Transcreating humour for (re)dubbing into Arabic: creativity, register variations and meaning making between overt and covert dichotomies

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Abstract

The transfer of humorous elements in audio-visual texts is a challenging task as verbal expressions heavily rely on witty wordplay and are visually bound. To overcome such a challenge, the translator has to have two particular skills: creativity and a thorough understanding of the context and/or intended meanings. This paper aims at investigating the realisation of humour in dubbing animation vis-à-vis register variation and creativity by comparing the Egyptian dub with the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) re-dub of Disney's Monster's Inc. *Drawing on House's (2015) translation quality assessment model, the data analysis reveals that resorting to colloquialism as a covert translation strategy provided a functionally adequate, nuanced leeway for the translator to capture the essence situational humour of the source text by relying on the on-screen visuals. Therefore, the translator quasi-assumes the role of an author to communicate interpersonal meanings as effectively and humorously as possible. Meanwhile, resorting to the standard variation as an overt translation strategy significantly deflated and sacrificed verbal humour due to the translator's literal style and Al-Jazeera's ideological orientation that shuns functional equivalence for the sake of linguistic homogenisation.*

Keywords: transcreation, (re)dubbing, translation quality assessment, register variation.

1. Introduction: A changing scene

A radical change has disturbed the universe of audiovisual translation in the Arab world when in March 2013, Al-Jazeera Children's Channel (currently rebranded as Jeem TV) countered the Egyptian hegemony in the dubbing of animations by signing a large-scale agreement with Disney to re-dub a selection of its feature films in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Needless to say, Al-Jazeera's decision instigated a coterminous heated discussion on social media and in the academic community, especially since the Egyptian vernacular is unanimously considered the ideal language variety "to capture the humorous and casual nature of the discourse" (Farghal & Almanna 2015: 160). Although this linguistic shift emanated from well-intentioned policies that

aspire "to establish a pan-Arab voice and stance and to convey precise socio-cultural, political, and religious values" in the domains of education and entertainment (Di Giovanni 2016: 4), the re-dubbings did not receive similar popularity. That is because adopting MSA in animation generally results in stilted, often transliterated renditions that are deficient in humour and creativity, a decisive finding corroborated by previous studies (Di Giovanni 2016b; Tawfiq 2018; Yahiaoui et al. 2019, 2020; Yahiaoui 2021). Nevertheless, this does not mean standard Arabic is unviable in dubbing animations; on the contrary, as Farghal & Almanna (2015) point out, the standard variety fits well with the formality of historical –or religious– animations. This demonstrates that linguistic and stylistic choices, to a certain extent, stem from a thorough understanding of the audiovisual text's genre, register and thematic content.

According to Zanotti (2015), re-dubs are typologised into three overarching categories: *revoicing* (going beyond the restaging phase by implementing changes to non-textual features such as acting style and voice quality to a previous or original dubbing script), *revision* (correcting mistranslations, rewriting, or inserting stylistic changes to an existing dubbing script), and *retranslation* (introducing a new dubbing script for recording). When discussing the underlying motivations for re-dubbing, Zanotti (2015: 137) postulates that apart from commercial factors, re-dubs "are made in answer to the cultural policy of special institutions" and the "shifting needs and changing perceptions in the target culture". As Tawfiq (2018) has shown in her study of MSA re-dubs through the prism of language management theory, Jeem TV regards multilingualism as an issue that internally separates the homogeneity of Arab societies. Therefore, Tawfiq (2018: 352) claims that the editorial guidelines set by the channel metalinguistically harbour language ideologies that contribute to the construction of a "unified Arab identity that is culturally and socially homogenous" and one that is able to "project Arab values that conform with religious beliefs". Similarly, Di Giovanni (2016b: 94) accentuates that Disney's "association with a global communications giant like Al Jazeera involves securing wide distribution, visibility and promotion for its products". Jeem TV's endeavour, in turn, is an organised linguistic management project realised through the ideological axes of normalisation and patronage (Chaume 2012).

2. *Monsters, Inc.* as a case study

One of Disney's films that underwent the process of re-dubbing into MSA is *Monsters, Inc.* (2001), a film that creatively plays with the idea that childhood monsters that reveal themselves from underneath the bed or closets terrify children to supply Monstropolis city with clean power energy using their screams. Thus, behind its expressed humour and running jokes, the story also serves as a subtle, engaging allegory that raises awareness of industrial and ecological concerns (Tranter & Sharpe 2008; Caraway & Caraway 2020). The Egyptian dubbing, which followed soon after the film's release, gained widespread popularity, partly due to the dubbing cast that featured famous voices such as comedian Mohamed Henedi and Samy Maghawry in the leading roles of Mike Wazowski and James B. Sullivan, in addition to Hanan Turk and Maged El-Kedwany voicing the characters of Celia Mae and Yeti respectively. Meanwhile, the re-dub consisted of professional Lebanese voice actors (more known in the dubbing industry). In fact, the mere existence of a first translation and a subsequent retranslation immediately elicits rivalry through difference (Pym 1998/2014; Deane-Cox 2014; Venuti 2004), as also pointed out by Zhang & Ma (2018), who argue that intertextual links between (re)translations can create dissidence. When it comes to audio-visual retranslation, Zanotti (2015) considers re-dubs a negative phenomenon and lists changing the original voice actors and dialogue as the main reason, but only in passing. Nonetheless, Zanotti's cursory remark is understandable given the scant availability of comprehensive analyses of re-dubbing despite its pervasiveness (Zanotti

2018; Albachten & Gürçağlar 2020). This scarcity is even more alarmingly visible in the Arabic context. Using *Monsters, Inc.* as a case in point, this contribution aims to fill the gap by examining how humour is expressed in the Egyptian dubbing vis-à-vis the MSA re-dub in relation to register variation and creativity. Furthermore, the research adopts House's (2015) model of translation quality assessment to identify diverging points and translation strategies (covert vs. overt) to subsequently provide a statement of quality that comparatively delineates the successes and/or failures of both versions in capturing the humorous effects.

3. Translation quality assessment model

Juliane House (2015) established a theoretical model of translation quality assessment that is eclectic in its scope and design as it is built upon the Hallidayan systemic-functional theory, pragmatic theory, register theory, and discourse analysis, with the notion of equivalence as the kernel criterion that binds all. With its roots dating back to 1977 and its subsequent modifications in 1981, 1997, and 2015, the model, according to House (2015: 1), is still one of the few, if not, "the only fully worked out, research-based, theoretically informed and interdisciplinary conceived approach to translation quality assessment of its kind". Her model distinguishes two translation methods: overt and covert translation. An overt translation is defined as "one in which the addressees of the translation text are quite 'overtly' not directly addressed"; therefore, it is not a second original (House 2015: 54). Meanwhile, a covert translation is one that "enjoys the status of an original source text in the target culture" (House 2015: 56). In the case of the latter, maintaining or, more aptly recreating, functional equivalence and socio-cultural relevance in the target text necessitates the application of a cultural filter, which opens the door for manipulation, and that is primarily why covert translations are considered originals. However, as Hatim & Munday (2004) opine, applying the filter should be informed by the awareness of differences in socio-cultural predispositions and communicative preferences between source and target culture so as not to create a version (unjustified use of filtering).

House (2015: 69) eschews from the "fundamentally misguided" Skopos-based approaches to translation, and opts instead for a comparative analysis to highlight mismatches or errors, which, too, can be overt or covert. Her interpretation of function transcends the "simplistic probabilistic text typology" (House 2015: 26). Instead, it relies on the emotive plane of language –examining interpersonal and ideational functions– to locate the individual function of a text (Vallès 2014). To this end, House (2015) developed a four-tiered scheme for analysis that integrates genre with register to characterise the deeper textual structures and patterns on the one hand, and to "refer any single textual exemplar to the class of texts with which it shares a common purpose or function" on the other (House 2015: 64). In other words, register captures the micro-context connections, whereas genre deals with "the macro-context of the linguistic and cultural community in which the text is embedded" (House 2015: 64). However, genre in the Housian model is conceived in the broadest of terms as an inventory that subsumes all generic categories across all cultures, albeit, the textual realisations of genre might be null in different cultures (House 2015). For House (2001: 247), translation is viewed as "the recontextualisation of a text in L1 by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in L2". In likening translation to recontextualisation, House affirms that not only does the preservation of meaning and function is achieved by employing equivalent situational-dimensional features, it is also achieved by creative transportation.

4. The register of language

As Pettit (2015) argues, arriving at a clear definition of register is not easy due to its inextricable connectedness with style, genre, and, more or less, culture. For example, Halliday (1978: 195) defines register as the "set of meanings that is appropriate to a particular function of language, together with the words and structures which express these meanings". Years later, and in the same vein, Savova (2005: 898) broadly defines register as "the way people use language in different situations […and it] is often used as a full or partial synonym for style, speech variety or variation, field of discourse, and text type". In other words, register is contingent on the awareness of the broader network of situational differences and communicative needs, which are manifested in three contextual variables: field, tenor, and mode. House (2001: 248) accordingly provides her definitions: *field* "captures social activity, subject matter or topic, including differentiation of degrees of generality, specificity or 'granularity' in lexical items according to rubrics of specialised, general and popular"; *tenor* "refers to the nature of the participants, the addresser and the addressees, and the relationship between them in terms of social power and social distance, as well as degree of emotional charge"; and *mode* "refers to both the channel—spoken or written […] and the degree to which potential or real participation is allowed for between writer and reader".

That said, it is inevitable to tackle, if somewhat briefly, the diglossic tapestry of the Arabic language in relation to register, that is, the co-existence of more than one linguistic form. Simply put, Arabic has a standard 'high' form which is learned via formal education and is used for formal speaking and writing purposes (represented by MSA), and several vernacular 'low' forms used for ordinary, everyday conversation (represented by four regional dialects: Levantine, Egyptian, Iraqi/Gulf, and North African). Although the latter is more prominent, the high variety appears to be the desired choice for some, since it is the "ideal form against which other forms can be judged" in general (Linn et al. 2018: 27), and it is a "unifying cultural force in Arab nationalism" in particular (Alsahafi 2016: 4). Schjerve (2003) and Ferguson (1996), before her, remarked on the association of diglossia with conflict and political power; a clearly detectable association in Al Jazeera's violation of this hardly-ever-questioned dyadic pattern (Di Giovanni 2016a).

5. The register of dubbing

Despite the usefulness of House's model to assess translation quality and its holistic amalgamation of situational, textual, and cultural dimensions (Schäffner 1997), the concept of quality itself, even for House, remains exceedingly problematic. For instance, Al-Qinai (2000: 498) states that "[q]uality is relative and absolutes of accuracy cease where the end-user (i.e. client) imposes his subjective preferences of style in TT". Likewise, Rothe-Neves' (2002: 114) diagnosis reveals that the problem "reside[s] in how to express quality or what measure should be used for the quality of a translation". Here, Al-Qinai and Rothe-Neves emphasise the impossibility to achieve objectivity, as there is "neither a definitive reading of a text nor a perfect rendering which achieves the goals of ST" (Al-Qinai 2000: 498). Dubbing-wise, quality is commonly associated with naturalness or what has been variously labelled prefabricated orality (Baños & Chaume 2009), pretended spontaneity (Baños 2014), and real realism (Pérez-Gonzalez 2007); all of which means that the dubbing script should be written to be read as if spoken. In this regard, Chuame (2020) posits that dubbing is an exemplary case of the invisibility of translation given the conscious erasure of the original dialogue through domestication and artistic means, which are aimed at establishing an equipoise between the semiotic codes transmitted through the acoustic and visual channels. Chaume (2020: 111) goes even further to

say that in this creative process, different standards of quality are to be maintained, including the "creation of credible and natural dialogue, spontaneous-sounding and convincing sentences, gestures, delivery and intonation that create the illusion of watching a 'real' story". On a similar note, Pavesi (2018: 105) associates realism with the audiences' habits and naturalness with "what is idiomatic or conventionally approved by viewers, who as native speakers recognise a linguistic choice as fitting in a given sociopragmatic situation". It follows that the register of dubbing (Marzà et al. 2006), however contrived, should ideally emulate natural dialogue and create an impression of reality to allow viewers to identify with the film (Fresco 2009). It goes without saying that due to the animated nature of *Monsters, Inc.*, this sense of identification is thoroughly linguistic.

6. Dubbing humour and the charm of creativity

Drawing on House's analysis model, Munday (2016) concludes that subtitling is an instance of overt translation because the target audience is constantly visually reminded of the translated text. *A fortiori*, dubbing is an instance of covert translation the audience do not have access to the original dialogue. That is why the verbal code takes a primary place in dubbing, especially in dubbing verbally expressed humour, which more often than not elevates situational humour. There is an established consensus that dubbing humour is a formidable task, but it is verbal humour that presents the most complex translational challenges (Chiaro & Piferi 2010) since, as Chiaro (2008: 570) argues, it "manifestly touches upon the most central and highly debatable issues in TS, those of equivalence and translatability". If equivalence and translatability are the primary mediating factors in translating humorous texts, dubbing may well constitute creativity rather than manipulation. Drawing on the works of Galassi (1994) and Bollettieri (1994), Zanotti (2014) acknowledges that the dialogue adapter's task is to relatively abandon the original and recreate credible effective dialogues that can grasp the meanings, the allusions, and the intentions that underlie the original meaning via transcreation. The term is imbued with a sense of departure from the original dialogue where "verbal language has definitely lost its prominence and words have come together with visual references to form a broad cultural unit" (Di Giovanni 2008: 40). For instance, O'Hagan & Mangiron (2013: 107) suggest that transcreation "draws attention to the human agency of the translator in the process of translation, inviting variable, non-uniform and at times non-predictable solutions". Put differently, given the priority of humour and the exigency to tailor the translation to the target viewers' expectations, transcreation provides a nuanced leeway to positively address cultural gaps so that the intent and effect are communicated without being fully faithful to the original verbal expressions. Transcreating humour, in one way or another, as O'Hagan & Mangiron (2013: 107) argue, entails that "losses can be mitigated, humorous instances can be relocated, and further layers of meaning can be added in the target texts", but as Perego (2014: 12) stipulates, the translator's "interpretive creativity" should be mutually recognisable by the audience to guarantee appreciation and enjoyment.

7. Analysis and discussion

Before tackling the analysis of the examples, it is necessary to establish a textual profile to characterise the function of the text, which is then taken as the norm by which the appropriateness of the target text is measured and judged; yet, even though textual proximity is a desideratum, House (2015: 30) puts an emphasis on the employment of "equivalent situational-dimensional means". As previously stated, the original is an animated children-oriented comedy film that explores the idea of monsters working at the titular energy-producing factory to

generate power for their city, Monstropolis. The film uses unmarked standard American English (except for three minor characters, namely, the grocery store owner Tony and the mother and son who appear towards the end). The language *per se* is simple for children to comprehend, and the structure is composed of short clauses with no embedding or syntactic complexity; however, the mode of expression is complex, meaning it is written to be read as if spoken to simulate real-life spontaneous oral language. The Egyptian dubbing closely follows the textual dimensions of the original in the sense that the colloquial invokes an informal, conversational style capable of capturing the verbal humour and irony while remaining committed to the on-screen visuals and a preliminary look at the standard Arabic re-dub will confirm two mismatches. From the perspective of social attitude, the standard variety endows the film with a linguistic formality that distances viewers from the film, which, from the perspective of social role relationship, constructs an asymmetric, authoritative relationship marked by pedagogic motivations and ideologically-induced attitudes. For the sake of a systematic analysis and due to the connectedness of verbal humour with the visuals, the examples examined here are listed chronologically as they appear in the original film. The time codes are that of the original English version.

Table 1. Example 1: (0:03:19)

Source Text	
Flint: Alright, Mr…Bile, is it? Bile: Uh, my friends call me Phlegm. Flint: Uh huh, Mr. Bile, can you tell me what you did wrong? Bile: I fell down? Flint: No, no, before that! Can anyone tell me Mr. Bile's big mistake? Anyone? Let's take a look at the tape. Here we go. Right…there! See? The door. You left it wide open!	
Egyptian Dub	**Back Translation**
‑فلنت: اسمك فتح الباب، مش كدة؟ ‑فتحي: أصحابي بينادوني فتحي. ‑فلنت: آه فتحي، تقدر تقلي غلطتك إيه؟ ‑فتحي: إني وقعت؟ ‑فلنت: لا، لا، قبل كدة. حد يعرف أستاذ فتح الباب غلط فيه؟ نرجع الشريط، هنا هو، تمام، فين، فين، فين، أهو، شفت، الباب، سبت الباب مفتوح!	Flint: Your name is Open Door, is it? Fathi: Uh, my friends call me the Opener. Flint: Uh huh, Knower, can you tell me what you did wrong? Fathi: That I fell? Flint: No, no, before that! Does anyone know Mr. Open Door's mistake? Let's replay the tape. Here, where, where, where, right there! See? The door. You left the door open!
MSA Redub	**Back Translation**
‑فلنت: حسناً، تدعى أستاذ بايل، أليس كذلك؟ ‑بايل: أصدقائي ينادونني سلام. ‑فلنت: أستاذ بايل، هلا أطلعتني فيما أخطأت؟ ‑بايل: عندما سقطت؟ ‑فلنت: لا، لا، قبل ذلك. هل يعرف أحدكم فيما أخطأ أستاذ بايل؟ هل من مجيب؟ فلنلقِ نظرة على الفيلم، لنرَ الآن...آه، أين، أين، هنا، رأيت؟ لقد تركت الباب مفتوحاً.	Flint: Alright, your name is Mr…Bile, is it? Bile: My friends call me Slam. Flint: Mr. Bile, can you tell me what you did wrong? Bile: When I fell? Flint: No, no, before that! Does anyone know what Mr. Bile did wrong? Anyone? Let's take a look at the film. Let's see…now, right…there! Where, where? See? You left it open.

The opening scene immediately establishes the film's humorous tone by introducing a novice monster called Bile (nicknamed Phlegm), who comically fails the simulation lesson after a

dramatization of his scare-inducing complexion. The irony is not only situational (expectation vs. what occurred), but also verbal. More specifically, the incongruity between the names Bile (denoting anger and irritability) and Phlegm (denoting calmness of temperament) marks the underlying reality of Monstropolis monsters; that they are scared by 'toxic' children.

It is important to note that the original's humour is solely derived from the monster's name and his reaction to the child's screaming; however, both Arabic dubs visibalised the image-text synergies using the visual domain to re-interpret the joke verbally. As Example 1 above shows, the renderings conveyed the humorous pathos, but the comic effect is more prominent in the former than the latter. For instance, renaming the character as 'فتح الباب' Fatḥ El–bāb (opening the door) and nicknaming him 'فتحي' Fatḥi (has to do with opening) –a culturally common name– when he was supposed to close the door intensifies the situational comedy by adding another humorous layer to the visuals. Francescon (2011: 14) calls this process "verbal anchorage" in which verbal expressions restate what has already been formulated by the visuals. Since the visual narration cannot be manipulated, this creative symbiosis overcame textual constraints through an "isotopic solution" in the verbal subtext, which allowed the translator to freely go beyond the original text (Chaume 1998: 18). As Barthes (1977: 41) also confirms, "the words, in the same way as the images, are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realised at a higher level, that of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis". In the MSA re-dub, the monster's name is overtly transliterated (as are all names). Yet, the translator code-switches to English to render the nickname using the semantically relevant expression "Slam" (as in shutting the door). Although the humour is couched in the expression, it fails to connect the irony with the transliterated name "Bile" as the Egyptian version does; hence, the situational irony is half-hidden, half-realised. In such cases, when two versions of the same text evoke humour differently, it is difficult to determine which version is funnier, as it partly depends solely on the viewer's interpretive perspective.

Table 2. Example 2: (0:04:40)

Source Text	
Waternoose: I need Scarers who are confident, tenacious, tough, intimidating! I need Scarers like…like…James P. Sullivan!	
Egyptian Dub	**Back Translation**
أبو عنكبوت: أنا عايز مخوفاتية شجعان، مصحصحين، جدعان، يعتمد عليهم، عايز مخوفاتية على حق زي، زي شلبي سوليفان.	Father of Spider: I need scarers who are brave, wide-awake, loyal, reliable. I need real scarers like Shalabi Sullivan.
MSA Redub	**Back Translation**
وواترنوس: أحتاج إلى مخيفين واثقين بأنفسهم، متماسكين، مثل...مثل...مثل جيمس بي سوليفان.	Waternoose: I need scary [monsters] who are confident, tenacious, like…like…like James B. Sullivan.

Following this incident, Mr. Waternoose, the CEO of the company, steps out from the shadows to educate the new recruits on the qualities the scaring profession requires and subsequently enumerates four attributes: confidence, tenacity, toughness, and intimidation. After a moment of anticipation, signposted by the repetitive use of "like", he lists James P. Sullivan as the paragon of scariness. The humour lies in the next scene where Sullivan is seen snoring in his bed in incongruity to what was expected. The colloquial register successfully captured the ironic nuances of the verbal-visual interplay by creating what Chaume (1998: 17) describes as "an equally synthetic message in the target language". The accentuation of humour is particularly salient in the expression 'مصحصحين' miṣaḥṣaḥīn (wide-awake), which stands as a sharp contrast to Sullivan's image. Returning to Francescon's (2011: 6) analysis of multimodally expressed

humour, this process is termed "visual relay" where the visual text extends and explicates verbal humour. Moreover, the creative coinage and repetition of 'مخوفاتيّة' miḫawifattyaḥ (scarers), as opposed to the common-place adjective 'مخيفين' muḫifīn (scary), proves that the translator is covertly translating (i.e., transcreating) the text to reflect the essence of the original. This is even portrayed in the rhyming adjectives 'شجعان' šoǧʿān (brave) and 'جدعان' ǧidʿān (loyal), which enhance the humorous character of the text, and add a colloquial musical touch to it. Conversely, the humour in the MSA version is neutralised, no attempt of creativity was made, and the four attributes are reduced to two: 'واثقين بأنفسهم' wāṯiqīna biʾanfusihim (confident) and 'متماسكين' mutamasikīn (tenacious), the latter is inaccurate, semantic-wise, in the present context because the literal translation evokes connotations of coherence more than it does tenacity.

Table 3. Example 3: (0:04:54)

Source Text	
Mike: Hey, good morning Monstropolis, it's now five after the hour of six a.m. in the big monster city. Temperature's a balmy 65 degrees, which is good news for you reptiles, and it looks like it's gonna be a perfect day to maybe just lie in bed, sleep in, or simply…work out that flab that's hanging over the bed! Get up, Sulley!	
Egyptian Dub	**Back Translation**
مارد: يا صباح الرعب! الساعة 6 وعلى المقيمين خارج مدينة الرعب المحافظة على فروق التوقيت. درجة الحرارة في الظل 25 وده كويس للزواحف واحتمال يبقى جو هايل للكسل في السرير أو النوم، أو أقلك الأحسن عمل تمرينات للمخوفاتية، اصحى يا شلبي!	Marid: O, horror morning! It's 6 o'clock and the residents outside Horror City should respect time differences. Shade temperature is 25, which is good for reptiles and could be terrific weather for lazing in bed or sleeping, or better still, for some workout for scarers! Wake up, Shalabi!
MSA Redub	**Back Translation**
مارك: صباح الخير مدينة مونستروبوليس! الوقت الآن صباحاً في مدينة الوحوش الكبرى. درجة الحرارة معتدلة لا تتعدى الثمانية عشرة درجة مئوية، وهذا جيد للحيوانات الزاحفة، ويبدو أنه سيكون يوما ممتازاً للاستلقاء على السرير، والنوم حتى وقت متأخر أو ببساطة ممارسة الرياضة لإزالة الترهل الموجود على السرير، انهض يا سوليفان!	Mark: Good morning, Monstropolis! It's now morning in the big monster's city. Temperature is moderate, not exceeding 18 degrees, which is good for reptilian animals and it seems it will be a perfect day for lying in bed and sleeping in, or simply practicing some sport to get rid of the flab situated in the bed! Get up, Sullivan!

In Example 3, the joke continues with Mike's mimicry of a morning anchorman to remark on how "it looks like it's gonna be a perfect day to maybe just lie in bed, sleep in" while calmly looking at the sleeping Sullivan; however, his tone, facial expressions and hand gestures betoken the sarcasm. Again, the Egyptian dub resorts to creativity to appropriately accommodate the humour by adding elements not found in the original utterance, such as 'وعلى المقيمين خارج مدينة الرعب المحافظة على فروق التوقيت' waʿala almuqimīn ḫāriǧ madinat elruʿb elmuḥāfaẓa ʿala furūq eltawqīt (residents outside Horror City should respect time differences). The allusion lies in the flouting of quality maxim and the use of the opposite meaning to mock Sullivan's laziness. 'جو هايل للكسل في السرير أو النوم' ǧaw hāyl lilkasal fi elsirīr aw elnūm (terrific weather for lazing in bed or sleeping) amplifies the situational comedy by combining the adjective 'هايل' hāyl (terrific) with the dissimulated verb 'للكسل' lilkasal (lazing) and the ensuing imperative 'اصحى' iṣḥa (wake up). This inventive translation is a practical corroboration of House's (2015: 16) view of translation as "reflective and creative process which always leaves the translator some freedom of choice between several

approximately equivalent possibilities of realising situationally appropriate meaning". In comparison, and in an almost monotonous adherence to the source text, the MSA translation does not hold a similar level of funniness; it adapts the original expression as it is with little to no changes; thus, the effect of laughter is less pronounced.

Table 4. Example 4: (0:07:54)

Source Text
Mike: (to his car) Bye baby, I'll call you!
Mike: Hey genius, you wanna know why I bought the car?
Sullivan: Not really.
Mike: To drive it! You know, like on the street, with a honk honk and a vroom vroom, and no walking involved!
Sullivan: **Give it a rest, will you, butterball?** Come on, you could use the exercise.
Mike: **I could use the exercise?! Look at you, you, you have your own climate!**

Egyptian Dub	Back Translation
‏-مارد: (متحدثاً لسيارته) <u>حتوحشيني يا حبيبتي</u>! ‏-مارد: يا ذكي، إنت عارف أنا اشتريت عربية ليه، ها؟ ‏-شلبي: مش فاكر. ‏-عشان أسوقها! زي الناس التانيين واضرب كلاكسات، أووو آه أووو آه، مش عشان أمشي! ‏-شلبي: رغي، رغي، رغي، رغي، ممكن تبطل رغي يا <u>بطيخة</u>؟ يلا، والمشي رياضة. ‏مارد: <u>رياضة للي زيي</u>؟! <u>بص لنفسك</u>! ده أنت، ده، ده أنت <u>خطوتك فدّان</u>!	Marid: (to his car) I'll miss you my love! Marid: Hey genius, you know why I bought the car? Shalabi: I don't remember. Marid: To drive it! Just like other people and hit the honk [button], oh ah, oh ah (honk imitation), not to walk! Shalabi: Babble, babble, babble, babble, can you stop babbling you watermelon? C'mon, besides, walking is a sport. Marid: Sport for people like me?! Look at you, you are, you…your footstep is an acre!

MSA Redub	Back Translation
‏-مارك: (متحدثاً لسيارته) <u>إلى اللقاء صديقتي سأتصل بكِ</u>! ‏-مارك: أيها العبقري، أتعرف لما اشتريت السيارة؟ ‏-سوليفان: ليس تماماً. ‏-مارك: لأقودها! كما تعلم، في الشارع ولأطلق البوق وأجعل المحرك يُدَّوّي ولا أمشي. ‏-سوليفان: وا، وا ،وا، وا، <u>هلا تهدأ يا صديقي</u>؟ أنت فقط بحاجة إلى بعض التمارين. ‏- مارك: <u>أنا بحاجة إليها</u>؟! <u>انظر إلى حالك، لديك مناخك الخاص</u>!	Mike: (to his car) goodbye my friend, I'll call you! Mike: Hey genius, you know why I bought the car? Sullivan: Not exactly. Mike: To drive it! You know, on the street and to honk the horn and make the engine thunder, not to walk! Sullivan: wa, wa, wa, wa (mock whining), will you calm down, my friend? You just need some exercise. Mike: I need it?! Look at you, you have your own climate!

Example 4 demonstrates how the expression "Look at you, you, you have your own climate" is re-created anew in Egyptian to render the text more humorous. The irony in "you have your own climate" highlights the size disparity between the two protagonists in terms of length, yet it is realised in terms of width in the expression 'بص لنفسك ده أنت، ده، ده أنت خطوتك فدّان' buṣ linafsak da inta, da, da inta ḫaṭwitak faddan (look at you, you are, you…your footstep is an acre!). Meanwhile, the MSA version identically mirrors the original word-for-word. The reason why the colloquial is more humorous is that, a) 'فدّان' faddan (acre) exaggerates physical difference

through its linkage with the activity of walking vs. driving, which is expressed visually; and b) the use of the terms ‘رغّي’ raġī (babbling) and ‘يا بطيخة’ ya baṭiḫa (you watermelon), the latter which cleverly captures the derogatory connotations of "butterball", foregrounds the humour and feeds into the interpersonal functional component between the translator and viewer and between the fictional characters themselves by enhancing the text's humorous qualities (House 2015). In retrospect, the lack of humour in the MSA re-dub can be attributed to Al-Jazeera's editorial guidelines, which focus on maintaining the "correct use of classical Arabic language" and banning "offensive language or comments [that are] likely to cause insult of any type" across all its content output (Tawfiq 2018: 357). The sanitisation is glimpsed in the formal use of ‘يا صديقي’ ya ṣadīqi (my friend) in lieu of "butterball" as well as the affectionate form of address "baby", the latter which the Egyptian translator renders as ‘يا حبيبتي’ ya habibty (my lovely) to ironically sentimentalise Mike's affection to his car. Al-Jazeera's expectable censorial behaviour is also visible in the deletion of the scene where Mike kisses Celia on the mouth to stop her from jeopardising the duo's plan to return the child. This evinces the seriousness of Al-Jazeera to present culturally appropriate content for Arab children at all times, even if the content is a humorous animation.

Table 5. Example 5: (0:20:44)

Source Text
Mike: (sniffing) Oof. Hey, can I borrow your odorant?
Sullivan: Yeah, I got, uh, Smelly Garbage or Old Dumpster.
Mike: You got Low Tide?
Sullivan: No.
Mike: How about Wet Dog?
Sullivan: Yup, stink it up!

Egyptian Dub	Back Translation
-مارد: أف، ممكن تسلفني <u>كولونيا</u>؟ -شلبي: آه، شوف عندي <u>مزيد عرق وعفن الليالي</u>. -مارد: عندك زبالة؟ -شلبي: لاء. -مارد: كلب مبلول؟ - شلبي: عندي، <u>اقرف نفسك</u>!	Marid: Oof, can I borrow [your] cologne? Shalabi: Yes, look, I have up-odorant and Night Rot. Marid: You got Garbage? Shalabi: No. Marid: Wet Dog? Shalabi: I do, stink yourself!

MSA Redub	Back Translation
- مايك: أوه، هلا أعرتني معطرك؟ - سوليفان: نعم، لدي <u>نفايات قديمة أو مطمر قديم</u>. - مايك: هل لديك <u>رائحة الجزر</u>؟ - سوليفان: لا. - مايك: ماذا عن رائحة كلب مبتل؟ - سوليفان: نعم، <u>تمتع برائحتها</u>.	Mike: Oh, would you lend me your fragrance? Sullivan: yes, I have Old Garbage or Old Dumpster. Mike: You got Carrot smell? Sullivan: No. Mike: How about Wet Dog? Sullivan: Yes, enjoy its smell!

Example 5 showcases how humour is, once again, sustained via the violation of quality maxim. Here, the creative fecundity of the Egyptian dialect takes the spotlight while the standard re-dub takes a setback. In the colloquial version, the word "odorant" is deliberately translated to ‘كولونيا’ kalunyya (cologne) to pave the way for the perfect punning joke ‘مُزيد عرق’ muzīd ʿaraq (up-odorant) which is originally conveyed in "odorant". When Mike finally settles for an odorant called "Wet Dog", Sullivan sarcastically replies "stink it up", which illustrates the incongruent

perception of objects and concepts in the monster world where everything is designed to repel and scare humans. The Egyptian dub retained the playful humour by translating the phrase as 'اقرف نفسك' iqrif nafsak (stink yourself), whereas the re-dub diminished the intended explicatures by translating the expression to 'تمتع برائحتها' tamataʿ biraʾiḥatiha (enjoy its smell). Additionally, the MSA translation of "Low Tide" is an example of an overtly erroneous error since 'رائحة الجزر' raʾiḥat alǧazar (Carrot smell) does not match the English meaning, neither denotatively nor connotatively, consequently resulting in defective humour and inefficient passing on of information. Similarly, the Egyptian transcreation of "Old Dumpster" to 'عفن الليالي' ʿafan el-layālī (Night Rot) evokes higher levels of humour than the redundant use of 'قديم' qadīm (old) in the re-dub.

Table 6. Example 6: (0:28:56)

Source Text	
Monster #3: It's true, I saw the whole thing!	
Egyptian Dub	**Back Translation**
ده صحيح، أنا شاهد عيان!	This is true, I'm an eyewitness!
MSA Redub	**Back Translation**
صحيح، رأيت الأمر برمته!	It's true, I saw the whole thing!

Table 7. Example 7: (0:42:52)

Source Text	
Mike: No! no way! But if it was an inside job, I, well, I'd put my money on Waxford. Randall: Waxford? Mike: Yeah, the one over there at station six. You know, he's got them shifty eyes.	
Egyptian Dub	**Back Translation**
مارد: لا! مستحيل! لكن لو في حد دبر الجريمة يبقى مفيش غير هوه، مدوحس. أندل: مدوحس؟ مارد: أيوا، اللي في وردية الذعر اللي عنده خمس عيون حولة.	Marid: No! no way! But if someone is behind the crime, there's no one else other than him, Midohas (chilblains). Andal: Midohas? Marid: Yes, the one [found] during the panic shift who has five squinty eyes.
MSA Redub	**Back Translation**
مارك: لا، مستحيل! لكن لو كان هناك خائن فهو حتماً واكسفورد! راندل: آه، صحيح؟ مارك: نعم، ذلك الذي في المركز ولديه عيون مراوغة.	Mike: No! No way! But if there was a traitor, then it is definitely Waxford. Randall: Is it? Mike: Yes, that one in the centre who has shifty eyes.

The contextual humour in Example 6 is indeed conveyed in both dubs, albeit the potency is more prevalent in the colloquial, which profits from the visuals to map the verbal. The translation 'أنا شاهد عيان' ʾana šāhid ʿayan (I'm an eyewitness) hilariously pokes fun at the multi-eyed monster's physique. The same technique is employed in Example 7 where Randall confronts Sullivan about the child's escape, but Mike steps in and temporarily removes suspicion by framing an innocent monster named "Waxford". The name is transadapted using the colloquial expression 'مدوحس' miduḥas (chilblains), which makes fun of the monster's hand-like body and five protruding eyes which resemble swollen fingertips. On the other hand, the literalism of the re-dub detracts from the humour for two reasons; first, there is no humorous

synthesis between "Waxford" and "shifty eyes"; and second, ʿعيون حولة ʿuyūn ḥūla (squinty eyes) is more light-hearted than ʿعيون مراوغة ʿuyūn murawiġa (shifty eyes). It could be argued, therefore, that Al-Jazeera is not searching for a new creative, humorous space; rather, it is trying to create a didactic platform where the inculcation of the standard register is the first and foremost priority. Such plain linguistic transfer is a characteristic of overt translations, which House (2015: 61) regards as "more 'straightforward' since their STs are taken over unaltered, i.e. are merely transplanted into a new environment with no provisions being made for the TT addressee's (potentially different) norms of expectation". She goes further to say that finding user-related linguistic-cultural equivalents is one of the apparent issues of translating overtly because the transmittance follows what is linguistically manifest in the source text. As a matter of fact, Al-Jazeera's editorial guidelines, as appended in Tawfiq's study (2018), showcase meticulous concern for linguistic execution and correct implementation of standard Arabic, even if the cost was the dilution of humour and cultural references that can give colour to the translation. This concern is the type of commitment Al-Jazeera is providing to its Arab audience.

Table 8. Example 8: (0:38:13)

Source Text
Mike: Roz, my tender oozing blossom, you're looking fabulous today! Is that a new haircut? C'mon tell me, it's a new haircut, isn't? It's gotta be a new haircut! New make-up? You've had a lift? You've had a tuck? You've had something. Something has been inserted in your skin that makes you look like…

Egyptian Dub	Back Translation
مارد: روز، زهرة الخريف المتفتحة، شكلك يهبل النهارده! غيّرتي تسريحة شعرك؟ ما تتكسفيش، اقولي، أكيد غيرتي تسريحة شعرك؟ شديتي وشك؟ المايك-أب؟ أكيد غيرتي تسريحتك، مش كده؟ عملتي أي حاجة تخلي الـ...	Marid: Rose, the blossoming autumn flower, your looks blow the mind today! You changed your hair style? Don't be shy, tell me, you definitely changed your hair style? Face-lifted? The make-up? Definitely changed your hair style, isn't it? You've done something that makes…

MSA Redub	Back Translation
مايك: روز، يا زهرتي الناعمة، تبدين رائعة اليوم! هل غيّرتِ قصة شعرك؟ أخبريني، غيّرتِ قصة شعرك؟ غيّرتها حتماً! مساحيق تجميل جديدة؟ شددتِ وجهك؟ فعلتِ شيئاً ما؟ أُدخل شيء ما في بشرتك يجعلك تبدين...	Mike: Roz, my tender blossom, you're looking fabulous today! Changed your haircut? Tell me, you changed your haircut? You definitely did! New make-up? Lifted your face? You've done something? Something has been inserted in your skin that makes you look like…

To set the scene in Example 8, Mike approaches Roz's desk to get hold of Boo's door key, but his orchestrated sweet-talk is ineffective against the expressionless Roz and her unyielding commanding character. As predicted, the colloquial translation 'oozes' with humour in that the expression ʿزهرة الخريف المتفتحة ʾzahrat elḫarīf elmutafatiḥa (the blossoming autumn flower) playfully contrasts spring, the season of rejuvenation, with autumn, the season of dying. In addition, the expression ʿشكلك يهبل النهارده ʾšaklik yhbel elnahrda (your looks blow the mind) delivers Mike's sardonic tone, which is being heightened by ʿما تتكسفيش ʾmatitkisfīš (don't be shy) and ʿعملتي أي حاجة تخلي الـ ʾamalti ayyi ḥāǧa tiḫali el (you've done something that makes…). The last two 'covert mismatches' work well in the text because they possibly hint at romance or insinuate that Roz's wrinkled visage is beyond ugly and that nothing can make it look less unattractive (see the inside headlines of the newspaper Roz is reading at 0:11:59). Compare this

with the literal style in 'تبدين رائعة اليوم' tabdīna raʾiʿatan alyaum (you're looking fabulous today) and the somewhat stiff 'ٔ أُدخِل شيء ما في بشرتك' ʾudḫila šayʾun ma fi bašratik (something has been inserted in your skin) in the MSA translation.

This situational humour echoes another scene at the beginning of the film in which Mike addresses Roz as "my succulent little garden snail" to imply her non-existent richness in desirable qualities. Unlike the uninspiring and rather clumsy standard translation ' حلزونة حديقتي كثيرة العصارة' ḥalazūnat ḥadīqaty kaṯīrat alʿuṣāra (my succulent little garden snail), the Egyptian translator explicitated the latent ironic meaning using the metaphor 'صفائح القواقع البحرية' ṣafayīḥ elqawaqiʿ elbaḥriyya (metal-plated seashell) to verbally denote her hardened demeanour against the visuals of her flaccid snail body. The heavy reliance on the visuals in the Egyptian dub in these instances and others reveals that the translator is not inventing strategies for the sake of creativity but is conscious of the text's texture and double medium (Chaume 1997), which they accordingly utilise for humour-related and characterising purposes.

Table 9. Example 9: (0:51:37)

Source Text	
Randall: Wazowski?! Where is it, you little one-eyed cretin? Mike: Okay, first of all it's creetin. If you're going to threaten me, do it properly.	
Egyptian Dub	**Back Translation**
أندل: وشوشني! وديتها فين يا <u>محول</u> يا أبو عين وحدة؟ مارد: أولهان، اسمها <u>أعور</u>. لما تحب تهزأني هزأني صح	Andal: Washwishni! Where did you put her you one-eyed squinted [monster]? Marid: First, it's called one-eyed. When you like to make fun of me, do it properly.
MSA Redub	**Back Translation**
راندل: وزاوسكي! أين هي أيها <u>المزعج ذو العين الواحدة؟</u> مايك: حسناً، أولاً يقال إن كنت ستهددني فأحسن فعل ذلك؟	Randall: Wazowski?! Where is she, you annoying one-eyed [monster]? Mike: Okay, first, it is said if you're going to threaten me, do it properly.

The scene derives its humour from Mike's mispronunciation of the offensive term "cretin" to correct Randall's, which goes to show that Randall is not wrong in calling him as such (phonetically speaking, the term is pronounced /ˈkrɛtɪn/ not /kritɪn/). As Example 9 indicates, the Egyptian translator managed to manoeuvre the phonetic wordplay via another centred around visuals, namely, the fact that Mike has one eye. To be fair, the back translation does not fully reflect the gist of the joke, but the reference is being made between 'محول' miḥwwil (squinty) and 'ٔ أعور' ʾaʿwar (one-eyed), and as a result, Mike's portrayal as cretin is reversed. Even "threaten me" has been rendered as 'لما تحب تهزأني' lamma tiḥb tihazaʾni (When you like to make fun of me) to give Mike –Marid– the upper hand in the Egyptian dub. In contrast, the wordplay has been neutralised and replaced by the expression 'المزعج ذو العين الواحدة' almuzʿiǧ ḏu alʿayn alwāḥida (annoying one-eyed [monster]) in the standard translation, and Mike's response, too, shows the eradication of humour via the out-of-context use of 'يُقال' yuqāl (it is said).

In discussing the level of success in dubbing, mention must also be made of cultural-based references, which have been adapted and brought closer to the Arab target audience in the Egyptian dub due to the limited exposure to western culture. As Whitman-Linsen (1992: 125) remarks, the "socio-cultural skein have to be rewound[ed]" adequately to avoid disconcerting alienation and cultural rigidity to the original. For instance, the restaurant's name where Mike takes Celia to dinner pays homage to the American visual artist Ray Harryhausen, an obscure figure in Arab culture, and dubbing it as 'كوابيس' kawabīs (nightmares) skilfully solves the problem by aligning the translation with the film's overall themes. Other figures mentioned in

English are "Loch Ness", "Big Foot", and "the abominable snowman", all of which are mythical creatures found in western folktales. Whitman-Linsen's "rewounding" is seen in the culturally adapted references 'البعو' elbaʿū (the boogeyman), 'أبو رجل مسلوخة' abu riǧl maslūḫa (the flayed feet [monster]), and 'المنفي' elmanfī (the banished one). The former two are of interest here, 'البعو' elbaʿū is the Egyptian slang for the bogeyman, whereas the myth of 'أبو رجل مسلوخة' abu riǧl maslūḫa is said to date back to the pharaohs. The scene where Mike sings "I don't know but it's been said, I love scaring kids in bed!", like a drill sergeant, is rendered using the pre-Islamic reference of 'الغول' alǧūl (ghoul) in an effort to preserve the rhyme, as in 'كل الدنيا هنا بتقول إني بخوف زي الغول' kol eldunyā hinā bitqūl ʾiny baḫawif zay elǧūl (all the world here says that I scare like a ghoul), though no cultural reference is found in the original. Nonetheless, this addition points to the translator's engagement with their own culture (Tymoczko 2007) and the commitment to methodically utilise the dialect to positively elevate the target text, a quality observed in characters' names and various scenes throughout the film.

8. Statement of quality

The comparison of the two translations reveals a mismatch in the mode dimension; however, by far the most noticeable mismatches occur in the social attitude and social role relationship parameters. Al Jazeera's approach asserted linguistic pedagogy and the supremacy of Standard Arabic but rendered the text more compartmentalised and less inventive, which simultaneously affected the tenor and interpersonal functions. On the other hand, the Egyptian dub holistically incorporated the verbal and non-verbal mediums as a facet of creativity and liberation. It is worth noting that a major contributing factor to the success of the colloquial has to do with voice talent, specifically Mohamed Henedi's delivery and tonal expressiveness, which enriched the text's humour and emotion. It becomes clear that the MSA version is not meant for the real-life, everyday audience as such, but for whom the translation is concerned (overt), since the names are opaque and no attempt of creativity was made, as opposed to the Egyptian dub which resonates with culture (covert). It is then concluded that register variation brings the translation to life; the hybridisation between the two is natural in a social context; it reflects tenor and makes the discourse more sellable.

9. Concluding remarks

Using the animated film Monsters Inc. as a case study, this paper set out to explore how humour is realised in translation vis-à-vis register variation. Comparing the Egyptian dub with its MSA re-dubbed counterpart have revealed diametric differences, linguistically, functionally, and ideologically. Based on the above discussion, it is clear that the choice of register for humorous texts is part and parcel of translation quality. Colloquialism empowered the translator's unbridled ambition to transcreate and to synthesise equivalent effects, while standardisation resulted in literal mimesis of the original that is neither humorous nor engaging. Applying House's (2015) proposed model has highlighted its suitability for analysing humorous texts, mainly because humour is identified within the ideational and interpersonal functions dependent on situational dimensions. This entails that the model can accommodate different strategies and analyses, especially when it comes to covert translations, which helps in forming qualitative-descriptive analysis when assessing translations' equivalence. In our present case, the MSA version failed because it was invested in controlling and homogenising the Arabic language at the expense of the text's content and function. Al Jazeera's linguistic 'imperialism' reflects the extent of its power and didactic patronage; still, the pervasive opprobrium and online petition campaigns that swept the internet clearly show resistance and unanimous preference for the

Egyptian vernacular. While the present study shed light on Arabic dubs and re-dubs, further empirical research and more interviews with dubbers are needed to account for dubbing/re-dubbing choices and their rationale.

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