Unproclaimed Motivation: A Sociological Analysis of Interventionalist Practices Against Censorship in Non-Professional Arabic Subtitling

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Abstract

With technological advances in AVT production, distribution, and consumption, translation activity has expanded to allow many opportunities for user participation such as non-professional subtitling. AVT scholars have thereby asserted that a new framework using a sociological lens is needed to study translators' roles in non-professional settings. This paper focuses on the role of Arabic non-professional (ANP) subtitlers in their capacity as agents of normative change through intervening in the translation. Namely, this paper tests the hypothesis that one of ANP subtitlers' unproclaimed motivations behind subtitling is to challenge societal and subtitling norms. Translating explicit language is presented as an example of this unproclaimed motivation to challenge censorship and ultimately societal and subtitling norms. To this end, this paper relies on results obtained from a mixed-method survey that elicited sociodemographic data for 40 non-professional subtitlers of Arabic, as well as their motivations behind subtitling. This study has found that ANP subtitlers demonstrate aspects of interventionism by challenging censorship of explicit language. Interventionism is also identified as an unproclaimed motivation behind ANP subtitling. Survey responses and subtitling examples are analysed and discussed followed by concluding remarks and recommendations for future research.

Key words: audiovisual translation, subtitling, non-professional subtitling, Arabic, interventionism, activism, censorship, motivation, sociology of translation.

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1. Introduction

The development and proliferation of social media, the internet, and media production/distribution has bred new forms of translation that allow more participation from consumers of audiovisual (AV) products, which has blurred the line between so-called *professional* and *amateur* media production/distribution (Pérez-González, 2013a; Díaz-Cintas, 2018). It has, moreover, blurred the line between professional and non-professional translators and allowed virtually anyone to produce a translated product for consumption. Such developments are particularly evident in audiovisual translation (AVT), especially subtitling, where the rapid evolution of technology has had an obvious effect on the process, product, as well as consumption habits, allowing audiences to subtitle and typically, but not always, not conform to societal and subtitling norms (usually followed by the subtitling industry), and introducing new challenges to the era of AVT, one of which is interventionism present in non-professional subtitling (NPS) (Munday, 2016).

AVT researchers working across different cultural and geographical contexts (e.g., Pérez-González & Susam-Saraeva, 2012; Izwaini, 2014; Baker, 2016; Wang & Zhang, 2017; Khakshour Forutan & Modarresi, 2018; Khoshsaligheh et al., 2018) have explored and documented how fans, and those who have no affection for the ST, translate audiovisual works "to resist different forms of censorship and/or oppression" (Pérez-González, 2020, p. 176). Their research shows that NPS incorporates two types of challenges that are seen as a form of interventionism (more on interventionism later). First, NPS questions the current global distribution of media products by providing new ways of AV content distribution that cater to consumers' needs (Baker, 2019) i.e., no content is restricted based on geopolitical factors or because it has not been audio-visually translated. Second, it poses a challenge to the established global order via encouraging subtitlers to develop and experiment with inventive subtitling strategies that challenge restrictive conventions imposed by the professional subtitling industry (Pérez-González, 2013b).

One topic that is related to NPS interventionism (Pérez-González & Susam-Saraeva, 2012; Pérez-González, 2013a) is investigating motivations behind subtitling (McDonough Dolmaya, 2012; Olohan, 2014; Cemerin & Toth, 2017). In addition to a rather narrow focus of topics tackling the motivation behind NPS (Olohan, 2014; Cemerin & Toth, 2017; Li, 2019), there is very little research that links the notions of motivation and interventionism within the context of NPS, which is one of the aims of the current study. Scholars like Olohan (2014) and Pérez-González (2007, 2014) claim that motivation is interlinked with the notions of intervention "(…) in the sense of demonetization and de-professionalization of translation and the belief that audiovisual content should be available to everyone" (Cemerin & Toth, 2017, p. 221). Furthermore, Baker (2016) and Pérez-González (2016) assert that some NP translators are motivated by the need to self-express. It is argued that NPS is shaped by motivational factors of the individuals involved in them, making studying motivation in conjunction to interventionism vital.

Despite this abundance of research on NPS interventionism and motivation behind subtitling, there is, however, very limited research so far which tackles these topics by introducing practical examples of interventionism in subtitles produced by NP subtitlers. The current paper argues for a link between motivation behind NPS and interventionism by hypothesizing that one of Arabic[1] non-professional (ANP) subtitlers' unproclaimed motivation behind subtitling is to challenge societal and subtitling norms. This hypothesis will be tested using a sociological lens that investigates the sociological background of a number of ANP subtitlers. It will also be tested by surveying ANP subtitlers' motivational factors behind subtitling. A select number of ANP subtitles that constitute a form of interventionism against societal and subtitling norms regarding swear words which commercial subtitlers observe are used as an example of resisting censorship. As it will be too ambitious to fully document all forms of ANP interventionism or censorship, for the purposes of this article, the discussion will be limited to the specific case of ANP subtitlers with the examination of Arabic subtitles as a target text (TT) and English as a source text (ST). The study also aims to discuss heavily debated terminology concerning interventionism and censorship.

1.1.   Interventionism and Censorship

Defining the term *interventionism* is a controversial issue, with many TS and AVT researchers seemingly avoiding it, and introducing other terms to the discussion which require clarification themselves. Terms such as activism, manipulation, and resistance are used synonymously to refer to interventionist practices (e.g., Pérez-González, 2007; Tymoczko, 2010; Pérez-González, 2013a, 2014, 2016; Khoshsaligheh et al., 2018; Baker, 2019). Pérez-González for example, presents "activism" as interventionism under a chapter titled: *Audiovisual Translation as a Site of Interventionist Practice* and postulates that "audiovisual translation, formerly a site of representational practice, is quickly becoming a site of interventionist practice" (2014, p. 58). In discussing NPS, Pérez-González then introduces and distinguishes between *aesthetic* and *political* subtitling (2014, p. 70). As he puts it, *aesthetic* and *political* subtitling are two collaborative subcultures that aim to advance agendas of "media fans" and "grassroot movements," demonstrating the dimension of interventionist AVT in times of "media convergence" (Pérez-González, 2014, p. 78). Dwyer (2012, p. 229) explains that fans felt that "professionally" translated anime tended to involve extreme "flattening" or domestication strategies resulting in a "deodorizing" function by removing its distinctive "Japanese flavour." In its

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[1] Even though as a first language, Arabic and its subsequent variants are spoken across 22 states, commonly known as the Arab world, with a total population of an estimated 420 million people (Bokova, 2012), studies into ANP subtitling are rare. There are no studies empirically concerned with aspects of motivation behind subtitling or even the sociodemographic context of ANP subtitling. The few exceptions to this either acknowledge the existence of ANP subtitling (e.g. Gamal, 2007, 2014), or mention it as they discuss linguistic or sociopolitical issues related to AVT (e.g. Darwish, 2009; Alharthi, 2016a; Furgani, 2016; Yahiaoui, 2016). Other small-scale investigations into specific areas of ANP subtitling such as Izwaini's (2014) investigation of "amateur" translation in "Arabic-speaking cyberspace" was only interested in localization and volunteer AVT.

many shapes—including social, aesthetic, or political—the term interventionism tends to suggest that whatever the motive behind the interventionist practice, it must challenge dominant interpretations and constructions of the world through producing alternative approaches to doing things (Buser & Arthurs, 2013, as cited in Baker, 2019, p. 453).

Informed by the aforementioned diverse views, and in view of the sociopolitical context of ANP subtitlers and results from the current study, this paper regards ANP translation that challenges societal or subtitling norms while entailing a degree of risk to the subtitler, to be a form of interventionism. Considering the ANP subtitling context and depending on the country from which the ANP subtitler operates, degrees of risk can be in the form of legal action against the translator (e.g., criminal prosecution) or societal condemnation, which becomes an important factor considering "the conservatism of the Arab culture" (Alsharhan, 2020, p. 21). For example, a study on ANP subtitling of English swear words found that "deletion" is often used as a translation strategy because it "might eliminate the chances of objecting at the translation outcome in the target culture as it works into meeting the recipients' expectations" (Khalaf & Rashid, 2016, p. 302). Challenging societal or subtitling norms can be in the form of intervening in the way certain AV content is translated as "a reaction to the inaccuracy and excessive manipulation of commercial translations" (Massidda, 2015, p. 17) or intervening in the distribution and subtitling of AV products unavailable in the Arab world, as will be illustrated with textual examples later on.

Using censorship as an example to link motivation with interventionist practices, I argue that NP subtitlers resort to subtitling (interventionist practice) motivated by their resistance to forms of cautious manipulation (censorship) that is typically initiated by agents in a position of power (e.g., state-controlled censors, TV network executives, or NP subtitlers). This manipulation entails the incorporation of modifications (deletions and additions) in the TT "that deliberately depart from the semantic meaning of the original and unscrupulously misconstrue what is being said (or shown) in the original" (Díaz-Cintas, 2019, p. 184). Associating interventionist practices with censorship is not a novel notion, for Tymoczko (2010), translation itself is the main "activist" goal, especially, as claimed by Baker (2019), in the context of censorship. The title of this paper features the word "unproclaimed" because although they are not always confessed as a motivation behind subtitling by ANP subtitlers, interventionist practices against censorship are evident in the TT, as will be demonstrated in the examples.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

The current study adopts a framework drawn from the sociological turn in TS, motivated by Pierre Bourdieu's (1977, 1991) work and his notions of field, habitus, and capital in order to examine the individuals involved in NPS. For Bourdieu, the field of social activity, which is viewed here as the domain of ANP subtitling in the Arab World, is the place where there is a power struggle between

agents (1977, 1991). In the field of ANP subtitling, these agents could include subtitlers as producers, subtitlers as consumers, and the general viewership/consumers of ANP subtitles. Habitus, which is determined by the broad social, identity, and perceptive disposition of the individual that is significantly influenced by family and education (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991), can be viewed as the sociodemographic background of the respondents which has been captured in the survey data. Capital may be acquired or given, and can be provided in the form of tangible economic capital (money and materialistic possessions) or in the form of intangible social capital (e.g. network of contacts), cultural capital (education), and symbolic capital (prestige, status) (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991), such as ANP subtitlers' motivation to subtitle with the aim of improving their English language skills.

This sociological treatment allows us to draw correlations between certain translation decisions and the habitus of the translators i.e. "translatorial habitus" (Simeoni, 1998). Adopting a sociological approach by exploring the translatorial habitus also complements Gideon Toury's notion of "translation norms" (1980, 1995). Norms are defined "as the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community – as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate – into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations" (Toury, 1995, pp. 54–55). Through "focusing on how the translator's own behaviour and agency contribute to the establishment of norms" (Simeoni, 1998, as cited in Munday, 2016, p. 196), this helps explain how and why subtitlers intervene to challenge norms.

Exploring Bourdieu's sociological theory and applying it to ANP subtitling responds to calls from AVT scholars who have pointed out the need for the incorporation of sociological methods into TS because these methods "are relatively new for translation scholars and they offer much scope for further application and exploitation in their various forms" (Olohan, 2019, p. 7). Furthermore, Bourdieu's sociological theory allows for the exploration of how these important social aspects may directly affect motivation. This then leads to conclusions about both ANP subtitlers' motivations and, more importantly, how these social aspects affect the translation product that ultimately leads ANP subtitlers to practice subtitling as a form of interventionism.

2. Research Methods

This paper tests the hypothesis that one of ANP subtitlers' unproclaimed motivations behind subtitling is to challenge societal and subtitling norms. Results discussed in this paper are part of a large pool of data resulting from an ongoing research project that incorporates: (1) a survey sent to ANP subtitlers and (2) an analysis of a select corpus of ANP-subtitled texts. Participant responses presented in this paper come from the aforementioned mixed-method survey that was designed to elicit ANP subtitlers' responses about their motivation behind subtitling. The survey comprises 40 (73% multiple-choice and 27% open-ended) questions, which investigates among other things: (1) motivational factors behind ANP subtitling and (2) sociodemographic context of the participating ANP subtitlers. With the exception of those that target sociodemographic data, all questions allow participants to provide their own written answer and/or select a provided statement, thus addressing

one of the criticisms of past motivation-related research. The survey was delivered electronically (SurveyMonkey) and was sent to respondents as a link via direct messaging through www.subscene.com. This subtitle sharing website was found to host the most active ANP subtitlers based on several online discussion forums and personal observation. After sending the invitation to more than 200 potential participants and receiving a total of 40 complete and incomplete surveys, the survey collector was closed on 25th of April 2020.

The second method adopted for this paper is a qualitative analysis of a select corpus of texts produced by ANP subtitlers using the aforementioned sociological framework in addition to Toury's (1995) "translation norms." The analysis started by selecting texts from my sample's subtitling portfolios as documented in the survey, which led to two texts being identified as potential candidates for the analysis: *Sons of Anarchy* (Sutter, 2008–2014) and *Game of Thrones* (Benioff & Weiss, 2011–2019). After going through ANP subtitles of both texts and survey responses of their ANP subtitlers, subtitling examples of *Sons of Anarchy* were identified as a better representative of the hypothesis under examination. ANP subtitles of *Sons of Anarchy* were obtained from www.subscene.com. The subtitles were downloaded as .srt text files, which are editable and searchable. The subtitles are discussed with reference to the sociodemographic data obtained in the survey to make further conclusions following the sociological approach of this study. Non-sociodemographic survey data were also examined and thematically analysed following an inductive approach. The sociological framework and mixed-method approach allowed the theme of censorship as an example of ANP subtitling interventionism to emerge out of the social context in which ANP subtitlers operate. ANP subtitling examples illustrating this theme are presented and discussed in conjunction with responses from the survey data.

3. Analysis and Discussion

Michael Cronin stresses that "translation makes us realize that there have been and are other ways of seeing, interpreting, reacting to the world" (2003, p. 70). These ways influence and shape the translation and present a form of socio-contextual motives that would drive some ANP subtitlers to engage in subtitling. The current study shows examples of such motives as seen in the following comment by a survey respondent as they explain the difference between ANP subtitles and commercial subtitles: "they [commercial subtitlers] excel at editing and avoiding grammatical errors while I have the freedom to lay out my ideas and have full knowledge of each character, their past, etc."[2]. Here, the surveyed ANP subtitler's reported sense of freedom demonstrates an unproclaimed form of interventionism against societal and subtitling norms, and as hinted by other ANP subtitlers as well, he reported having the freedom to tackle explicit language without the restrictions of censorship. Survey responses include words like "freedom" and "non-restrictive" when ANP subtitlers discuss why NP subtitles appeal to them as producers or consumers.

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[2] To control the English proficiency variable, my survey was administered in Arabic and responses had to be translated by the author from Arabic into English.

Through a thematic analysis of the survey responses and ANP subtitles, the notion of censorship emerges as a major finding in that it is seen as an example of ANP subtitling interventionism. The analysis shows that unusual censorship circumstances seem to motivate about one third of the surveyed ANP subtitlers to make an impact on the status quo by taking up subtitling and showing that things can be done differently by resisting societal and subtitling norms, such as those that dictate that swear words should not be discussed openly (societal norm) (Abdelaal, 2019) and should be subtitled euphemistically (subtitling norm) (Khalaf & Rashid, 2016; Alsharhan, 2020). In an answer to a survey question asking about dealing with profanities and scenes showing explicit sexual activity, a respondent stated that they "subtitle the whole AV content", another argued that they "subtitle it as is to be honest with the audience without any falsification", showing that the surveyed ANP subtitlers are challenging societal and subtitling norms as practiced by the subtitling industry in the Arab world (more on industry norms shortly).

According to Toury (1995), being a translator involves learning to play a social role according to a set of "intersubjective translational norms." With regard to ANP subtitlers and Toury's understanding of norms as parameters for a translator, the data of the current study show that ANP subtitlers are not only aware of norms that are mainly the result of censorship but they are firm in their opinion that they enjoy freedom away from the restrictions of censorship and norms (upcoming examples from ANP subtitles further illustrate this). In reply to a survey question asking about the main difference between NP subtitles and subtitles produced by streaming platforms and TV networks, a respondent wrote: "streaming services and TV subtitles have many prohibitions and restrictions. As for online subtitles [NP subtitles], they are free and not restricted. You can modify them to suit you, and this is what I always do." This statement shows how NP subtitlers are not only aware of societal and subtitling norms but also report a sense of relief for working away from their influence as will be shown in the subtitling examples shortly.

Before analyzing a selection of ANP texts, it is important to understand the societal and subtitling norms that exist in the translation of swear words, profanities, and taboo language in the Arab world. When dealing with this kind of content, commercial subtitlers tend to translate "by using an expression that is more euphemistic in the TT" which "is one of the subtitling strategies adopted by many subtitlers from English to Arabic" (Abdelaal, 2019, p. 11). Also, the strategy of applying a shift in register in taboo words is often used by commercial subtitlers (Alsharhan, 2020). These strategies are adopted to conform to the societal norm dominant in Arabic cultures, where "people tend not to talk about, watch or listen to sex-related issues so openly" (Abdelaal, 2019, p. 11). This societal norm influences the subtitling norm, whereby translators are not the ones with the power; it is actually a societal norm that imposes certain strategies on the translator. Thus, for example, when humorous AV content in a movie classified as comedy includes jokes that are told with the use of profanities, the subtitler's job becomes even more challenging because of the imposed societal norms (e.g., regarding swear words or religion-based humor) and subtitling conventions (related to style, font, addition of comments) that accompany the task. This is because there is substantial contrast between

societies with respect to which types of humor are preferred in social interactions (Alharthi, 2016b) and inevitably on screen. For Arabic speakers, jokes with sexual allusions are not favored on screen, while they are often part of STs that are generated within Western contexts (Alharthi, 2016b).

In this paper, censorship is discussed by tackling just one of its categories, i.e. explicit language (the linguistic aspect) with a focus on textual examples that include swear words, profanities, or other taboo elements, as well as explicit AV content (the visual aspect) in translation from English into Arabic. Several Arab countries have resorted to censoring internet traffic using sophisticated techniques and state-mandated filtering which focus on pornography, drugs, and religious distortion (Shishkina & Issaev, 2018). This results in a high level of censorship as an active norm (Toury, 1995) in English to Arabic subtitling, leading some countries to block access to certain websites or the internet altogether for various sociopolitical reasons, including maintaining political stability, strengthening national security, and preserving traditional societal values (Shishkina & Issaev, 2018).

The topic of censorship in NP translation has been tackled in various ways. Massidda (2015) examined censorship in Italy and compared the translation approaches of "professional" and NP subtitlers in rendering offensive language from Italian to English. Her findings indicated that while "professional" subtitlers alleviated or euphemized profanities such as "motherfucker", "dick", and "asshole" into "son of a good mother," "biscuit" and "idiot," respectively, NP subtitlers translated them without altering their intensity. Abdolmaleki et al. (2018) investigated NPS of manga[3] in Iran. Abdolmaleki et al. (2018) reported that, according to a manga online community's founder, most of the community's readers are young, therefore as a community they would follow self-made rules that downplay swear words and insults, and NP translators attempt to comply with these guidelines as much as possible. For example, many swear words are replaced with words that are not regarded very aggressive in Persian yet still reflect profound feelings (Abdolmaleki et al., 2018).

Despite a noticeable scarcity of research on Arabic language subtitling (Alharthi, 2016b; Furgani, 2016; Khalaf & Rashid, 2016; Abdelaal, 2019), previous studies show that explicit language tends to be flattened by NP translators. Khalaf and Rashid (2016) for instance, examined the attenuation of obscenity of swear words in ANP subtitles and their findings illustrate that the most common strategies used are deletion, change of semantic fields, register shift and the use of archaic words or euphemistic expressions, generalization and linguistic substitution, and ambiguity but more importantly is that they found that subtitlers are "abiding by norms in the target culture" in choosing the translation strategy to handle swear words (Khalaf & Rashid, 2016, p. 303).

The findings of the current study show that 45% of the surveyed ANP subtitlers emphasized the importance of translating explicit language (swear words, profanities, or other taboo elements) and explicit AV content without using strategies such as deletion, attenuation, or euphemism to flatten

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[3] Although manga, that is, comics or graphic novels originating in Japan, is beyond the scope of the current study, the socio-cultural context and the focus of the study resembles that of ANP subtitlers.

their obscenity. This outcome contradicts Khalaf and Rashid's (2016) findings. When asked about translating such content, a participant replied that "the content is translated as is, the viewer and the translator already know the content and its classification [i.e., whether it is classified as suitable for adults or children]"; another stated: "I subtitle it as is because it may be of importance to the context of the film". These comments indicate that this individual was motivated in part to challenge the norm of censorship by intervening in the translation. Other surveyed ANP subtitlers confessed that they entered the world of subtitling out of frustration with other subtitlers' handling of such content. Subtitling examples 1 and 2 below substantiate these claims and show how interventionism can be an unproclaimed motivating factor behind subtitling.

Example 1 (as well as example 2) are of subtitles produced by P14, who is a 35–44-year-old male participant of the survey. He is a high school graduate and describes himself as a "professional subtitler" and claims to have not received training in translation and interpreting (T&I), and has never worked as a translator for a company/agency before. Drawing from the sociological approach to translation, the assumption that the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991) of an individual or a group can be "reconstructed" (Wolf, 2014, p. 13) through their various activities helps understand P14's translation process by tracing the "interaction between the text analysis and the social analysis" (Wolf, 2014), which was possible owing to the availability of sociodemographic data on the subtitler.

Example 3 and Example 4 were produced by survey respondents P21 and P38. P21 is an 18–24-year-old male, who is a high school graduate and describes himself as a "professional subtitler". According to his profile, he has subtitled, or participated in ANP subtitling, about 42 movies and/or TV series and, according to my survey, has spent a year or more ANP subtitling. When asked in the survey about his motivation behind ANP subtitling, P21 stated that he practices ANP subtitling to enable others to enjoy the AV content. Most importantly, he replied to survey question: How do you deal with profanities and sexual scenes? by commenting:

- **I put them as they are** (P21)

P21's response suggests that he is in favor of conveying ST taboo language with the same intensity in the TT. By examining the claim against his translation, Example 4 illustrates that he does adopt this approach to taboo language, challenging social norms regarding sexual taboos while at the same time conforming to ANP subtitling norms deploying Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) because, according to my survey data (Figure 1 below), the use of MSA is favored by 69% of the surveyed sample of Arabic ANP subtitlers.

Figure 1.

Participant responses to: "What do you think of the use of MSA for mainstream subtitles (DVDs, cinema, Netflix)?"
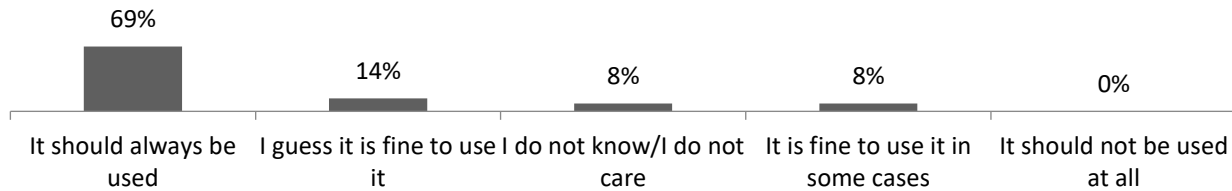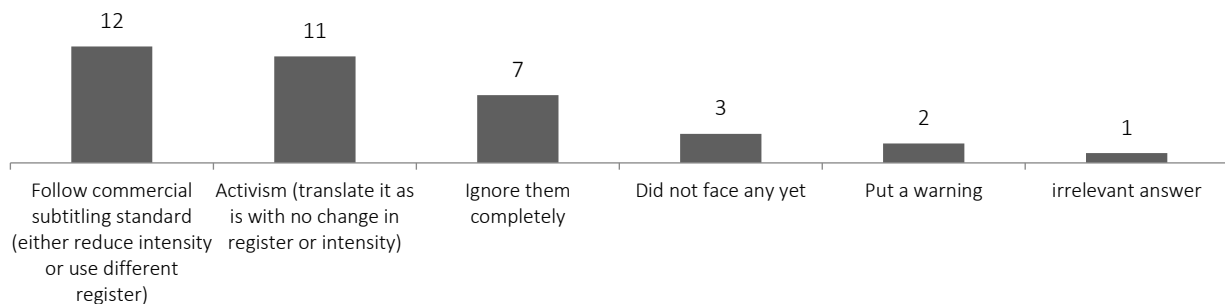

Source: author's own study.

As for P38, his sociodemographic data demonstrate that he is a 25–34-year-old male and is a university graduate and describes himself as an "amateur subtitler." His profile on www.subscene.com shows that he has subtitled, or participated in ANP subtitling, about 76 movies and/or TV series and, as stated in my survey, has spent a year or more ANP subtitling. He also provided an interesting response to the question: How do you deal with profanities and sexual scenes? (Figure 2 below). He stated:

- **The content is translated as is**, the viewer and the translator [should] already know the content and its classification (P38)

Figure 2.

Participant responses to "How do you deal with profanities and sexual scenes?"

Source: author's own study.

In a similar fashion to P21's remark, P38's response indicates that he is also adamant on translating taboo language in a way that is as intense as it is in the ST. In line with this response, P38's translation approach to the taboo word "bastard", as seen in Example 3 was to retain its intensity by using an Arabic equivalent that is not common in commercial subtitling.

These sociodemographic data show that not all ANP subtitlers are "techno-kids" who are mainly interested in subtitling films in a practical, fast, and technical fashion (Gamal, 2007, p. 91). As an ANP

subtitler, P14's profile on subscene.com shows that he has subtitled, or participated in subtitling, more than 500 titles of movies and TV series and, according to the survey, has spent a year or more subtitling, and reported to have received money for ANP subtitling work in the past.

Examples 1 and 2 exhibit instances in which swear words, profanities, and taboo elements are translated in contrast to societal and subtitling norms observed by commercial subtitlers. Both Examples show subtitles taken from the American action crime drama series *Sons of Anarchy* (Sutter, 2008–2014). The TV series follows the lives of an outlaw motorcycle club in the US. This particular ST was chosen because it was subtitled by one of the survey respondents as well as for being identified as having a plethora of explicit language. Examples 1 and 2 show ANP subtitles produced by survey respondent P14.

Example 1.

Subtitles by P14 taken from season 1, episode 7 of the Sons of Anarchy *(Sutter, 2008–2014)*

ST	ANP Subtitles	Back-translation
Clay [00:31:33]: Not gonna let anything turn Jax away from Sam Crow, especially "pussy". Gemma [00:31:37]: Tara's not "pussy". He loved her.	لن أدع شيئاً يبعد " جاكس " عن " سام كرو " وخاصةً *المهبل* " تيرا " ليست مهبل إنه يحبها	– I am not letting something move "Jax" away from "Sam Crow" especially vagina – "Tara" is not a vagina He loves her

Example 1 demonstrates an example where the ST word "pussy" is translated using an Arabic equivalent that is as offensive as the ST term. In this particular scene, Gemma and Clay are discussing their son's (Clay's stepson) involvement with a woman named Tara.

Even though the ST and the TT words "pussy" and مهبل belong to different registers in their respective languages, they share similar intensity. However, Arabic مهبل, which usually translates to "vagina", is rarely used as an equivalent for the word "pussy" especially in commercial subtitles. Instead, the commercial norm would be to either omit the word or to flatten it by using a less offensive term as will be shown shortly.

Compared to P14 from Example 1, other ANP subtitlers rendered the ST word "pussy" using Arabic فرج, which is a more general formal term referring to "genitalia" or "private parts". As such, it dramatically reduces the intensity/offensiveness of the ST. Using the Arabic equivalent فرج indicates

that the subtitler conformed to the commercial norm by adopting ambiguity as a way of attenuating the ST's obscenity, which matches Khalaf and Rashid's (2016) findings. Therefore, P14's use of the Arabic word مهبل is viewed as demonstrating ANP subtitlers' challenge to societal and subtitling norms that are generally observed on Arabic mainstream media by presenting a different way of subtitling such content, challenging censors' power and putting themselves at risk for doing so.

Example 2.

Subtitles by P14 taken from season 1, episode 7 of Sons of Anarchy *(Sutter, 2008–2014)*

ST	ANP Subtitles	Back-translation
Tig [00:39:33]: Come on. Get out of here before I "rape" both of you.	اخرجوا من هنا قبل أن/أغتصبكما جميعاً	Get out of here before I "rape" you all

Example 2 includes subtitles which were also produced by P14. The example shows how the ST word "rape" was translated by P14 with Arabic أغتصب which is the closest equivalent (back-translation: "rape"). In this scene, Tig a male member of the bike gang is addressing another male and his girlfriend. The ST word "rape" was used to convey a threat towards the other participants in the scene and replacing it with a weaker word/phrase or omitting it entirely would take away from the intensity of the message. This instance demonstrates another case where the ANP subtitler retained the intensity of the ST and did not resort to one of the strategies normally used in commercial Arabic subtitles to avoid mentioning the subject of rape.

The use of ST words "pussy" and "rape" conveys certain emotions that complement the ST dialogue and this is important to convey as well. In Example 1, the ST word "pussy" was used by a male speaker as a pejorative term towards a female and to insult is the main reason behind the use of such term. In Example 2, the ST word "rape" is being used in a derogatory fashion to threaten the listeners. In both instances, the use of explicit language in the ST serves a purpose that was realized by P14 and confirms claims made by the surveyed ANP subtitlers, stating that explicit language is important and should not be omitted or flattened.

In answer to a survey question asking about how to deal with profanities and scenes depicting sexual activity, P14 explicitly stated that such content "must be clarified [subtitled clearly]. You cannot deceive the viewers", which is what he demonstrated in the previous examples. This response indicates that P14 clearly takes a clear stance against how such language is translated. His attitude would appear to concur with Tymoczko's (2010) and Baker's (2019) postulate about interventionism and censorship being correlated. In other words, P14's stance on subtitling swear words and taboo language suggests an interventionist approach, moving against the norms of commercial translation found on TV screens, cinema, etc. P14's response to the survey about the importance of not deceiving

the viewer attests to that stance. Although P14 never labelled himself as an interventionist or his work as motivated by interventionism, he certainly appears to have demonstrated certain attributes of interventionist practices.

P14's sociodemographic background helped paint a picture of why he made certain translational choices in translating explicit language. His aforementioned response "[…] You cannot deceive the viewers" and the subtitles he has produced reveal that although he did not openly state interventionism as a motivational factor behind his ANP subtitling work in the survey, he exhibits a form of "unproclaimed" interventionism seen in his challenge of the censorship rules usually observed in the Arab world.

Example 3.

Subtitles by P38 taken from season 8, episode 2 of Game of Thrones *(Benioff & Weiss, 2011–2019).*

ST		I'm Robert Baratheon's **bastard**.	
Commercial subtitles (OSN)	أنا **ابن** (روبرت باراثيون) **غير الشرعي**	ANP subtitles	أنا **نغل** (روبرت براثيون)
Back translation	I am (Robert Baratheon's) **illegitimate son**	Back translation	I am (Robert Baratheon's) **child of adultery**

Example 3 demonstrates the use of the Arabic equivalent نغل to translate the taboo word "bastard", interestingly, by another ANP subtitler, P38. The ANP version with the Arabic equivalent نغل (lit. a child of adultery) puts focus on the person and their parents, with an allegation that the parents are adulterers. The ANP subtitler opted for a shift in register, which conforms with commercial and ANP subtitling norms, but their approach when comparing the Arabic versions illustrates a choice of words that does not take away much from what makes the ST word taboo. P38's chosen Arabic equivalent نغل is closer to the ST's intensity in terms of the "adultery" associations, which illustrates a form of interventionism as per this paper's definition of the term.

Another example is seen in how the word "bitch" is translated into Arabic. "Bitch" is considered taboo if translated into certain wordings in Arabic if the translation insinuates undertones relating to low morals or adultery. Example 4 below shows how this word is translated differently by Arabic commercial subtitler(s) and ANP subtitler(s).

Example 4.

Subtitles by P21 taken from the American psychological thriller movie Joker *(Phillips et al., 2019).*

ST		[A man shouts at a woman as she rushes out of the train]	
		MAN: **Bitch**!	
Commercial subtitles (iTunes)	ساقطة!	ANP subtitles	عاهرة!
Back translation	Woman with low morals	Back translation	Adulteress [salacious]!

Example 4 illustrates how the English taboo word "bitch" was translated differently by the commercial subtitler(s) and ANP subtitler and survey respondent P21. The ANP subtitler translated the ST word "bitch" into the formal Arabic equivalent عاهرة which literally means "adulteress" or "salacious". The Arabic equivalent عاهرة is derived from the root Arabic word عهر (lit. "adultery"). As for the commercially subtitled version, the formal Arabic equivalent ساقطة which means, in case of its use in Example 4, "a woman of low morals" was used to translate the English word "bitch". Although both the commercially subtitled and cybersubtitled versions are not as offensive as the ST, partly due to a shift in register, it appears that the cybersubtitled version is closer in intensity than the commercial one. This aligns the Arabic equivalent عاهرة more closely with the ST's sexual undertones because the Arabic equivalent is more suggestive of the idea of sex or adultery than the commercial version. It is noted that P5 (his socio-demographics are discussed below) chose the Arabic equivalent عاهرة even though the use of formal Arabic equivalent ساقطة (lit. woman with low morals) as adopted in the commercial version is commonly used in commercial subtitling and some ANP subtitles. Comparing the Arabic equivalent ساقطة as used in the commercial version to the Arabic equivalent عاهرة in terms of intensity indicates that the Arabic equivalent عاهرة is slightly stronger when used to translate the English taboo word "bitch". The use of a stronger rendition by the ANP subtitlers, I would argue, is a sign of their challenging social norms. Although the cybersubtitled version conforms to the Arabic commercial subtitling norm of using MSA, their choice of words is different to the commercial norm of euphemism and is closer to the ST taboo connotations that accompany the English taboo word "bitch".

Even though the English taboo word "bitch" could have been translated into the colloquial and informal قحبة (lit. prostitute) as claimed by Khalaf and Rashid (2016), Example 4 still illustrates varying formal Arabic equivalents عاهرة and ساقطة with varying intensity. Example 4 demonstrates how a different choice of words could explain different approaches that could be due to different

motivations behind translations, i.e., the ANP subtitler was not hesitant to use to an Arabic equivalent that has sexual (taboo for Arabic speakers) connotations as opposed to the commercial version where the used equivalent only suggests low morals and is not necessarily related to the sexual undertones that are associated with the ST word. Example 4 also shows how ANP subtitlers pick and choose which norms they want to follow as they conform with the subtitling norm of using MSA, but still challenge the social norm when it came to subtitling taboo language.

Another form of challenge is when ANP subtitlers add comments in their subtitles in order to warn the viewer of upcoming explicit scenes. This intervention or strategy for dealing with explicit AV content may not equate to interventionism, as defined earlier, because it does not involve risk nor does it challenge societal norms but it is still poses a clear challenge to commercial subtitlers because it is definitely not a strategy that is practiced in mainstream media (TV, cinema, DVDs, etc.). This form of indirect interventionism has been reported by 12% of the surveyed ANP subtitlers and was observed by the author through personal observation too. Example 3 illustrates an example of such intervention

Example 5.

Subtitles by P14 taken from season 1, episode 7 of Sons of Anarchy *(Sutter, 2008–2014).*

ST	ANP Subtitles	Back-translation
[sexual scene ensues]	تحذير*: لقطة اباحية لن اترجمها*	*warning*: pornographic scene [upcoming] which I will not subtitle

In Example 5, the ANP subtitler intervenes in the subtitles by adding a comment warning the viewer of an upcoming scene showing sexual activity which they will not subtitle. This intervention and insertion of additional text shows that the subtitler has a level of self-censorship when subtitling visually explicit content but not explicit language as demonstrated in previous examples. This could be related to their habitus of being raised in a society where such content is not regarded as acceptable, especially in mainstream media or in public. It is regarded as self-censorship because it conforms with commercial censorship practices with regards to explicit AV content. Although about 30% of the surveyed ANP subtitlers have shown that they have no problem with subtitling explicit language as seen in Examples 1 and 2, Example 5 shows an intervention but one that challenges rules in a different manner. Example 5 is also different from Examples 1 and 2 because it illustrates a different position on the translator's part in relation to the subtitles.

Overall, about 20% of the surveyed respondents were adamant in conveying their dismay at the practice of warning the viewer of an upcoming explicit scene. One of the respondents calls for subtitling everything "to be honest with the audience without any falsification"; another stated that

they "subtitle the whole AV content". Additionally, I have come across several online blogs, forums, and social media posts (e.g., Wadan, 2006; jimy34.blogspot.com, 2016) discussing how self-censorship practiced by some ANP subtitlers is "polluting" the viewing experience. This strategy may not fit the aforementioned definition of interventionism as set out by this paper, but it certainly shows that ANP subtitling as a field is showing signs of interventionism beyond translation. The strategy also shows that the ANP subtitling field is not a site of representational practice anymore because the mechanisms of agents can be traced even if they conform to their society's norms as they simultaneously challenge subtitling conventions. This form of challenge illustrates how much influence ANP subtitlers have in their field as they not only show forms of intervention that disrupt commercial subtitling but also show signs of intervention that challenge the mechanisms of power within their own ANP subtitling field as well.

4. Conclusion

The main findings of this paper are that 45% of the surveyed ANP subtitlers claim to subscribe to practices that may be called interventionist, and that this can also be seen in some of the examples of their texts. This paper set out to argue for a link between motivation behind NPS and interventionist practices by hypothesizing that one of ANP subtitlers' unproclaimed motivations behind subtitling is to challenge societal and subtitling norms. In brief, evidence from the current study shows signs that ANP subtitling is becoming a field of interventionist practice, despite interventionism not being proclaimed as a motivational factor by surveyed ANP subtitlers. It is hard, however, to make any generalizations about ANP subtitles across the Arab world for the lack of data on translational habitus, sociodemographic contexts of ANP subtitlers, and different societal norms as this would require large-scale empirical research. Even though there are some ambiguities in how previous AVT research defines interventionism, according to the current data, some ANP subtitlers exhibit forms of interventionist practices because they challenge subtitling conventions and societal norms. Unlike findings from other studies (e.g. Baker, 2016), the surveyed ANP subtitlers do not openly proclaim or advertise that they are interventionists, nor do they claim to be working towards a unified agenda, they are simply practicing subtitling in a way that suits them without conforming to subtitling conventions and societal norms.

There are a few limitations to this paper, such as the small number of examples used for the subtitling analysis. Even though only three examples were discussed in this paper, in addition to P14, P21 and P38 displayed forms of interventionism in their survey data and in at least half a dozen examples. In addition, the scope of this paper is restricted to the investigation of forms of interventionism within the theme of censorship. Even though this is a restricting theme for the current investigation, as a finding, censorship proved to be a helpful insight into interventionist practices using a sociological lens. Despite these limitations, the results of this study have shown that ANP subtitlers' motivational factors have an impact on translational choices, choices that can be interpreted as forms of interventionism in some cases. Other instances of ANP subtitling interventionism were also observed

in other areas that are beyond the scope of the current paper and include AV content distribution, translation of religious content, and translation of humorous language.

Future research into NPS using a sociological approach has the potential to further our understanding of other issues on interventionism such as exploring possible links between anonymity and subtitling translation strategies, or subtitling selected AV content as a means for self-expression, or allowing the NP subtitlers to voice their views on a matter such as self-censorship. As in other areas of social life, our understanding of translation as a social practice and a possible space of individual intervention could be substantially improved by analyzing NP translators' motivations for subtitling and their sociodemographic conditions that affect decision-making by involving them in the dialogue, especially in under-researched areas such as Arabic language/speakers. On a theoretical level, this type of research has the prospect of benefiting from disciplines such as sociology of translation, which remains a relatively new field for AVT research, yet a very promising one.

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