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Cultural Constraints in Subtitling and Dubbing Arabic Series into English: A Case Study of the Saudi Series “Alkhallat”

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ABSTRACT

Dubbing and subtitling foreign movies, series, and other audiovisual products have flourished since the invasion of the screens; hence, the translation task between languages and cultures became integral to cope with this vast expansion. The different cultural and religious backgrounds of Arabic and English-speaking cultures complicate the translation of Arabic television series. Therefore, translators should be multicultural and multilingual, especially when working between Western and Eastern cultures. The current study aims to investigate the strategies used by Netflix professional translators to ensure the ideas are culturally conveyed effectively to the intended audience. The research compared the English subtitled and dubbed versions of the Arabic-Saudi series Alkhallat with the original version screened on Netflix. The findings showed that the main subtitling and dubbing strategies that were used were cultural substitution, omission, and paraphrasing. The findings also showed that although the dubbed and subtitled versions employed similar strategies, the wording varied. This variation could be attributed to the differences between spoken and written modes. The current study concludes that translators must understand the source and target cultures and consider the constraints of each AVT mode in order to provide

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a good quality translation.

Keywords: Audiovisual Translation; Arabic-English; Subtitling; Dubbing; Saudi Series

1. Introduction

Images are extremely important in people's daily lives, and displays of all shapes and sizes are nearly ubiquitous^[1]. The social milieu is commonly characterized by televisions, movies, computers, and mobile phones due to the screen's power. They are everywhere, including residences, places of employment, public transit, libraries, taverns, dining establishments, and theaters. Audiovisual products have a crucial role in people's lives, especially after globalization, which gave people a chance to access content that was not accessible before. In order to finish their work, enhance their professional and academic careers, have fun, and learn new things, people spend a lot of time watching screens and listening to audiovisual information^[2]. One of the major reasons preventing a viewer from enjoying a foreign program is the lack of knowledge of that foreign language. In other words, due to the advent of new technologies and the subsequent creation of new forms of global and intercultural communication, the world is significantly influenced by media nowadays, leading to a new demand for translation^[3].

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) is a multi-semiotic transfer that involves the transfer of visual channels such as pictures and aural channels, including speech and nonverbal elements, as well as music and sounds^[4]. AVT comprises a variety of translation modes, with subtitling and dubbing being the most popular. According to Chaume, dubbing involves the substitution of the original source text dialogue with a track created and recorded in the target language^[5]. Subtitling, on the other hand, is "the translation of the spoken (or written) ST of an audiovisual product into a written target text which is added onto the images of the original product, usually at the bottom of the screen"^[6].

In the 1990s, the Arab world started not only purchasing foreign programs but also producing series and movies^[7]. Some of these original works were also distributed to foreign cultures and countries and thus became the subjects of AVT. Subtitling and dubbing Arabic broadcasts are critical for breaking down language barriers and increasing cultural interchange. They are crucial in making Arabic information

available worldwide and developing cross-cultural understanding. Yet, transferring culture-bound expressions is one of the most complex and burdensome aspects of AVT. Dubbing and subtitling are the main AVT modes used to render culture-bound expressions.

Statement of the Problem and Research Objectives

When dealing with culture-bound expressions, translators demonstrate great concern, especially with cultures that are not very comparable and have significant differences^[8-10]. According to Venuti, "it is often believed that national identity is culturally diverse, connected to issues related to race and ethnicity and manifested in a particular language and culture"^[11]. This means that throughout the process of rendering Arab works to the English-speaking audience, a kind of loss of identities may occur, allowing new ones to take place. Religious references, regional dialects, and unique cultural settings are frequently used in Arabic utterances, which cannot be transferred easily, especially when cultural nuances and meanings are retained, and losses in the translation are avoided. Said losses could cause shifts in the effects of the text on its audiences. A challenging issue that translators have when bridging the gap between Arabic cultural expressions and English-speaking audiences is striking a balance between adherence to the source language and providing clarity and cultural relevance in the target language. To sum up, what is unacceptable in one culture might be acceptable in another. The Arab world considers religion as a red zone, and people there do not tolerate mockery of their beliefs. Hence, translators should be aware of the identity of each culture when approaching related terminologies and expressions.

The purpose of the current study is to identify the strategies used in subtitling and dubbing culture-bound expressions in the Saudi series *AlKhallat* into English. The study also looks at whether the strategies used to subtitle the series differ from those used to dub it.

2. Literature Review

This section consists of two main subsections: theoretical background and empirical studies. The first subsection provides some background information on AVT, with a special focus on its dubbing and subtitling. It also discusses the strategies used to translate culture-bound expressions. The second subsection reviews some research related to the current study.

2.1. Audiovisual Translation and Culture

AVT is a growing type of translation that has gained interest among researchers in the academic field. It is defined as “a specialized branch of translation which deals with the transfer of multimodal and multimedia texts into another language and/or culture”^[12]. The most common AVT types are dubbing and subtitling. According to Díaz Cintas, “dubbing is a type of interlingual audiovisual translation that assumes the transformation of the source language’s soundtrack into the target language’s soundtrack”^[13]. The audience can hear the audio in their native tongue when watching dubbed video content, which enables them to comprehend and enjoy the video or film more. As for Dries, “a show is properly dubbed if viewers are unaware, they are seeing a dubbed version”^[14]. According to Di Giovanni an attribute that sets dubbing apart from other forms of AVT is its ability to form a genuine bond between the audience and the media they experience as it familiarizes the content with the use of their native language in the creation of natural sound dialogue^[15]. In subtitling, the audience can hear the performers’ authentic voices when watching subtitled video content. Professional subtitlers guarantee that the subtitles are accurately translated. Because the video content is available in written form, it is accessible to viewers who are deaf and hard of hearing and those who have trouble comprehending accents and cannot understand the spoken dialogue^[16, 17]. However, some viewers may have difficulty concentrating on the action on screen since they must read the subtitles. Some viewers may find it difficult to keep up with the fast pace of subtitles to catch what a particular character is saying. Ivarsson pointed out that “it is vital to consider the language variety and cultural awareness of the intended audience while subtitling.”^[18] Since we are dealing with different cultures, the translator should remember that the Saudi Arab culture is conservative,

and many of its expressions are related to religion and God, even when cursing. For example, the Arabic phrase “*يلعنك الله*” which is a strong expression of anger or disapproval, translates to “May God curse you” or “God curse you” in English. These literal translations do not carry the same weight as their Arabic counterparts and sound unnatural.

In AVT, translators are concerned not only with the language but also with the images, sound effects, and accents. A subtitler or a dubber typically needs to explain what the intended audience does not grasp. They are also required to reflect the cultural features to the target audience. Culture is a complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. People from various cultural and linguistic origins communicate to exchange information and experiences. Translation has a function in fostering cross-cultural contact; thus, it must work around cultural gaps and constraints. To put it another way, translation and culture are inextricably linked. Cultural constraints might be characterized as a collection of ideals that a particular culture regards as inappropriate, obscene, or banned. These restrictions include, but are not limited to, clothing, conduct, laws, conventions, religion, and taboos. On the other hand, Cultural gaps represent concepts that are found in one culture but are alien to the other, such as culture-bound expressions.

Culture-bound expressions are essential in the process of translation^[19]. They include idioms, proverbs, metaphors, and colloquialisms that are culturally distinctive and may not have exact analogs in another language. In translation, it is critical to transfer the meaning and cultural subtleties of these terms correctly. Understanding the cultural background of these expressions aids translators in finding equivalent terms or rephrasing them in a way that keeps their intended meaning. Failure to adequately address culture-bound expressions can result in misunderstanding, loss of cultural richness, or even distortion of the original meaning. As a result, translators must be thoroughly aware of both the source and target cultures to provide accurate and culturally appropriate translations.

The Arabic language is rich with cultural terms that reflect its speakers’ habits, traditions, and distinctive qualities. The Saudi accent, in particular, adds a unique taste to these aspects. Saudi culture-bound expressions include a wide range of issues, such as kinship, hospitality, religion,

and desert life. For example, expressions such as “يا الله” let’s go and “اقلطوا” welcome are frequently used to indicate hospitality and friendliness. These phrases serve as a means of successful communication and give insights into the Saudi people’s cultural subtleties and beliefs.

Subtitling and dubbing professionals should be multilingual and multicultural since, according to Bandia, “translation is a cultural interaction as well as a linguistic process.”^[20] Culture-bound expressions, when rendered from one language into another, may create a gap. Therefore, translators have to opt for some translation strategies to bridge this gap. Translators may employ a variety of translation strategies, which are used to overcome the challenges that translators face and contribute to improving the translation output. The following translation strategies were proposed by Díaz Cintas and Remael^[21].

1. Loan (Direct transfer): transferring the cultural reference from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) as is. It is employed when the source language has a cultural word that does not exist in the goal language. For instance, shampoo “شامبو” and virus “فايروس”.
2. Calque (literal translation): a strategy adopted when a term in the SL has no equivalent available in the TL. A foreignization strategy brings the TL audience closer to SL culture. The phrases “cold war” and “black market” can be translated into Arabic as “السوق السوداء” and “الحرب الباردة”, respectively.
3. Explication: a strategy in which the translator makes a text in the SL more explicit and accessible to the TL by using hyponyms or hypernyms. For example, translating the Danube as “نهر الدانوب”.
4. Substitution: replacing a term with another even if there is an equivalent due to temporal and special constraints. An example of this strategy is translating the face cover as “نقاب”.
5. Transposition (Cultural adaptation): replacing the cultural reference in the ST with another reference in the TT. This strategy is similar to domestication or naturalization, as opposed to the globalization strategy. For example, the English phrase “Break a leg!” can be rendered as “ربنا يوفقك”.
6. Lexical creation: creating a new lexeme in the TL to stand for a term in the SL. For instance: “ضرة” as

co-wife

7. Compensation: a way to compensate the TL for losing information once the SL is rendered. To illustrate, “إنه رجل حكيم” can be translated as “he is, indeed, a wise man.”

2.2. Empirical Studies

Alkadi explored the difficulties translators face when subtitling and dubbing English-language movies and television shows in Arabic^[22]. The corpus of the study consisted of three full-length movies, one television sitcom, and one animated series. The analysis focused on the translation of dialects, obscenities, and comedy. The findings showed that translators should opt for a more functional translation approach to guarantee that the translated conversation has the same effect on the target audience.

Yahiaoui discussed the obstacles that dubbing practitioners face while rendering foreign movies and series into Arabic by examining the American series “The Simpsons”^[23]. The researcher selected some episodes that tackled several issues, including sex, drugs, religion, politics, and racial and gender stereotypes. Using descriptive translation studies paradigm alongside critical discourse analysis, the findings showed that various intrinsic and extrinsic factors may affect the translation process. Some of these factors can be controlled by the translators, while others control them. These factors may impair the translation process.

Creating accurate subtitles is a demanding task that requires subtitlers to utilize specific strategies. Mehawesh and Neimneh examined the translation strategies used in subtitling the Jordanian film “Theeb”^[24]. The Bedouin Arabic of Jordan is the dialect employed in this film. The collected examples were analyzed using Gottlieb’s subtitling strategies^[25]. The findings showed that the strategies of condensation, decimation, transfer, imitation, and deletion were opted for in subtitling the culture-bound expressions in the movie. The findings also showed that there were certain mistakes and issues in the translation that may contribute to impeding the full understanding and comprehension of some scenes.

Abulawi, Al Salman, and Haider examined using Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Egyptian Vernacular (EV) in dubbing the English movie “A Bug’s Life”^[26]. The researchers compiled a corpus of Arabic dubbed versions of the movie and the original English dialogue. The study followed

qualitative and quantitative approaches to identify the differences. As for the quantitative analyses, a questionnaire has been utilized to explore the participants' responses to MSA and EV dubbed versions. The researchers found that participants were inclined toward the EV dubbed version over the MSA. Additionally, the qualitative analysis revealed that the EV version had a better linguistic and technical quality than its MSA counterpart.

In the same vein, Haider, Saideen, and Hussein investigated how subtitlers translated the Jordanian Arabic vernacular television series *Jinn* into English^[27]. The investigated series is the first Arabic-Jordanian sitcom on Netflix with sexual content and derogatory language. The researchers also categorized the culturally specific utterances thematically using Ljung's swearing typology. The findings showed that subtitlers employed various strategies to translate Arabic culture-bound expressions into English. These include converting the source culture's taboo into the target culture's taboo at the same, greater, or lesser degrees of severity. The results also showed that the swear words' most commonly used connotative functions in the series were "unfriendly suggestions" and "noun supports."

Although several studies examined subtitling or dubbing AV materials across languages, little attention has been paid to similar studies focusing on dubbing and subtitling Saudi content into English. Therefore, this study fills this gap by examining the cultural constraints in subtitling and dubbing the Saudi Arabic Series "Alkhallat" into English. It attempts to answer the following research questions.

1. What strategies do Netflix translators use when subtitling the Alkhallat series into English?
2. What strategies do Netflix translators use when dubbing the Alkhallat series into English?

3. Methodology and Data Collection

3.1. Why Focus on Arabic-English Audiovisual Content?

The digital revolution significantly impacted the availability of audiovisual resources, which have significantly influenced societies and affected people's viewpoints, feelings, and actions^[28]. They promote cultural understanding, enhance communication, and provide entertainment and education^[29]. The dynamic fusion of sound and image produces

a potent medium that occupies a larger portion of our everyday lives.

Arabic is one of the most spoken languages in the world. This language is known for its rich vocabulary, expressions, and grammar^[7]. Arabic has cultural and historical features that characterize it from some other languages. English, on the other hand, is regarded as the language of science, knowledge, and communication^[30]. Additionally, it is the language of business in almost all countries worldwide, including the Middle East and other Arabic-speaking countries. Hence, many AVT products are presented in or translated into English.

3.2. Why Alkhallat Series?

Little attention has been paid to studying Saudi movies and series when compared to Egyptian movies, for example, which have received significant interest in the field^[31]. Saudi television shows offer a variety of linguistic aspects, such as standard Arabic, regional accents, and informal Arabic dialects. Saudi television shows portray the customs, traditions, and cultural standards of Saudi Arabia. They provide a window into Saudi society's traditions, beliefs, and way of life, which may be challenging for translators^[32]. Therefore, this study examines the translation strategies used to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers in Saudi television shows.

The *Alkhallat* series is full of cultural expressions that are mainly understood by Saudi people; hence, even for other Arab countries, these expressions might be difficult to comprehend. This means that the meaning of some of those cultural expressions cannot be figured out easily and thus needs much attention from the subtitler.

3.3. Data Collection

The data was collected manually by watching the series on Netflix in the original language, Arabic, as shown in **Figure 1**. The series, aired in 2023 on Netflix, has four episodes; each episode is 30–35 min long. These four episodes describe the concept of fraud and deception in daily Saudi life. The series was first watched in Arabic and compared to the English subtitles. After highlighting the cultural concepts, the researchers re-watched the dubbed version to compare the subtitles to the dubbed version. The data was compiled in

Table 1. Selected cultural expressions in the series.

No.	Cultural Expressions
1	يا ورع انت واياه .والله انكم جيل مو متربي
2	ماني برايح مكان يا ابن الحلال
3	بيبا تكفي لا توقف قدام الباب بيبا
4	يلا يلا زره زره في المركبة وانهج
5	يا امي اسمع كلام ابوك وعين من الله خير وارقد ونام
6	شكلك مفتجع في الشماغ
7	وتقول خاطفينه الرجال مقعده معايا بالسيارة قدام ومرتبين اموره ولا تعرضناه ولا جيناها وهذا حاطين معاها مفتح
8	وش بيكم صيفتوا علينا
9	ما وذك تجيب صاحبك معنا نطقك عليه
10	جاد الله عليكم
11	اقلطوا
12	تعال يا لعين الوجه
13	الله يصلحه يا اخي
14	رح يكب العشا
15	الرجال سارقنا جهرا والعين تره
16	وصاة الوصاة

Table 2. Examples of the strategy of “omission” in the series.

No.	Source Text	Literal Translation	English Subtitles	English Dubbing
1	جيل مو يا ورع انت واياه . متربي والله انكم	Hey kids , you and him. By God, you are a generation not well-raised.	Move away enough. I swear your generation is rotten	Get things outta my face; quit doing that. Your entire generation is spoiled
2	ماني برايح مكان يا ابن الحلال	I am not going anywhere, oh, legitimate/respectable son .	I am not going anywhere	I am not going anywhere
3	بيبا تكفي لا توقف قدام الباب بيبا	Dad, please I plea you , do not stop in front of the door, Dad.	Dad, don't stop in front of the door	Dad, don't stop in front of the door
4	يلا يلا زره زره في المركبة وانهج	Come on, come on, tie him, tie him into the vehicle and hurry .	Just leave him tied up in the car	Just leave him tied up in the car
5	يا امي اسمع كلام ابوك وعين من الله خير وارقد ونام	Oh my child, listen to your father and seek goodness from God , and lie down and sleep.	You need to just listen to your father and go to sleep	You need to just listen

the professional subtitlers left out the expression and did not transfer it to the target language. It is worth noting that rendering the statement without “تكفي” may change the meaning, making it imperative. Thus, while a direct translation is not available, adding the expression “please” to the TT may make it a polite request rather than an order, thus compensating the loss.

Each culture creates new terms to be used in certain situations aside from what is typical or standard. This is exactly the case in using “انهج” in example 4, which is a way to ask someone to go fast, get something done, and come back quickly. When rendering it into English, the translators tended to remove the expression and simply translate the sentence without it as long as the intended meaning of the phrase is understood. The expression “انهج” is used to give orders, and it shows the power relation between the characters. Translators omitted this expression in both the

dubbed and subtitled versions, although it could be translated as hurry up!

Religious remarks are regarded as an integral part of the cultural expressions in the Saudi dialect and are deeply rooted in their daily life. For instance, the expression “خير عين من الله” is used to wish that things are going to be fine (example 5). This utterance is related to religion since Muslims turn to God for supplication. The translators opted to remove this expression when subtitling and dubbing it into English. This omission can be seen as a form of cultural adaptation as such utterances are uncommon in the target culture.

This analysis indicates that the translators prioritized conveying the general sense of the utterance when using this strategy. Thus, stylistic, cultural, and character-related nuances were affected the most, while little change was found in the area of the sentences’ direct meaning.

4.2. Paraphrase

When translating, the strategy of “paraphrase” entails changing words or sentence structures in the target language while maintaining the same meaning. When translating something directly might lead to awkward, ambiguous, or culturally unacceptable expressions, this strategy is especially helpful. By modifying the original text to fit the linguistic and cultural background of the intended audience, translators can preserve the meaning while using paraphrasing. This strategy is applied in instances (8–13), as **Table 3** shows.

In example 1, the cultural expression “مفجع” is discussed. In the Saudi dialect, this term refers to something or someone who looks ugly. Both in the subtitled and dubbed versions, the term is omitted, but both sentences bear the meaning implicitly. The example contains an additional cultural expression in the term “الشماغ.” In Saudi Arabia, “الشماغ” is extremely important in the daily lives of Saudis. This traditional headscarf, which is mainly worn by males, is more than simply an item of apparel; it is a statement of cultural identity and legacy. It represents Saudi Arabia’s rich history and traditions, and its presence in numerous parts of life demonstrates its importance. From formal ceremonies to casual gatherings, the “الشماغ” is an essential aspect of traditional dress, expressing pride in one’s cultural background. The subtitles rendered this expression as the hypernym “headscarf,” which does not reflect the item’s cultural relevance. However, the rendition found in the dub displays a graver error. The dubbed version assigns a highly negative connotation to the cultural headscarf that symbolizes pride in the Saudi identity. This displays a lack of cultural sensitivity and understanding from the translators who provided this insulting rendition.

Food expressions are important culture-bound expressions since they provide windows into a society’s customs. Eastern and Western food are relatively different; therefore, the translator from Arabic into English should tackle these barriers. In example 2, the original ST used the term “مفطح” (grilled lamb with rice), which is one of the most common cuisines in Saudi Arabia that is served as a main on many occasions, such as wedding ceremonies. Netflix translators opted to substitute the Arabic term for both the dubbed and the subtitled versions. Hypernyms are one of the domestication strategies used when rendering culture-bound expressions from the ST to the TT. Hence, the professional

dubbers and subtitlers domesticated the terms for the English viewers by giving them general terms (hypernyms) such as “we are giving him food” and “we feed him.”

In example 3, the culture-bound term “علينا وش بيكم صيقتوا” conveys a distinct and nuanced meaning in the Saudi dialect. In Saudi culture, “summering” means being late. This term originates from travelers who would return in late spring. If some were late, they arrived in summer, and others would say, “You have summered,” meaning they missed the expected return time. The latecomers promised not to be late again, and “summering” became associated with being late. Hence, in language, “summer” refers to the season, but idiomatically, it means being late. The term in example 8 is used to mock someone for being late or coming later than planned. This culturally constrained expression’s translation as “you are very late” adequately reflects the primary sense of it. It gives the idea that the individual is severely delayed or has come much later than planned. However, the cultural depth and playfulness found in the original Saudi vernacular statement are lost in the English translation. Unpacking the meaning for the target audience is the best method for the translator to resort to.

In example 4, the culturally bound term “نطقطق عليه” has a special meaning in the Saudi dialect that is strongly ingrained in the local culture. The word “نطقطق عليه” is an idiom that is often used to express the act of friendly and playful teasing. It consists of lighthearted banter and good-natured teasing, usually between friends or family members. The goal of “نطقطق عليه” is not to injure or disrespect anyone but rather to build a sense of camaraderie and fun among the group. It is a way for Saudis to interact and express appreciation for one another by participating in friendly banter. Thus, the translation of “نطقطق عليه” as “bully him/make fun of him” is not totally correct and may cause confusion. While the term “bully” indicates damaging and violent behavior intended at frightening or injuring someone, the term “نطقطق عليه” does not have such negative connotations. The original expression’s humorous and welcoming tone is lost in the English version. In fact, non-Saudi speakers may have an entirely different sense, leading to a misconception of the intended meaning. The misuse of the paraphrase strategy rendered the meaning in a negative way, unlike the original text.

Table 3. Examples of the strategy of “paraphrase” in the series.

No.	Source Text	Literal Translation	English Subtitles	English Dubbing
1	شكلك مفتح في الشماغ	You look messy in the heads	And how do you think you look in that headscarf	Man, how do you think you look with that stupid thing on your head?
2	الرجال مقعده معايا بالسيارة قدام ومرتين اموره ولا تعرضناه ولا جيناه وهذا حاطين معاه مفتح وتقول خاطفينه	The man is seated with me in the car in the front, and we have arranged his affairs, and we did not obstruct him or approach him. We gave him grilled lamb with rice , and you say he was kidnapped.	We sat him in the front seat of my car. We took care of him, and we feed him. How did we kidnap him?	I even sat in the front seat right next to him. We took care of him, and we haven't touched him. Now we are giving him food. Is that abduction?
3	وش بيكم صيفتوا علينا	What is wrong with you? you have summered.	You are very late	You are very late
4	ما ودك تجيب صاحبك معنا نططق عليه	Don't you want to bring your friend with us so we can knock/tap on him?	Let's make fun of him a little	Let's bully him a little

4.3. Cultural Substitution

It is the substitution of a cultural notion from the source culture with one from the target culture in order to transmit the meaning of the source cultural reference. This strategy replaces a culturally distinctive word in the source language with a similar word in the target language that is more relatable or recognizable to the intended audience. This method guarantees that the translation retains the meaning and impact of the source material while making it more approachable and relatable. This strategy is utilized in instances 1–7, as shown in Table 4.

The expression “جاء الله عليكم” in example 1 is a way of expressing profound thanks to someone, mainly when serving food. The statement represents cultural values such as humility, charity, and recognizing the significance of heavenly favors in one’s life. When employed in ordinary situations, “جاء الله عليكم” acts as a passionate and warm statement of thanks. It represents the link of appreciation and respect between persons (example 1). The translation of “جاء الله عليكم” as “thank you” is functional in this context, but it does not completely express the depth of cultural values and religious importance given by the original word. As such, “Blessings to you all” embodies the cultural values of humility, piety, and faith in divine providence that underpin the statement in Saudi vernacular. This translation retains the original phrase’s profound feeling of respect and reverence while also conveying cultural and religious relevance to English speakers.

In example 2, the culture-bound term “اقلطوا” communicates a colloquial and lighthearted invitation to visitors in the Saudi dialect. It entails a warm welcome and invitation and taking part in food and drink. The phrase “اقلطوا” is an informal manner of inviting someone to get comfortable, take a seat, and enjoy their time in a calm and pleasant environment. It is widely used while entertaining friends, relatives, or visitors to indicate a warm and welcoming setting where people are encouraged to feel at ease. While the exact meaning of “اقلطوا” is “take a seat,” it refers to more than a physical activity. It represents a friendly mood, allowing guests to relax and enjoy their hosts’ company. The translation “you are most welcome” emphasizes the expression’s welcoming tone, stressing the idea of being cordially accepted and appreciated. It is important to note that not all of the subtleties, concepts, and meanings inherent in the original language are conveyed in the translated text in the dubbed and subtitled versions. This leads to a type of understatement, where the target language may lose the richness of the original material.

In example 3, “تعال يا لعين الوجه” is a vulgar insult used to express extreme anger and hostility toward someone. It is meant to demean and belittle the target person. It is important to note, however, that the cultural meanings of the term differ from the recommended translations. Subtitling it as “Oh shit” or “son of a bitch” may not correctly represent the precise context of the original statement, resulting in misunderstanding or insult. For subtitling and dubbing, a more culturally sensitive and contextually suitable translation may

Table 4. Examples of the strategy of “Cultural Substitution” in the series.

No.	Source Text	Literal Translation	English Subtitles	English Dubbing
1	جاء الله عليكم	May God be generous to you all.	Thank you	Blessings to you all
2	اقلطوا	Please, come in. Your presence honors me, and you are warmly invited to partake of food and drink	You are most welcome	Have a seat
3	تعال يا لعين الوجه	Come here, you with the cursed face.	Oh shit	Son of a bitch
4	الله يصلحه يا اخي	May God rectify him, my brother.	Oh god	Goddamn
5	رح يكب العشا	He will spill the dinner.	Spill the beans	Flip on us
6	الرجال سارقنا جهرا والعين تره	The man is stealing us openly/publicly, and the eye sees.	The guy stole from us in plain sight	The guy stole from us in plain sight
7	وصاة الوصاة	The recommendation of recommendations.	It is the crème de la crème	Best of the best

be used to express emotional intensity while avoiding outright profanity and assuring a more realistic depiction of the cultural meaning for viewers.

Religious expressions are highly used in Saudi culture; thus, they employ them differently. They may use the term “الله يصلحه ياخي” to express a wish for someone to be guided and go back to the right path or to indicate a sense of disappointment toward someone’s behavior (example 4). Apparently, the dubbed version ultimately converts the meaning into a more explicit and manipulated term. In English societies, they frequently use Goddamn in different contexts to show wonder and annoyance. Meanwhile, the subtitling opts for an expression that preserves the same degree without using any taboo terms.

Example 5 contains the Saudi cultural phrase “يكب العشا رح”. It is translated as “spill the beans,” which implies divulging a secret or sharing sensitive information. Due to its added complexity, the expression “flip on us” may be a more appropriate counterpart. In Saudi culture, the phrase denotes not just the disclosure of secrets but also the possibility of treachery or turning against someone. It implies that the person who knows the truth may reveal it, resulting in unintended repercussions. As a result, reading “رح يكب العشا” as “flip on us” seeks to capture its cultural character while offering a proper English comprehension and better represents the sense than “spill the beans” which only captures the meaning partially.

In example 6, the Saudi cultural term “الرجال سارقنا جهرا والعين تره” is a vibrant and expressive phrase with significant cultural importance. To some extent, translating it into

English as “in plain sight” captures the meaning of the original term. The expression means the crime or fraud is so obvious that even an onlooker can see it. The translation “in plain sight” retains the impression of something being plainly visible, but it may lack some of the original Arabic word’s cultural depth and emotional impact. As a result, while “in plain sight” is a plausible translation, it is important to recognize that subtleties and cultural contexts may not be entirely conveyed in English.

In example 7, the Saudi cultural phrase “وصاة الوصاة” has a profound cultural meaning, referring to something or someone who is regarded as the pinnacle of perfection and the highest level conceivable. To some extent, translating it into English as “It is the crème de la crème” or “Best of the best” captures the core of the original word. The statement indicates that the topic in issue is at the top of its field, outperforming all others in terms of quality, competence, or performance. The subtitled version uses a French expression that translates to “the cream of the cream.” It could be seen as elegant. By adding a foreign term that has become naturalized in English, the subtitler employs a cultural borrowing strategy. The dubbed version, on the other hand, employed a simple English idiom that conveys the meaning concisely and directly. Though both translations are accurate, “best of the best” is usually a preferable option for clear communication because it is probably more widely accepted and applicable.

5. Conclusions

This study investigated the strategies Netflix translators use to subtitle and dub the culture-bound expressions in the

Saudi series Alkhallat. The primary impediment to translating Arabic audiovisual materials into English is cultural. It is a large circle that includes other aspects such as ideologies, values, conventions, faiths, and traditions, all of which are respected and should be taken into account. Because cultures differ throughout the world, the translator must understand the target audience's culture in order to realize the restrictions of translating cultural remarks from Arabic into English.

The analysis revealed that translators had specific difficulties when encountering cultural expressions. To provide the intended meaning as in the original AV product, translators must comprehend the contextual backdrop and be fluent in both the source and target languages. Translators can be perplexed by the repetition of vernacular Arabic. This explains why the translators employ the strategies of cultural substitution, omission, and paraphrase in several instances. The dubbed version shows that the translator used more explicit expressions than the subtitled one to suit the TT audience, such as "Goddamn" and "son of bitch". The difference between the dubbed and the subtitled version is in the degree of aggressiveness in using swear words and using more slang language in the dubbed version since it is oral. At the same time, the subtitles should be more formal, and this is related to the spoken and written modes. On some occasions, translators interpret the intended meaning of the cultural expressions incorrectly for some reason, such as the translator's unfamiliarity with the Saudi cultural expressions. Yahiaoui and Al-Adwan stated that "the translator must have adequate knowledge of both the source and target languages and cultures, be creative, and adapt internationally standard components into Arabic^[33]." To get such a good outcome translation, translators must be talented enough to capture a similar effect on the target audience in both subtitling and dubbing. It goes without saying that in the dubbed version, translators are the primary controllers of the flow. This means they domesticate the context to meet the target audience's life.

There is a clear parallelism between censorship and authenticity when it comes to dubbed and subtitled films. Dubbing includes replacing the original dialogue with a translated version in the viewer's language, whereas subtitles display a translated text at the bottom of the screen. Regarding censorship, dubbed films are more likely to have their material changed to adhere to cultural sensitivities or regulatory re-

strictions. Censorship can lead to losing authenticity since the original subtleties, expressions, and cultural context may be altered or even eliminated. On the other hand, subtitled audiovisual materials tend to maintain the original speech's authenticity since the translations are more accurate in the original language. Although subtitles do not capture every minor detail, they give a more accurate portrayal of the intended meaning and help retain the aesthetic integrity of the picture. While dubbed audiovisual materials may appeal to a broader audience by removing linguistic barriers, subtitled films can provide a more authentic and unadulterated cinematic experience.

The current study focused on subtitling culture-bound expressions in vernacular Saudi Arabic; future researchers may investigate the strategies used in other subtitled series and movies in English to find out the extent to which the results reported here are similar or dissimilar to other strategies. In addition, the researchers have yet to examine fansub translations of the series. Therefore, other researchers are encouraged to conduct further Studies on non-Saudi movies and series, such as Syrian, Jordanian, or Egyptian.

Author Contributions

R.A. conceptualized the study, developed the methodology, analyzed the data, validated the findings, prepared the original draft, and visualized the results; A.S.H. contributed to the methodology, validated the findings, supervised the project, and reviewed and edited the manuscript; L.A. analyzed the data, validated the findings, and reviewed and edited the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

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