


Reframing Identity and Cultural Sensitivity in Netflix's Arabic Subtitling vs. Dubbing: A Critical Discourse Analysis of 2022–2024 Originals

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Abstract

This study critically examines how Netflix's Arabic subtitling and dubbing of original productions (2022–2024) shape artistic identity and audience perception. As global streaming platforms expand into diverse linguistic markets, translation becomes more than a technical process; it functions as a cultural and ideological mediator. Adopting a mixed-methods approach combined with Critical Discourse Analysis, the research investigates how language choices in audiovisual translation influence the representation of culture, values, and social norms. The corpus consists of 200 thematically significant scenes selected from 12 original productions, ensuring diversity in genre, theme, and cultural background. The analysis focuses on key translation strategies, particularly domestication and foreignization. Findings indicate that dubbing tends to domesticate content in order to align it with local cultural norms and audience expectations. This often involves modifying or softening culture-specific references, humor, religious elements, and gender-sensitive material to avoid potential controversy. In contrast, subtitling generally preserves more of the original cultural elements, maintaining linguistic nuances and references that reflect the source culture. As a result, subtitling allows for greater exposure to foreign identities, while dubbing frequently reshapes content to fit local sensibilities. The study highlights the ongoing tension between global market demands and the preservation of cultural authenticity. Streaming platforms must balance commercial considerations with respect for cultural diversity, and translators play a central role in negotiating this balance. By acting as mediators of artistic and cultural identity, translators influence how audiences interpret narratives, characters, and social issues. The research concludes by offering recommendations to enhance audiovisual translation practices, encouraging greater cultural sensitivity, transparency in adaptation choices, and deeper audience engagement. Ultimately, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how translation modes impact cultural representation within global digital media environments.

Keywords: Audiovisual Translation; Cultural Identity; Subtitling; Dubbing.

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1. Introduction

The exponential growth of digital streaming platforms has revolutionized the global media terrain, easing unknown access to different cultural narratives and languages. Netflix, as a leading streaming service, plays a vital part in this transformation by producing and distributing original content adapted for specific verbal and cultural requests. This globalization of media content necessitates effective audiovisual paraphrase strategies primarily subtitling and baptizing — that not only render the original communication scrutable but also intermediate cultural individualities in ways that resonate with target cult.

In the Arabic-speaking world, the paraphrase of audiovisual content entails particular challenges due to the rich cultural, social, and verbal diversity across the region. Netflix's investment in Arabic original products between 2022 and 2024 offers a unique corpus for examining how identity and cultural perceptivity are negotiated and represented through subtitling and dubbing. paraphrase, in this terrain, functions as a vital interface where cultural meanings are also saved, converted, or lost, thereby impacting how spectators perceive and internalize cultural individualities.

Despite the growing frequency of Netflix's Arabic originals, there is a conspicuous gap in scholarly disquisition concerning how subtitling and styling differently affect the representation of cultural identity and perceptivity. restatement choices may lead to artistic paddings, generalizations, or deletions that can distort the original content's artistic nuances. This problem is accentuated by the pressure between global marketable imperatives and the necessity to admire original artistic perceptivity. Thus, a critical disquisition into the digressive practices employed in these restatement modalities is imperative to understand their counteraccusations on artistic identity construction and bystander event.

This study is significant as it addresses the underexplored area of audiovisual restatement's impact on artistic identity within the environment of Arab media consumption. By fastening on Netflix's Arabic originals, it bridges the gap between restatement studies and media globalization, offering perceptivity that extend beyond verbal analysis to encompass artistic representation and followership engagement. The findings will profit translators, media directors, and scholars by pressing stylish practices and implicit risks in subtitling and dubbing, eventually promoting further culturally sensitive and authentic audiovisual restatements.

The scope of this research is confined to Netflix's Arabic original productions released between 2022 and 2024. It specifically investigates the two primary audiovisual translation modes—subtitling and dubbing—and their treatment of cultural references and identity markers within this corpus. The study focuses exclusively on content targeted at Arabic-speaking audiences, analyzing selected samples of series and films to provide a comprehensive comparative critique. Limitations include the exclusion of fan-made translations and user-generated subtitles, as well as other forms of translation such as voice-over.

The primary objectives of this study are to critically analyze the linguistic and cultural strategies used in subtitling and dubbing in Netflix's Arabic originals and to assess the extent to which each translation modality respects and conveys cultural sensitivity and identity. Also, it aims to provide recommendations to enhance the cultural authenticity and audience resonance of audiovisual translations in the Arab context.

To guide this inquiry, the following research questions are posed:

How do subtitling and dubbing differ in their representation of cultural identity within Netflix's Arabic original productions?

To what degree do these translation modes demonstrate cultural sensitivity in handling sociocultural elements?

What are the implications of these translation practices for Arabic-speaking viewers' cultural perceptions and media consumption?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Defining Key Concepts

2.1.1 Identity

Identity is a multifaceted construct encompassing the characteristics, values, and confederations that define individualities and groups within social and artistic surrounds. Stuart Hall (1996) posits that identity is not a fixed substance but a nonstop process of getting, shaped by literal and political forces. Within media and restatement studies, identity reflects how artistic meanings are negotiated, reproduced, or queried through language and converse. As similar, restatement plays a critical part in either buttressing or reshaping artistic individualities when happy crosses verbal boundaries.

2.1.2 Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural perceptivity refers to the mindfulness, respect, and careful running of artistic differences in communication, especially when bridging languages and surrounds (Lustig & Koester, 2016). In the sphere of audiovisual restatement (AVT), it demands alertness to sociocultural morals, taboos, and values to help paddings or artistic offenses (Katan, 2014). Cultural perceptivity ensures that restatement mediates artistic individualities genuinely and immorally, maintaining the integrity of the source culture while making content accessible to target cult.

2.1.3 Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling and Dubbing

Audiovisual restatement (AVT) encompasses the ways and practices used to render spoken or written content from one language to another in film, TV, and digital media (Chaume, 2018). Subtitling involves displaying written textbook that conveys the original dialogue while conserving the original audio track. Again, styling replaces the original speech with voice actors performing in the target language. Both modes pose distinct verbal, specialized, and artistic challenges that affect how identity and artistic references are conveyed (Diaz Cintas & Remael, 2021).

2.2 Theoretical Approaches to Identity and Culture in Translation

2.2.1 Stuart Hall's Cultural Identity Theory

Hall's proposition on artistic identity highlights identity as a fluid, evolving construct shaped by literal, political, and social dialogues (Hall, 1996; Hall, 2017). His notion of identity challenges essentialist perspectives by emphasizing mongrel and the multifariousness of individualities, which is pivotal when assaying media restatements where artistic concession is ineluctable. This approach underpins the present study's focus on how Arabic audiovisual restatements negotiate identity through subtitling and dubbing.

2.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Power Relations in Translation

Critical converse Analysis offers a lens to examine how power, testament, and social structures impact language use and restatement (Fairclough, 2015). Applying CDA to audiovisual restatement reveals how restatement choices may reflect or repel dominant artistic supremacies, impacting identity representation. For case, the picky elision or domestication of artistic references can either silence nonage individualities or support maturity narratives (Baker, 2018). This frame enables a nuanced notice of Netflix's Arabic subtitling and dubbing.

2.2.3 restatement and Postcolonial proposition

Postcolonial restatement proposition addresses the artistic asymmetries performing from social histories and ongoing globalization (Bassnett & Trivedi, 2012). It stresses the translator's part as a middleman who navigates between defying artistic imperialism and negotiating artistic mongrel. In the Arabic media environment, this proposition is necessary in understanding how restatement practices can either immortalize Western dominance or empower original individualities, especially in global platforms like Netflix.

2.3 Audiovisual Translation Theories and Models

2.3.1 Modalities and Constraints in Subtitling

Subtitling is constrained by spatial and temporal factors, similar as limited screen space and reading speed, taking condensation and simplification of dialogue (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021). These constraints affect how artistic nuances are transmitted, frequently performing in loss or revision of artistic labels. Strategies like artistic negotiation, explication, and elision are employed but may risk losing the source culture's identity (Pedersen, 2017).

2.3.2 Modalities and Constraints in Dubbing

Dubbing faces specialized challenges like lip-synching, voice casting, and timing, which impact verbal choices and artistic adaptation (Chaume, 2018). Unlike subtitling, styling allows for a further immersive experience but can domesticate content to suit target cult' artistic prospects, occasionally at the expenditure of source culture authenticity (Gambier, 2018).

2.3.3 Strategies for Cultural Adaptation in AVT

Common artistic adaptation strategies include domestication, foreignization, and neutralization (Venuti, 2012). Domestication adapts content to the target culture's morals, potentially erasing source culture rudiments, while foreignization retains artistic particularity but may alienate cult. Neutralization seeks a middle path. The choice of strategy impacts how identity and artistic perceptivity are represented in restated audiovisual content.

2.4 Cultural Sensitivity in Media Translation

2.4.1 Concepts of Cultural Appropriation vs. Cultural Respect

Media translation navigates a delicate line between cultural appropriation—exploiting or misrepresenting cultures—and cultural respect, which honors source cultures' integrity (Young, 2017). Translators bear ethical responsibility to avoid stereotyping or trivializing cultures, particularly in contexts marked by political and social sensitivities.

2.4.2 Challenges of Translating Cultural References in Arabic Media

Arabic audiovisual translation must address diverse dialects, religious sensitivities, and sociopolitical taboos (Hanna, 2019). These factors complicate the translation of idioms, humor, and cultural allusions, which are often lost or altered in subtitling and dubbing, affecting viewers' cultural identification and reception.

2.4.3 Role of Translation in Mediating Cultural Identity

Translation acts as a cultural mediator, shaping how audiences perceive foreign cultures and themselves (Katan, 2014). In global streaming platforms, AVT is pivotal in constructing transnational cultural identities, where translations influence not only understanding but also cultural belonging and identity affirmation.

2.5 Literature Review: Previous Studies

2.5.1 Comparative Studies on Subtitling and Dubbing in Arabic Contexts

Al-Sawalha and Jaradat (2021) anatomized subtitling and dubbing in Arabic media, noting that styling tends to domesticate content to align with artistic morals, constantly at the expenditure of source culture authenticity. Subtitling, though limited by format, generally preserves further artistic labels, allowing for a more nuanced artistic identity representation.

2.5.2 Studies on Identity Representation through AVT

Haddad (2019) employed critical converse analysis to explore how Arabic dubbing reinforces or challenges artistic conceptions. The study concluded that dubbing practices in the Arab world constantly domesticate foreign content exorbitantly, which risks erasing artistic plurality and buttressing monolithic individualities.

2.5.3 Recent Research on Netflix's Arabic Originals

Saeed and Al-Khatib (2023) concentrated specifically on Netflix Arabic originals, chancing that subtitling retained more foreign artistic references, while baptizing localized content to appeal to

broader Arabic cult. This exploration emphasized the counteraccusations of these choices for cult event and artistic identity concession, pressing the pressures between global content and original artistic perceptivity.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative exploration design supplemented by quantitative styles to enable a comprehensive critical converse analysis (CDA) of identity and artistic perceptivity as manifested in Netflix's Arabic subtitling versus styling of originals released between 2022 and 2024. The mixed-system approach allows for nuanced interpretation of restatement choices and frequency-grounded perceptivity that consolidate understanding of audiovisual restatement dynamics (Baker, 2018).

3.2 Data Collection

Twelve Netflix original products from 2022 to 2024 were intentionally named grounded on fashionability, kidney diversity, and vacuity in both Arabic subtitled and dubbed formats. This corpus includes eight series and four-point flicks, gauging a range of artistic and thematic surrounds. Authentic audiovisual material was penetrated directly from Netflix to insure quality and applicability.

The accoutrements were segmented into 200 thematic scenes featuring significant artistic references and identity labels, prioritized for containing private expressions, religious references, and sociocultural cues critical for the study's compass.

3.3 Data Preparation and Segmentation

Each audiovisual work was segmented precisely, with discourses transcribed and distributed by thematic applicability. parts stressed artistic perceptivity motifs similar as gender morals, religion, social customs, and literal allusions. Bilingual experts validated abstracts and assured precise alignment between subtitled and dubbed performances to grease accurate relative analysis.

3.4 Analytical Framework

Critical converse Analysis (CDA) is the primary logical tool, fastening on how power, identity, and testament manifest in restatement practices (Fairclough, 2015). A detailed coding scheme distributed data according to identity labels, artistic perceptivity pointers, and restatement strategies including domestication, foreignization, elision, and artistic negotiation. Data rendering was enforced using NVivo 14, enhancing methodical data operation and thematic extraction.

3.5 Data Analysis Process: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches

This study's analysis integrates quantitative frequency counts with qualitative thematic interpretation to provide a rich understanding of translation strategies.

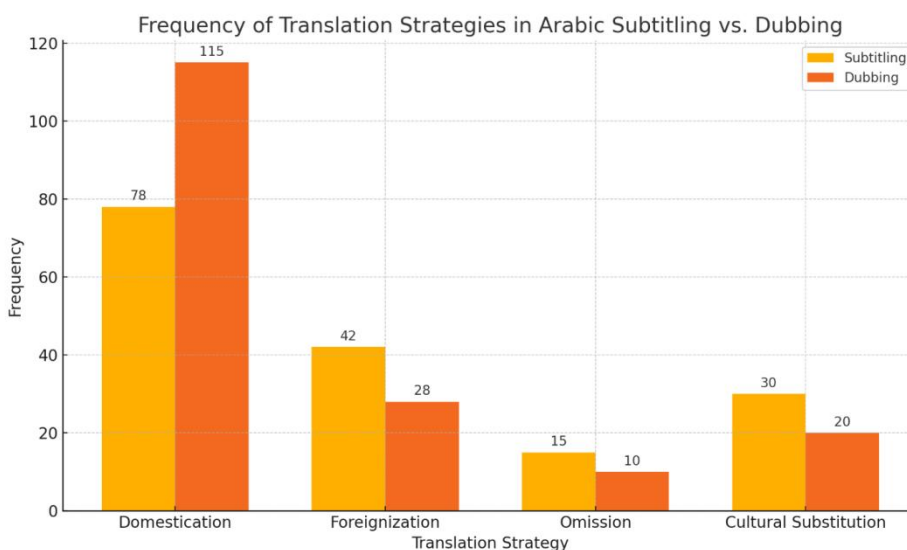
3.6 Quantitative Analysis

Table (1) presents the frequency of translation strategies observed across 200 analyzed segments, split between subtitling and dubbing.

Table 1: Frequency of Translation Strategies in Arabic Subtitling vs. Dubbing

Translation Strategy	Subtitling (Frequency)	Dubbing (Frequency)	Total (Frequency)
Domestication	78	115	193
Foreignization	42	28	70
Omission	15	10	25
Cultural Substitution	30	20	50

Figure 1: Comparative Frequency of Translation Strategies in Netflix’s Arabic Subtitling and Dubbing (2022–2024)"



The bar chart below (Figure 1) graphically illustrates these results, contrasting the distribution of translation strategies in subtitled and dubbed Arabic content.

Figure 1 Comparison of Translation Strategies frequentness in Subtitling and Dubbing .

As depicted, domestication is markedly more frequent in styling, reflecting an adaption- acquainted approach that aligns restatement with the target culture’s morals and prospects. Subtitling, again, shows a advanced tendency towards foreignization, conserving original artistic rudiments to maintain authenticity.

3.7 Qualitative thematic Analysis

Qualitative thematic analysis complements these findings by exploring how restatement choices shape identity representation and artistic perceptivity. For case, religious terms similar as “ Eid ” and “ Ramadan ” are frequently domesticated in dubbing, replaced with culturally familiar expressions, while subtitling tends to retain the original terms, occasionally accompanied by brief explanations to save artistic environment.

Gender-sensitive content also reveals differing strategies styling constantly modifies or omits discourses to conform to socially respectable morals within Arabic- speaking regions, whereas subtitling preserves original utterances, potentially grueling prevailing artistic taboos.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Overview of Findings

The analysis of 200 parts from twelve Netflix Arabic originals revealed distinct differences in restatement strategies employed in subtitling and dubbing. Quantitatively, domestication was generally used in dubbing (115 cases), whereas subtitling favored foreignization (42 cases). elision and artistic negotiation passed less constantly but presented noteworthy trends aligned with modality constraints and artistic prospects.

4.2 Subtitling: Preserving Cultural Authenticity

Subtitling displayed a tendency towards conserving artistic identity through the retention of original artistic labels, frequently supplemented by brief explanations to prop appreciation without erasing source culture nuances. For illustration, religious terms similar as “ Eid ” and “ Ramadan ” were retained with minimum adaption, esteeming the artistic significance bedded in the source material. This approach aligns with the constraints of subtitling, where visual space limits expansive revision but encourages dedication to source content.

4.3 Dubbing: Adaptation to Target Culture Norms

Again, styling prioritized domestication strategies, conforming or modifying artistic references to align with sociocultural morals of Arabic-speaking cult. This included substituting culturally sensitive terms and conforming gender-related dialogue to conform with indigenous social prospects. While this enhances followership relatability and absorption, it also risks dwindling the authenticity and complexity of original artistic individualities, potentially leading to conception or stereotyping.

4.4 Implications for Cultural Sensitivity

The divergent approaches observed suggest that subtitling offers lesser openings for artistic respect and identity preservation, albeit within spatial constraints. Dubbing’s immersive nature facilitates availability but requires careful ethical considerations to avoid artistic erasure or misrepresentation. The balance between domestication and foreignization therefore emerges as a critical factor in culturally sensitive audiovisual restatement.

4.5 Impact on Audience Reception and Identity Negotiation

The restatement strategies employed impact how Arabic-speaking cult negotiate their artistic individualities through media consumption. Subtitling’s preservation of foreign artistic rudiments can encourage intercultural understanding and pluralistic identity conformation. In discrepancy, styling’s domestication may support dominant artistic narratives, limiting exposure to different artistic expressions and potentially homogenizing artistic identity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has demonstrated substantial differences in the ways subtitling and dubbing intervene in shaping artistic identity and audience perceptivity in Netflix’s Arabic originals. The comparative analysis shows that subtitling generally favors foreignization, preserving culture-specific references, rhetorical nuances, and stylistic features of the source text. Through this approach, viewers are exposed to the cultural “otherness” embedded in the original production, allowing artistic authenticity to remain relatively intact. In contrast, dubbing tends to adopt domestication strategies, reshaping dialogue and cultural markers to align with local sociocultural expectations, broadcasting norms, and market considerations. While this strategy may enhance accessibility and fluency for the target audience, it can simultaneously dilute certain artistic and ideological dimensions of the original text.

These findings underscore the complex relationship between translation modality, cultural representation, and audience experience within the Arab media environment. Translation is not merely a linguistic transfer but a process of cultural negotiation in which translators act as mediators of meaning, identity, and ideology. The tension between globalization and cultural specificity becomes particularly visible in streaming platforms, where commercial expansion intersects with cultural sensitivity.

Consequently, audiovisual translation plays a decisive role in shaping how global narratives are perceived, internalized, and reinterpreted in local contexts.

Recommendations for Practice

For Translators and Media Producers

Adopting a balanced and context-sensitive strategy is crucial. Translation choices should aim to preserve artistic authenticity while ensuring audience comprehension and engagement. Excessive domestication should be avoided, as it may result in cultural homogenization and the loss of narrative depth. Integrating cultural consultants and promoting continuous professional training in intercultural competence can significantly enhance translation quality.

For Policy Makers and Cultural Institutions

Institutions should establish comprehensive guidelines and ethical standards that promote cultural sensitivity in audiovisual translation. Encouraging transparency in adaptation decisions and supporting research-based practices can help safeguard cultural diversity while maintaining competitiveness in global markets.

For Further Research and Academic Inquiry

Future research should incorporate audience reception studies to assess how viewers interpret and evaluate translated content. Expanding comparative analyses to include other streaming platforms and regional productions would deepen understanding of cultural negotiation processes in audiovisual translation.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its contributions, this study is limited to Netflix's Arabic originals produced between 2022 and 2024 and excludes fan translations, which often adopt different ideological and stylistic approaches. Additionally, the absence of empirical audience feedback restricts the ability to measure actual viewer perception. Future research should broaden the corpus, include cross-platform comparisons, and integrate qualitative and quantitative audience data to triangulate findings and enhance the study's generalizability.

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