is the trigger of this paronym? No meaningful, logical or contextual motivation behind creating this paronym. Saad keeps using meaningfully, logically and contextually unmotivated paronyms. Therefore, the rejection of translating the signs of the pun is reasonable, as shown in the subtitles in Table 17.

Table 17. Subtitling *البقية في حماتك*

Arabic Token	Subtitling
البقية في حماتك	Your mother in low too

In Table 18, the non-sensical فركة is the paronym of بركة 'blessing'. It is formed by replacing the b sound with f. This phonological process, again, has not logical trigger, especially when we know that the resulting paronym has no clear meaning. This explains why the translator rejects the signs of the pun and translates the literal meanings of the host text.

Table 18. Subtitling "الايام مبقاش فيها "فركة

Arabic Token	Subtitling
"الايام مبقاش فيها "فركة	Time goes by so fast

The previous analyses indicate that the puns in Saad's films are mainly paronymic that are difficult or even impossible to render into English or to replace one or both of their signs. This is because mostly there is no logical or meaningful connection between the two signs of the paronymy. His paronymic pairs are mere manipulations of the phonetic components of the source signs. These non-sensical manipulations could be the reason why the translator abandons transferring or replacing the signs of the pun in English.

4.2 Malapropism

In this part, another type of wordplay in Saad's films is analysed, which is malapropism. This type of wordplay is the misuse of a word instead of the right word.

The first example of malapropism is the manipulation of the idiomatic expression in Table 19. The last word in سبق الاصرار والترصد, whose English idiomatic counterpart is premeditation and surveillance, is replaced with تردد. Note that this type of wordplay is very close to paronymic pun, as الترصد and التردد are phonologically related to each other. The sense of humour in this token is finding a word that opposes the meaning of the source word. The meaning of التردد 'hesitation' opposes the meaning of الترصد 'premeditate'. This replacement will create a meaningful controversy that Arab viewers can reinterpret as humorous content. In other words, how is it possible to commit a crime with hesitation and determination at the same time? As can be seen in the translation in Table 19, this meaningful controversy is absent. This entails that the translator ignores this figurative use of language by literally translating the direct meaning of the host text.

Table 19. Subtitling قتل مع سبق الاسراف والتردد

Arabic Token	Subtitling
قتل مع سبق الاسراف والتردد	This means premeditated murder

In Table 20, the actor is begging an actress to help him. Malapropism in this conversational turn is in the use of the word ظوافر instead of رموش 'eyelashes'. The link between these two words is that they are both body parts. One possible interpretation of this substitution is that Saad was making fun of the character's eyelashes, whose length looked like that of nails than lashed. Again, no effort is paid by the translator to deal with this figurative use of language, which should be funny and humorous. The translator explains the wholistic and direct meaning of the host text, ignoring the signs of malapropism.

Table 20. Subtitling ابوس ايديكي وظوافر عينيكي

Arabic Token	Subtitling
ابوس ايديكي وظوافر عينيكي	Please tell me, I beg you

4.3 Insult

Insults are also used in Saad's films as a device that may promote humour. To list some of these insults, consider the tokens provided in the following tables. As can be seen in the translation of the insult in Table 21, the translator uses the idiomatic expression that is equivalent to فاصل شحن in English, and therefore both the Arabic insult and its English translation should be humorous to Arab viewers and English viewers.

Table 21. Subtitling تقريبا فاصل شحن

Arabic Token	Subtitling
تقريبا فاصل شحن	His battery is dead

Concerning the insult in Table 22, part of it is literally translated. The humour in the Arabic source text is based on creating the image of swallowing the brain and the middle ear once somebody is smacked. This image is common in cartoons. Hence, the literal translation of swallowing the brain and the middle ear could be humorous to English viewers.

Table 22. Subtitling ابلعك نفوخك والاذن الوسطى

Arabic Token	Subtitling
ابلعك نفوخك والاذن الوسطى	You will sallow your own brain

In Table 23, the translation of the insult involves explicitation. The source of humour in this insult springs from the created strange image of gouging the eye by a crow. The universality of this image could be the reason behind being humorous to Arab and English viewers.

Table 23. Subtitling ربنا يبتليه بغراب اعور

Arabic Token	Subtitling
ربنا يبتليه بغراب اعور	I hope a crow gouges his eyes out!

As for the insult in Table 24, it is translated by transposition. The Arabic insult is replaced with an English counterpart. The effect of totally beating up a person is reflected in the English idiomatic translation. Yet, the image of blowing a body and then skinning, which should be the trigger of the sense of humour in the source text, is not transferred into English. Accordingly, the English translation is less humorous than the Arabic source text.

Table 24. Subtitling ربنا ينفخ فخاذكوا ويسلخها

Arabic Token	Subtitling
ربنا ينفخ فخاذكوا ويسلخها	May you be beaten to pulp!

In Table 25, the insult is in the image of having a hot mixture in the mouth while talking. This figurative and insulting image can be funny, as the speaker wants to describe how the other interlocuter is talking in a weird and confusing way. As shown in the translation, this funny image is lost, and the direct meaning of the source token is transferred to English.

Table 25. Subtitling ناقصين لبخة في الكلام

Arabic Token	Subtitling
ناقصين لبخة في الكلام	I need no more confusion

To wrap up, the insults collected from Saad's films assert that the actor tends to insult others by creating weird images, such as blowing and stripping the thighs. Since they are images that can be visualized by any viewer, whether Arab or non-Arab, it is plausible to say that the literal translation can mostly transfer the insult in a funny way to the target language.

4.4 Swear Words

Most of the swear words collected from Saad's films are literally translated. Note that Saad tends to use names of animals as swear words, especially *kalb* 'dog', which is in general used to mean despicable. Consider the tokens (Table 26 to Table 31) where the word *kalb* is repeatedly used. In Table 26, the swear word is a bit humorous, as the actor is talking about his sons whom he misses much. Thus, this swear word *klaab* 'dogs' to intensify the meaning of missing his sons. It intensely shows his great affection towards his sons. On this basis, this word comprises the meaning of missing the loved ones, the meaning of intensified affection and a bit of insult at the same time. In the English translation, it is clear that in most places in Britian and North America, the word dog is not used to insult. Therefore, the translator explicates the intended meaning by using bastards. One remaining issue is to determine whether this English word can convey all the three meanings conveyed by *klaab* (specifically, missing, intensifying and insulting). This question needs to be backed by judgements by native speakers of English. At any rate, these meanings can be delivered to English viewers by visual cues. Precisely, the touchy and humorous scene itself can convey these meanings.

Table 26. Subtitling وحشتوني ياولاد الكلب

Arabic Token	Subtitling
وحشتوني ياولاد الكلب	I miss you. You bastards.

Likewise, the swear word *kalb* is used in the conversational turn in 40 where it is literally meant to insult the listeners. Thus, the explicitation strategy using bastard is adequate. It conveys the simple intended meaning. Note here that this example is provided in this part although it is not humorous to show that swearing is not always intended to promote humour. However, the performance of the actor himself is what makes what he says a bit funny. Regarding its translation, the word damn is used to express that the actor is insulting and cursing.

Table 27. Subtitling يا ولاد الكلب

Arabic Token	Subtitling
يا ولاد الكلب	Damn you!

Again, the actor uses the wear word kalb to promote a sense of humour in the conversational turn in Table 28, yet it is paired with his funny, unexpected and even weird body language and facial expressions. In other words, the swear word could not be treated as funny without the accompanying performing effects.

Table 28: Subtitling بنت الكلب

Arabic Token	Subtitling
بنت الكلب	I need no more confusion

The interim conclusion here is that swear words are in essence are not funny or humorous. Instead, it is the weird and clown-like performance of the actor that may make his cursing and insulting funny. Therefore, the literal translation or explicitation of the direct meaning of swear words would be enough, as the viewers, whether Arab or English, will rely on the actor's performance to interpret the talk as funny and humorous.

One of the types of swear words that Saad uses should be treated as a type of word reduplication, such as the swear word in Table 29. In the conversational turn embedded in Table 29, the swear word واطي is repeated to emphasize and intensify the meanings of insult and curse. Again, these words are not funny and humorous at any rate, but the extraordinary and unusual performance of the actor while uttering these swear word makes them look like funny and humorous.

Table 29. Subtitling الواطي ابن الواطي

Arabic Token	Subtitling
الواطي ابن الواطي	You idiot

Another example of word reduplication to emphasize the insult and curse is included in Table 30. Like the previous example, the sense of humour is in the strange and exaggerated performance of the actor not in the swear word itself. As shown in the English translation, the translator tries to transfer the direct meaning of cursing by replacing the source text with an English idiomatic one. As just been said, humour is ignored as the performance of the actor is expected to add some humorous sense.

Table 30. Subtitling يحرق ابو اللي جاب ابوك

Arabic Token	Subtitling
يحرق ابو اللي جاب ابوك	A way with you, you lowly stumpage!

Another type of swear expressions is called in this thesis synthetic swear expressions. They are extremely complex. In the conversational turn in Table 31, for example, the swear expressions is a very complex and long sentence that including the verb of cursing, a name of an animal, the Arabic word عسل'honey', and the Arabic equivalents of father and mother. The humorous sense of this sentence springs from the non-linear and complex meaningful contradictions between the selected words in the Arabic source text. This statement is very extravagant on purpose. It is to raise of a sense of humour by creating meaningful conflicts and a lengthy and complex structure. Concerning transferring this complexity to English, it seems one of the most challenging tasks that can be assigned to a translator, especially if we know that the speakers of the target language does not use such complex structures and meaningful conflicts in their talks. As seen in the translation of this structure in Table 31 that the translator could not even carry the direct meaning of insulting and cursing to English.

Table 31. Subtitling يلعن ابو زرافة عسل ام اللي جابت ابوك

Arabic Token	Subtitling
يلعن ابو زرافة عسل ام اللي جابت ابوك	Such a funny guy, just like his father

4.5 Jokes

Saad also tends to integrate jokes in his films. One of these jokes is the one in Table 32. Booha is wondering what he can do (work) in the Muslim holidays. As a joke, he suggests to be a sheep. This sheep could be from a cultural perspective a very local joke; therefore, it may need addition and explicitation to situate the English viewers. Yet, many English people know much about the rituals in Muslim holidays. They know that Muslims sacrifice sheep in the festivals of Eid al-Fitr. This means that some English viewers may understand the joke immediately. However, the translator should add a line explaining the ritual. As shown in the English translation in Table 32, the direct meaning of the source text is transferred by some explicitation that gives the English viewer that Muslims sacrifice sheep in Eid al-Fitr. Note that we are living a very integrated globe, i.e., the cultures of the world, especially the most famous ones (e.g., the Islamic culture) are exposed. This makes the process of translating cultural concepts non-problematic. Regarding the sense of humour, it is hard to decide whether the translation in humorous to English viewers or not, but it seems devoid of humour, unlike the source Arabic one.

Table 32. Subtitling حشتغل ايه في العيد خروف؟

Arabic Token	Subtitling
حشتغل ايه في العيد خروف؟	But what will I do? sacrifice myself as a sheep?

Another joke provided in Saad's films is the one in Table 32. In the conversational turn in this table, the joke is the image of a moving coccyx that is lost in a fatty tale. The fatty tale typically refers to that tale of sheep or pragmatically to a human butt in the Arabic cultural. This humorous and funny image is to indicate in an indicate way that the back of the actor is hurting. He is trying to say that he does not feel comfortable at all. This direct meaning is transferred to English as shown in the translation in Table 33, yet the humous load is lost. In this case, the translator should search for an image from the English cultural that can be used to means that it hurts.

Table 33. Subtitling العصعوص تايه في الليه

Arabic Token	Subtitling
العصعوص تايه في الليه	It's hurts!

The previous discussion indicates that the jokes in Saad's films can be culturally local or be based on images. Culturally local jokes need explicitation and addition to make it clear for foreign viewers, taking into consideration that culturally local jokes can be exposed to some but not all foreign viewers. As for jokes that are based on images, they can be imaged by foreign viewers, and therefore can be understood at the semantic and humorous levels.

4.6 Irony

Irony is one of the pragmatic devices used in Saad's films. It is basically to mock a situation or action performed by an actor/actress. For example, the conversational turn in Table 34 shows that هندية is a word used by Booha to mock how his beloved one is trying to convince her mother to accept Booha's proposal. This word is used as the actress is using a movement that is common among Indians. It should be

repeated here that the literal translation of this word that is used for the sake of irony is adequate, as the visual cues (i.e., the performance of the actress and the actor) will make the use of this word explicit. However, as shown in the English translation in Table 34, explicitation is used instead of literal translation, therefore the sense of humour and irony are lost in the English translator.

Table 34. Subtitling وشوية حتقلبلك هندية وهي قاعدة

Arabic Token	Subtitling
وشوية حتقلبلك هندية	And begging you understand

4.7 Spoonerisms

Spoonerism is basically a form of pun or wordplay in Saad's films. More specifically, it is a type of paronymy. On this basis, refer to Section 4.1 to learn more about how such paronymic tokens have been dealt with.

4.8 Collocations and Proverbs

In his films, Saad tends to reorder words within collocations and to replace some words in proverbs to raise a sense of humour. As usual, reordering and replacing words are strange, as they are not motivated (i.e., they are not based on meaningful, logical or contextual reasons), as shown in the following two tables (48 and 49):

Table 35. Subtitling يا ناكر جميل السيارات

Arabic Token	Subtitling
يا ناكر جميل السيارات	Shut up, you car ingrate

Table 36. Subtitling انفطر قلبي على ولدي وقلب قطر على البحرين

Arabic Token	Subtitling
انفطر قلبي على ولدي وقلب قطر على البحرين	And he doesn't even know

5. Conclusion

Despite this unprecedented exchange of cultural AV products worldwide, the Arab world has been more of a recipient than a sender. In other words, Arabic AV content exported to other language communities worldwide is less than the foreign AV content we import – with English AV content as top among the imported foreign AV content (AlBkowr & Haider, 2023). For this reason, it was necessary for the industry of AV content production to focus more on the less traveled way by translating more of the Arabic AV content to other languages – mainly English. Since Arabic AV content has not been translated into other languages for a long time, the researchers considered that such translations might be loaded with linguistic errors and that not many researchers have examined this direction of translation, especially from EV into English and in the context of humour in AV content. Therefore, this study endeavours to enrich the existing literature on the translation of humour from Arabic interlingually, on one hand, and on the translation of humour from Arabic interlingually (see Al-Abbas and Haider, 2021) in AV content, on the other.

Moreover, this study has investigated subtitling some of the humorous content in comedy films starring Mohammad Saad. What complicates the translation of (supposedly) humorous tokens in Saad's films is that most of these tokens are structured in a shocking way even to the Arab audience. While in the empirical literature, the studies discussed focused on the translation of humour either from a cultural perspective (see Harrison, 2013) – as humour is deeply rooted in its source culture – or from a translational perspective that focuses on the translational strategies employed to translate verbal humour (see Rahmawati, 2013), what this study adds is the unusual type of verbal humour examined as a case study. The examples discussed in Sections 4.1 to 4.8 demonstrate that the challenge of translating the humorous tokens in Saad's films lies in the excessive use of wordplay in these tokens, whether in the form of replacing a word in fixed expression or idiom with another irrelevant word, or by replacing a sound or a syllable of a word with another one. In this regard, the researchers found that most of the examined humorous tokens are figurative and linguistic in essence. Therefore, it is expected that the translator should have enough background on how to deal with such tools. However, it has been noted that the translator ignores the figurative and linguistic devices used by the actor. In most cases, this is not the translator's mistake. It is rather the complexity of the figurative and linguistic language used by the actor. Saad tends to use figurative language that is not contextually triggered – it does not have a contextual motivation that could help viewers to understand these figurative tools. For example, paronymic puns are rarely established on tight semantic and contextual relations (or grounds) between their signs. The absence of such logical connections and the arbitrariness of the selections of signs (especially the second sign of each pun) make it very difficult for the translator to be faithful to the figurative and humorous content of a pun. However, the researchers concluded that while several humorous tokens were ignored by the translators of these comedy films, in some cases, they resorted to certain translation strategies, such as explicitation, transposition, and literal translation (calque) to convey the meaning of some humorous tokens including insults, malapropism, and swearwords.

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