Taming the Beast: Bullying and Censorship in Interlingual Subtitling

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Abstract

This research scrutinizes the representation and impact of verbal bullying in audiovisual (AV) content, focusing specifically on the Jordanian Netflix show *AlRawabi School for Girls*. Differences in British and American English interlingual subtitling are examined as tools for regulating subtitled content for adolescents. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study uses a parallel corpus of source (Jordanian Arabic) and target texts (British and American English) to explore patterns, bullying language themes, and subtitling practices' role. Five principal categories of verbal bullying are identified: threats, insults, taunts, rumors, and deflection through humor. Subtitlers mitigate these themes using adaptive strategies such as neutralization, substitution, and stylistic amplification. The research reveals that British English undergoes greater censorship than American English due to differing cultural sensitivities and stricter UK regulations. These findings stress the importance of censoring verbal bullying in adolescent-targeted AV materials and highlight the pivotal role of subtitling practices and effective regulatory measures. The study suggests a need for a uniform, global approach to managing harmful subtitle language to protect young viewers.

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1. Introduction

The psychology and sociology fields have extensively investigated the weaponization of language within the milieu of adolescent bullying and maltreatment (Juvonen & Graham, 2014; Smith & Brain, 2000; Sutton & Smith, 1999; Vaillancourt et al., 2008). Nevertheless, an extensive gap persists in research that scrutinizes the influence of bullying language within audio-visual (AV) materials, with specific emphasis on the implementation of subtitling as a mechanism of censorship. Therefore, the present study endeavors to remedy this deficiency by scrutinizing aspects or patterns of bullying language in the Jordanian Netflix show, *AlRawabi School for Girls,* directed by Shomali (2021) and contrasting the nuances between British and American English interlingual subtitling as tools for regulating AV-subtitled content that targets adolescent viewers.

AlRawabi School for Girls is a groundbreaking show series representing a milestone for Netflix as it represents the platform's first Jordanian scripted drama and its second original Arabic-language production. Choosing the show as a case study is noteworthy due to its emphasis on adolescent girls and its willingness to address subjects frequently deemed taboo in Middle Eastern societies. It offers a modern description of Generation Z teenagers, highlighting the brutal and controversial reality of gendered violence, honor killings, and bullying in Jordanian society. It explores the dynamics of bullying, including how power imbalances, social hierarchies, and societal pressures contribute to it. Moreover, the show reveals the devastating impact of bullying on both the victim and the bully, highlighting its long-lasting effects on mental health and self-esteem. Therefore, the show serves as a rich repository for the current study since it comprehensively explores the complex and interconnected issues facing modern-day teenagers in the Middle East.

When examining the limitations of subtitling, the usual constraints that come to mind are text compression and mode alteration (Scandura, 2004). However, one seldom associates censorship as a restriction imposed on subtitling. Cox (1979, p. 313) suggests that censorship is "the intentional act of preventing someone from accessing certain verbal, graphic, dramatic, or sonic material with the intention of safeguarding a preferred belief or attitude". In the realm of audio-visual translation (AVT), Scandura (2004) contends that censorship is often veiled through dubbing and subtitling, which effectively mask the omission or replacement of overt, raw, or problematic phrases, implications, or mentions. Although censorship is most commonly associated with external entities such as governments, distribution companies, or networks requiring modifications to AV materials, subtitlers' self-censorship is another equally compelling aspect. Self-censorship occurs when the subtitlers consciously modify or tone down the sexual innuendos, wordplay, or taboo elements in the original material to safeguard their audience. The spectrum of censoring activities is vast and encompasses many actions, including removing scenes, altering vulgar language, deleting references, or changing the plot (Gambier, 2018).

Bullying is a decisive social issue, especially among teenagers. Verbal bullying means using aggressive, intimidating, or demeaning words or expressions intended to belittle, humiliate, or dominate another person, contributing to a hostile environment (Gredler, 2003b). This form of verbal aggression is a key component of bullying behavior, which typically involves a power imbalance and repeated behavior over time. In light of this, the present study utilizes an aligned parallel corpus of the

source text (i.e., Jordanian Arabic) and the target text (i.e., British and American English) to investigate the patterns and themes of verbal bullying, as well as examining how interlingual subtitling practices can be used as tools for censorship. Furthermore, this study provides valuable insights into the role of subtitling practices in controlling media content, with potential implications for media censorship policies and practices. Ultimately, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the description of bullying language in media and the need for effective regulations to minimize its negative impact on adolescent viewers. In line with the above, this research attempts to address the following research questions:

> 1. What are the patterns and themes of bullying language in Netlix's *AlRawabi School for Girls*?

> 2. How do British and American English interlingual subtitling differ in their use as a tool for censorship?

> 3. How do subtitling practices influence the portrayal of bullying language?

> 4. What implications do these practices have for regulating AV content targeted at adolescent viewers?

2. Literature review

2.1. Audio-visual Translation (AVT)

In the contemporary media landscape, which is rife with AV materials that can be accessed through various platforms and media, the significance of AVT in our daily lives has become increasingly apparent. Consequently, scholars' interest has been fueled in exploring how AV products' linguistic and non-linguistic elements are conveyed to audiences through AVT. As Fong and Au (2009) put it, AVT is a complex discipline that involves transferring verbal and non-verbal aspects of AV materials. As such, it is a multi-semiotic translation that encompasses a wide range of linguistic and visual cues. Among the various modes of AVT, subtitling is the most researched in translation studies. Karamitroglou (2022, p. 5) defines subtitling as "the translation of the spoken (or written) source text of an audio-visual product into a written target text which is added onto the images of the original product, usually at the bottom of the screen." Subtitling is traditionally classified based on linguistic and technical parameters, with the linguistic parameter being the most distinctive feature (Liu, 2014). Orero (2004, p. 57) states that the linguistic parameter signifies "the relationship that is established between source and target languages, whether this is the same or not." Different types of subtitling can be classified based on factors such as language combination, purpose, presentation, and timing. However, for the purpose of this study, the two primary categories of subtitling, grounded in the linguistic parameter, are interlingual and intralingual (Gottlieb, 1997; Orero, 2004).

2.2. Interlingual subtitling

The surge in global consumption of audio-visual content, especially on streaming platforms like Netflix, has escalated the demand for interlingual subtitling. Interlingual subtitling, which involves the

translation of subtitles from a source language to a target language (Díaz-Cintas, 2003), operates across two linguistic dimensions, spanning both spoken and written modalities. It has also been described as diagonal or oblique subtitling (Gottlieb, 1997). The central aim of interlingual subtitling is to deliver an accurate and faithful representation of the original message to the target audience (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2014). The task necessitates language proficiency and an understanding of relevant cultural nuances to ensure contextually appropriate translation (Chaume, 2013). Owing to space and time limitations in subtitling, adaptations are often required instead of literal translations (Georgakopoulou, 2009).

Interlingual subtitling is available in various forms, including traditional subtitling, closed captioning, and SDH (Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing). Traditional interlingual subtitling entails translating audio content from one language to another using written text. In contrast, closed captioning involves transcribing audio content into written text at the bottom of the screen. SDH, conversely, comprises translating audio content into written text while incorporating additional information regarding sounds and other audio elements pertinent to the plot (Gambier, 2001).

Netflix, an American streaming platform with diverse audio-visual content from countries worldwide, necessitates interlingual subtitling. Accordingly, the platform offers interlingual subtitles in various languages, including American and British English. Nevertheless, the two types of English interlingual subtitling differ in their methodology, with American interlingual subtitling characterized by a more literal translation of the audio content and British interlingual subtitling adopting a more nuanced translation to capture the cultural context of the audio content.

Censorship often plays a role in interlingual subtitling, particularly when handling dialects. Dialects, or regional language variations, may include words and expressions deemed offensive or inappropriate in other regions (Roca, 2000). As a result, interlingual subtitling frequently employs euphemisms and censorship to avoid offending the target audience (Chiaro, 2009). Both American and British interlingual subtitling practices commonly utilize censorship (Díaz-Cintas, 2012; Pedersen, 2011).

2.3. Weaponizing language

While there is considerable research on language use in entertainment media (Anderson et al., 2010; Billings et al., 2015; Van Dijk, 2001), specific studies exploring the concept of language "weaponization"—the use of language as a tool for harm or manipulation—in movies and television shows appear to be limited in current academic discourse. Much of the existing research has centered around the utilization of language in comparative translational studies (Baker, 2018), nonviolent communication (Rosenberg & Chopra, 2015), and the framing of conflict (Entman, 2007). These studies broadly discuss the militarization of language, focusing on its role in justifying or condemning warfare rather than its weaponization in terms of verbal abuse or derogatory speech, leaving a gap in understanding the potentially harmful effects of language within entertainment media.

The term "weaponized language" has been used in popular media to describe various scenarios, including ancient pre-battlefield incantations and schoolyard bullying (Strawhand, 2012). However, there is a need for a narrower definition that considers other interpretations. This clarification should be regarded both by the media and those engaging with the concept. Borowski (2019) proposed that

for language to be considered weaponized, it must meet four specific criteria: the presence of an elite group that develops a narrative, the bombardment of slogans, a charismatic figurehead for the movement, and a closed-off attitude toward international interactions. This understanding of weaponizing language highlights the broader impact it can have on the behaviors of individuals and societies beyond just insults fueled by language.

Pascale (2019) claims that the current weaponization of language is based on four tactics: censorship, propaganda, disinformation, and mundane discourse. Censorship limits the expression of ideas that challenge the dominant power structure. On the other hand, propaganda involves the deliberate manipulation of facts and fabrication to promote a specific viewpoint. Disinformation tactics are designed to maintain power by inciting reactive responses that perpetuate civil instability, while mundane discourse involves mobilizing media and the public to spread disinformation, even when it involves repeating absurd claims and conspiracy theories (Pascale, 2019). Therefore, this study aims to shed light on the phenomenon of bullying language in subtitled show series in entertainment media.

2.4. Bullying language

Bullying is a widespread social phenomenon characterized by exerting power and control over others through aggressive behavior. The power imbalance between the bully and the victim is a defining feature of bullying. It can result in significant harm to the victim, including physical, verbal, and mental harm (Gladden et al., 2014). Verbal bullying involves using hostile language to isolate the victim from their peers, while physical bullying involves using force (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011).

The relationship between threats, insults, taunts, rumors, and deflecting with humor expressions and yelling, put-downs, name-calling, and belittling behaviors lies in the fact that they can all be classified as forms of verbal abuse. Verbal abuse is characterized by using negative language, tone, and behaviors to demean, belittle, or control another person (Evans, 1996)—each category shares commonalities with the broader concept of verbal abuse. Threats involve using language to intimidate or manipulate a person by instilling fear of potential harm (Vissing et al., 1991). In comparison, insults are derogatory remarks to undermine a person's dignity or self-esteem. Taunting is often a mocking or ironic remark to ridicule someone indirectly (Gibbs Jr., 2000), while rumors include spreading false or damaging information about someone with the intent of harming their reputation (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007).

Furthermore, deflecting with humor means using humor to belittle or dismiss someone's concerns or feelings (Martin, 2007). Each category aligns with the broader concept of verbal abuse as they involve using language and communication to harm, demean, or control another person. Therefore, they can all be considered forms of verbal bullying.

Bullying can take on several forms, including direct and indirect bullying. Direct bullying encompasses physical acts of aggression, such as striking or threatening, while indirect bullying can include exclusion or spreading rumors (Salleh & Zainal, 2014). In addition, the humanistic theory emphasizes the impact of bullying on an individual's emotional and social development (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2012). Bullying has also been defined as peer harassment or victimization in social settings by Hoover et al. (1992), highlighting the dynamic nature of the roles that individuals may play in bullying dynamics.

Bullying language is a significant issue affecting individuals and society. The harmful effects of bullying are not limited to childhood and adolescence but can extend into adulthood. Studies have shown that victims of bullying may experience long-term consequences, such as low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety (Nansel et al., 2001). Furthermore, bullying can decrease academic performance and cause school absenteeism or even dropout (Dake et al., 2003; Juvonen et al., 2003; Muscari, 2002; Nansel et al., 2001). The severity of bullying language and its consequences highlight the importance of addressing this issue and developing effective strategies to prevent bullying.

2.5. Manifestations of verbal bullying

Verbal bullying encompasses a vast array of behaviors directed at causing harm to another individual. These behaviors include physical, verbal, psychological, and cyberbullying and contain many actions such as insults, name-calling, teasing, sexual touching, exposure of private body parts, controlling behavior, and spreading rumors or images (Nansel et al., 2001). Furthermore, this behavior extends beyond the traditional definition of bullying and encompasses sexual harassment and relationship violence, among others.

According to Forsberg (2019), young people are more likely to perceive their interactions as bullying if they occur with an opponent rather than a friend. This is due to the assumption of mutual consent between friends without a refusal. The target's reaction, whether emotional harm was expressed or not, was also examined by participants when deciding if the interaction constituted bullying. The concept of consent plays a crucial role in understanding bullying language among young people. Forsberg (2019) argues that consent is central to young people's comprehension, implying that mutual consent is assumed for name-calling, teasing, and sexual or intimate touching within the context of friendships. This aligns with the sexual consent literature, which suggests that consent is assumed without a refusal within dating and established relationships (Milnes et al., 2022).

Bullying is a multi-faceted issue that can take various forms, including overt, physical or verbal, and indirect or relational (Smith et al., 1999). Physical bullying is the most noticeable form and receives the most attention, particularly in light of growing concerns about violence (Gredler, 2003a). Verbal bullying, on the other hand, involves name-calling, teasing, and verbal threats (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996). Relational bullying has received less attention, which may be due to a misunderstanding that it is less harmful or because it may be perceived as typical female behavior (Smith et al., 1999). Relational bullying involves harm to the victim through manipulating or destroying their social relationships, such as social exclusion, spreading rumors, or withholding friendship (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Consequently, given its relevance to AV-subtitled materials, this study will concentrate exclusively on verbal bullying.

2.6. Censorship

Popular media platforms, including Netflix, wield substantial influence over the convictions and conduct of modern-day adolescents. Wan & Gut (2008) indicate that adolescents dedicate considerable time to media consumption. Accordingly, embedding a mechanism of media bullying-language delivery within the textual content of audio-visual materials rife with various weaponry is crucial in

mitigating the adverse impact on young adults. Bullying is a recurrent theme in many Netflix originals, necessitating the meticulous inspection of researchers, particularly those in the AVT field.

Censorship has been prevalent throughout human history in various communication formats, including books, newspapers, radio, TV, and cinema. Gambier (1994) highlights the importance of studying what is transformed and why in subtitling. One of the reasons for such transformations is censorship, which can be attributed to several factors, including politics, political correctness, religion, and self-censorship (Scandura, 2004, p. 125).

Self-censorship occurs when the translator modifies certain elements based on their subjective assessment of appropriateness, sometimes intending to "protect" the audience (Scandura, 2004, p.125). In such cases, the translator's lack of knowledge of idioms or foreign cultures may result in mistranslations or undertranslations, making them self-censors (Lung, 1998). An explicit form of censorship is the omission of references and allusions, which may be acceptable and even the translator's duty in some instances, whether or not the translators are aware of such censorship (Scandura, 2004). However, failing to eliminate or alter the reference can lead to negative consequences, while in some instances the omission might be a result of the translator's insufficient understanding, the underestimation of the audience's capacity, or the translator's inability to identify the reference in the first place (Scandura, 2004).

In AVT, it is imperative to bear in mind that the consumption of such content serves a twofold purpose: entertainment and cultural education (Scandura, 2004). As such, expunging aspects deemed uncultured, insignificant, or localized may impede the audience's exposure to authentic representations of different cultures and traditions. A subtitler's responsibility is to ensure that the audience is not deprived of these learning opportunities due to unnecessary omissions that could hinder their cultural education.

The investigation of verbal bullying and censorship in interlingual subtitling lies in subtitlers' critical role in content mediation. Dealing with sensitive issues like bullying requires careful handling by the subtitler, potentially involving the application of censorship. Given that bullying is a social issue with significant potential harm, controlling such language in AV content, especially aimed at younger audiences, becomes paramount. Hence, finding an optimal balance between censorship and authentic representation in AVT is crucial to ensuring that the audiences' learning experiences are not compromised, especially in addressing sensitive subjects such as bullying.

3. Method

This research adopts a qualitative methodology, emphasizing collecting and analyzing non-numerical data, including source dialogue audio and interlingual target subtitles, to understand better the concepts, opinions, and experiences related to verbal bullying and its representation in AV materials. Utilizing this approach, the study endeavors to attain a more nuanced comprehension of bullying language by examining its multiple dimensions and manifestations within the subtitling context. The analysis delves into the complexities of bullying language around lexical choices, tone, and communicative intent. Moreover, the investigation critically examines how these elements are conveyed and the potential modifications or censorship occurring during the subtitling process,

focusing on the distinctions between American and British English and an acknowledgment of their unique cultural contexts. This qualitative data aims to garner profound, meaningful insights into the interlingual subtitling of verbal bullying and its representation.

3.1. Corpus of the study

The corpus of this study is composed of SRT (SubRip subtitle) files that were sourced from the Netflix website. These files have been systematically arranged in a Microsoft Excel file. They are divided into three separate columns: Jordanian Vernacular Arabic (the original language), American English (the first translated language), and British English (the second translated language). The subtitles were meticulously matched up to pinpoint the ones carrying subtle undertones of bullying language. These cases were then categorized based on their corresponding themes for deeper examination and analysis.

3.2. Data analysis

The *AlRawabi School for Girls* show was created in Jordanian Vernacular (JV) and subtitled intralingually and interlingually. Drawing on Ferguson's (1959) influential model of diglossia, which suggests the coexistence of two distinct varieties within a language—the elevated high (H) and vernacular low (L)—this study conducts a comparative analysis using interlingual British and American English subtitles. These subtitles were extracted directly from the Netflix platform for this investigation. First, the show was watched multiple times by the researchers to identify scenes featuring bullying language. This allowed for an English translation of the JV, highlighting differences between the source text (ST) and interlingual subtitling in British and American English. Subsequently, through a comprehensive analysis of the ST script and interlingual subtitling, the subtitles were categorized into five themes by the researchers: threat, insult, taunt, rumors, and deflecting with humor, all about describing bullying language.

The procedures for this study are:

1. Selecting an Arabic series that is subtitled in British and American English.

2. Watching the six miniseries of *AlRawabi School for Girls* show and identifying the scenes containing bullying language.

3. Extracting the ST in JVA and the interlingual subtitles (British and American English) and identifying the bullying language expressions.

4. Classifying the bullying language expressions into different categories based on themes, such as threat, insult, taunt, rumors, and deflecting with humor.

5. Analyzing the identified expressions in JV, British, and American English.

4. Results

In this section, the five categories outlined in the methodology section, namely (1) threat, (2) insult, (3) taunt, (4) rumors, and (5) deflecting with humor expressions are elaborated.

4.1. Threat

Threat can be defined as an intentional statement of hostility against someone in retribution for a wrongdoing or failure to act (Hample, 2005). The frequent recourse to an array of threat expressions, as manifest in a plethora of media texts, is indicative of a discursive pattern of threat that exerts a profound influence on the affective states of the audience, engendering feelings of fear and anxiety that permeate throughout society (Ozyumenko & Larina, 2020). As such, this discursive strategy may be deemed a carefully crafted and calculated tactic for manipulating public opinion. The same discursive tactics may be deployed in entertainment platforms to convey bullying language, thereby exacerbating the deleterious impact of such linguistic maneuvers. Table 1 shows the Jordanian vernacular subtitles that use threat expressions as a theme for delivering bullying language with their interlingual British and American subtitles.

Table 1. The use of threat expressions to denote bullying

No	ST Jordanian Vernacular	TT American Subtitles	TT British Subtitles
1	إذا مرة ثانية بتفكري توقفي بوجهي راح أدمرك. حتى لو كان هاد آخر اشي بعمله بحياتي.	If you cross me again, I will destroy you, even if it's the last thing I do!	If you ever try to stand in my way again, there will be blood. And I will destroy you even if it's the last thing I do!
2	أنتِ لا تشغلي بالك ليان. أنا راح أسوّد عيشتها.	Don't worry, Layan. I'll show her.	Don't worry, Layan. I'll make her life a living hell.

Table 1 displays the application of threatening expressions to signify bullying. In Example 1, American English adopts direct and explicit language, threatening to "destroy" the targeted individual. Conversely, British English uses a more nuanced approach with carefully selected words and phrases subtly conveying the same threatening intention. This subtlety is often achieved through euphemisms or more delicate vocabulary, which may lessen the perceived severity of the threat. For instance, promising to "destroy" or warning of "blood" can be phrased less aggressively, thus conveying the underlying message with a sense of finesse.

Example 2 demonstrates a similar trend. American English adopts a controlled assurance, whereas British English intensifies the message by promising to turn the person's life into a "living hell". The language variations can be attributed to specific linguistic preferences and cultural contexts. British English subtitles, in reflection of their cultural norms, values, and more substantial censorship, often resort to indirect and euphemistic language. Common practice includes substituting explicit swear words with softer alternatives, such as using "bloody" instead of a harsher expletive (Ljung, 2010), or employing phrases like "taking the mickey" as a gentler expression for mocking (Hughes, 2015).

In contrast, American English subtitles, reflecting a culture valuing assertiveness and individualism, are generally straightforward. This transparency can lead to the perception of being confrontational or aggressive, especially by non-American audiences. The explicit nature of American English may ensure a more accurate representation of the original language but risks potential misinterpretations.

The higher degree of censorship in British English may impact the information relayed, altering the intensity of the original expressions and possibly leading to misunderstanding. As seen in Example 1, using the word 'masculine' in British English subtitles may fail to convey the same intensity of taunt and aggression as 'boy' in American English. Similarly, in Example 2, the British version's less explicit language might convey a different level of disdain or mockery, potentially hindering the complete understanding of the message.

In essence, American and British subtitles' differences are shaped by their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. American English, known for its informality and directness (Kovecses, 2000; Rohdenburg & Schlüter, 2009), contrasts with British English's characteristic reserve and indirectness. Such cultural variations inevitably influence the subtlety and intensity of the conveyed messages in interlingual subtitling, particularly concerning sensitive issues like bullying.

4.2. Insult

Insult language can be described as using words, phrases, or expressions intended to harm, belittle, or disrespect another person (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). This form of language can exert power and control over others and is often associated with aggressive behavior and social dominance. Insult language can include various verbal attacks, including name-calling, mocking, and put-downs. The categorization of pragmatic shifts has shed light on the fact that the communicative power of a bullying language is typically either flattened, accentuated, or maintained by substituting the offensive language with its equivalent in the target language. Moreover, given the specific nature of the pragmatic shift in translation, subtitlers can employ various direct and indirect adaptive tactics to euphemize and censor insults on the screen. The strategies encompass neutralization, which involves the process of harmonizing a specific cultural or emotional aspect of the message in the translation; substitution, which entails the development of novel communicative forms that evoke comparable emotions and perceptions in the target audience as those of the original message; and stylistic amplification, a deliberate reinforcement of the source text expression by the translator, enhancing the overall impact of the message. These approaches enable a coherent and comprehensible transmission of content within the target language while maintaining fidelity to the source material's emotional and cultural nuances (Sevastiuk, 2021).

Table 2. Insult expressions utilized to indicate instances of bullying

No	ST Jordanian Vernacular	TT American Subtitles	TT British Subtitles
3	أصلا كيف بدك. تعرفي! أنتِ وحبيتين الكرز اللي طالعينلك. ويا دوب مبينيين. انتِ أصلا ليه لابسة bra انه مفكرة راح	Having those tiny little boobs and all…Why are you wearing a bra anyway?	[chuckles] How could you anyway, with those two tiny cherries you have? -I mean, they're barely visible. -Why

	تصير معجزة ويكبروا جواتك boom.	Hoping they'll magically grow into it?	are you even wearing a bra? Do you think that wearing it is going to make them magically get bigger? -[laughs] -Boom.
4	بدك حدا يساعدك؟ لحقي حالك قبل ما تبللي الساحة.	You need help? Hurry up, Dina…	Go sort yourself out before you make a mess.

Table 2 demonstrates insult expressions of bullying. Upon examining Examples 3 and 4, it can be noted that American interlingual subtitles are more straightforward in their use of insulting language. In contrast, British interlingual subtitles tend to be less offensive. For instance, in example 3, the American subtitles use the word "boobs," a slang term for breasts, and considered vulgar in some contexts. In contrast, the British subtitles use the word "cherries," a less explicit metaphor for breasts. Furthermore, American subtitles use the phrase "magically grow into it," which suggests a degree of taunt and condescension, while British subtitles use the word "boom," a humorous way of conveying the same sentiment. In Example 4, American subtitles use a straightforward technique, while British subtitles use a euphemism by saying "sort yourself out" instead of "hurry up" to convey the same meaning.

Regarding censorship, British subtitles are more censored than American subtitles by utilizing neutralization in their use of insulting language. This is evident in the euphemistic approach that the British subtitles take, which often downplays the severity of the insult. However, this censoring may not necessarily affect the delivery of information, as the context of the insult and its intent can still be conveyed effectively.

4.3. Taunt

A taunt, as defined by (Ruch & Proyer, 2009), is a remark or gesture intended to provoke, mock, or ridicule someone. It insults or belittles the target, often undermining their confidence or inducing emotional distress (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Verbal or nonverbal taunts may incorporate sarcasm, teasing, or other forms of derision. Additionally, taunting expressions emphasize criticism, mitigate a critical intent, and harmonize the effect of praise. Nevertheless, translating these taunt expressions in subtitles presents a considerable challenge for translators (Pedersen, 2005), as they represent a form of implicit communication that subverts the ostensible message.

Subtitling presents numerous obstacles for translators, including conveying expressions precisely in the target language while considering the standardized form of the subtitling (Anggraini et al., 2020). The relevance of subtitling obstacles to taunting in bullying lies in the difficulty of conveying sarcastic expressions accurately in the target language. Due to the subtlety and complexity of the taunt, translating taunts can be challenging. This can lead to potential misinterpretations or misunderstandings of the intended purpose, particularly in bullying language, where taunts may undermine or belittle the targeted individual. It is crucial for translators to be aware of these difficulties and develop effective strategies to accurately convey taunts and other nuances of language in subtitling.

Table 3. Taunt expressions utilized to indicate instances of bullying

No	ST Jordanian Vernacular	TT American Subtitles	TT British Subtitles
5	هلأ سؤال! أنتِ كل يوم لما تصحي الصبح بتحاولي تبيني حسن صبي. ولا هاد وضعك الطبيعي؟ زنخة	Tell me, do you wake up every morning trying to look like a boy. or are you a boy?	I have a question. So, when you drag yourself out of bed, does the masculine look come naturally or do you have to try really hard?
6	شو الزفت اللي عم تاكليه؟ مطحنة شغالة؟ ارحمينا.	What the hell are you eating? What are you, a frigging grinder? Enough already.	Why are you stuffing your face? I mean, seriously, Dina, stop eating.

Table 3 represents taunt expressions to show instances of bullying. When comparing Examples 5 and 6 above, one can notice significant differences in tone, wording, and degree of censorship between the American and British English subtitles. In Example 5, the American subtitles use direct and confrontational language to snark the recipient, implying they attempt to look like a boy. On the other hand, the British subtitles use more subtle language, posing the question of whether the masculine look comes naturally or requires effort, thus implying that the recipient is not inherently masculine. Furthermore, using the word "drag" adds a degree of taunt, indicating that the character's appearance is contrived and unnatural. Similarly, in Example 6, the American subtitles use explicit and profane language to insult the character's eating habits, using the word "hell" and "frigging" to add emphasis. The British subtitles use less direct language in the same instance, simply asking why the character is "stuffing their face" and requesting that they stop eating.

4.4. Rumors

Rumors, as a form of bullying language, can be defined as unverified or unconfirmed statements or stories about an individual or group intended to damage their reputation or social relationships (Kessel Schneider et al., 2012). Rumor often involves spreading malicious information or unfounded accusations and can severely affect the victim's social and emotional well-being. They can be especially damaging to adolescents, as they are often circulated within peer groups and social networks, amplifying their impact, and perpetuating negative stereotypes and social exclusion.

Table 4. The use of rumors as a theme of bullying

No	ST Jordanian Vernacular	TT American Subtitles	TT British Subtitles
7	وعشان تكمل لما تنفست بوجهي! ريحة معفنة! فار ميت بثمها.	And to make matters worse, when she came closer to me, her breath reeked! As if there was a dead rat in her mouth.	And as if that wasn't bad enough, she was breathing right in my face. -And her breath smelt so, so bad! -[girls exclaiming] [Layan] It was like a rat had died in her mouth.

| 8 | بع شو القرف هاد! أنتِ ايمتى آخرة مرة تحممتي؟ على العيد! عمرك سمعتي عن اشي اسمه shower! ريحتك جد طالعة | Yuck, you stink! When was the last time you took a shower? During Eid? Have you ever heard of showering? You really stink. | [sniffs] What's that smell? Heard of personal hygiene? I guess not. [indistinct chuckling] When was the last time you took a shower? You stink. |

Table 4 reveals the use of rumors as a theme of bullying. Examples 7 and 8 show that American subtitles seem more censored than British ones. In Example 7, American subtitles use euphemisms to tone down the offensive language, while British subtitles are more natural and use the word "smelt" instead of "reeked". In Example 8, American subtitles utilize "stink" instead of the more offensive "smell bad" in the Jordanian vernacular. The British subtitles use "personal hygiene" to imply that the person is unclean but avoid using "stink".

Using literal translation as a censoring technique may affect the delivery of the bullying language as it may tone down the level of offense perceived by the viewer. In example 7, British subtitles use the phrase "like a rat had died in her mouth," which is more descriptive and vivid than "dead rat in her mouth" in the American subtitles. British subtitles convey a stronger sense of disgust, which may affect the viewer's perception of the bullying language used.

4.5. Deflecting with humor

Deflecting with humor expressions is a form of bullying language that involves using humor or sarcasm to avoid criticism or to deflect negative attention (Smith et al., 2015). This can be seen as a form of verbal aggression, as it can undermine the self-esteem and social status of the targeted individual. While humor can be used to cope with bullying, the use of humor to deflect criticism can also maintain social dominance and perpetuate a culture of bullying.

Table 5. Expressions deflecting with humor to transform bullying

No	ST Jordanian Vernacular	TT American Subtitles	TT British Subtitles
9	ظهرها وصدرها واحد. مسفقة.	There isn't much on that flat chest of hers to hurt.	She's completely flat, back and front!
10	محلاكي مس عبير. طالعة زي السمكة.	Come on! Ms. Abeer, you look terrific! You look like a fish in the.. Not like a fish!	Over here! Look at you, Ms Abeer. You look like a shimmering fish. Not like a fish.

Table 5 represents expressions deflecting with humor to transform bullying. Deflecting and humorous language in interlingual subtitling is a common practice employed to convey the original meaning of a source text in a more palatable form. However, when dealing with bullying language, the subtitler must consider the cultural nuances and potential harm that the original text might cause in the target

language. In this case, the subtitling of Jordanian vernacular poses a particular challenge, as it contains expressions that might be deemed offensive or inappropriate in British and American English.

Example 9 shows a clear difference between American and British interlingual subtitling. The original Jordanian vernacular is subtitled in American English as "There isn't much on that flat chest of hers to hurt," which uses more euphemistic language to deflect the offensive nature of the comment. In contrast, the British subtitle's "She's completely flat, back and front" is plainer and uses an ironic tone to convey the insult. Similarly, the American subtitle in Example 10 uses humor to deflect the insult by saying "Come on! Ms. Abeer, you look terrific! You look like a fish in the... Not like a fish!" The British subtitle, on the other hand, adopts a more direct approach, "Over here! Look at you, Ms Abeer. You look like a shimmering fish. Not like a fish." While the American subtitle uses indirect language and humor to deflect bullying, the British subtitle uses an ironic tone to convey the insult while minimizing the impact. However, both subtitling modes ultimately aim to convey the intended meaning of the source text in a way that is culturally acceptable and less harmful to the target audience.

5. Discussion

The current study presents an in-depth analysis of interpreting verbal bullying from Jordanian vernacular into English, focusing on five distinct categories: threats, insults, taunts, rumors, and humor used as a deflective mechanism. This examination illuminates different patterns in applying diverse conversational techniques within the frame of British and American English interlingual subtitles.

It emerges that American English translations exhibit a predilection for a more direct and overt approach. This mirrors the sociolinguistic trend observed in American English towards assertiveness and individuality, reflecting a culture that values transparency and forthrightness (Algeo, 2009; Kovecses, 2000). In contrast, British English translations lean towards a more understated approach, preferring nuanced and euphemistic language. Such a choice aligns with Britain's cultural customs and values, indicating an interconnection between language and cultural norms (Hudson, 1996; Woods, 1984).

A clear divergence in the representation of threat expressions across the American and British English subtitles was noted. American English subtitles employ more direct and confrontational language, manifesting a cultural preference for forthrightness and explicitness (Tannen, 2005). However, British English subtitles veer towards a more tactful usage of language. The choice for subtlety is achieved through euphemisms, indirect expressions, or refined vocabulary (Allan & Burridge, 2006; Hughes, 2015), thereby reducing the apparent severity or harshness of the threat. However, the straightforwardness of American English subtitles may result in a more accurate depiction of the original language but may risk appearing confrontational or aggressive to the audience.

Insult expressions follow a similar pattern, with American subtitles favoring a more explicit approach while British subtitles choosing a more restrained, euphemistic approach. This aligns with each culture's unique linguistic preferences and norms, underlining the complex interplay between language, culture, and societal values (Debbas & Haider, 2020; Kasper & Rose, 2002). British subtitles demonstrate a higher degree of censorship, which is apparent in the neutralization of insulting language. This practice resonates with the British cultural preference for modesty and understatement

(Hughes, 2015). However, this approach may occasionally obfuscate the insult's original meaning or intent, necessitating additional contextual understanding (Allan & Burridge, 2006).

The analysis of taunting expressions demonstrated a significant difference between American and British English subtitles. The American subtitles were direct and confrontational, using explicit language to provoke or mock the recipient (Tannen, 2005). In contrast, the British subtitles took a more indirect approach, employing softer language. The degree of censorship is crucial in conveying the intended severity of the taunt, with the British subtitles potentially mitigating the level of aggression expressed in the original taunt (Allan & Burridge, 2006).

A noteworthy contrast was observed in the representation of rumor expressions. American subtitles were censored, employing euphemisms to tone down the offensive language (Abu-Rayyash et al., 2023; Jay, 2009). In contrast, British subtitles adopted a more direct approach. This contrast counters the general tendency of British subtitles to use more indirect and euphemistic language in threats and insults. The subtlety of British English may be context-dependent rather than a consistent feature across all communicative instances (Mills, 2003).

Lastly, the study explored the usage of humor as a deflective tactic. British subtitles again showcased a higher degree of censorship, using irony to deliver the insult while minimizing its impact. In contrast, American subtitles leaned towards indirect language and humor to deflect bullying, which might align with the American cultural preference for humor as a conflict management tool (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). This difference indicates the complex nature of humor and its potential use as a mechanism to deflect criticism and mitigate harm. The use of indirect language and humor can lessen the offensive nature of the comments, hence functioning as a form of censorship (Attardo, 1993). This discussion reiterates the crucial role of cultural context and sensitivity in translating verbal bullying from one language to another.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of verbal bullying language within audio-visual materials, explicitly examining the representation of bullying language in the Jordanian Netflix show *AlRawabi School for Girls.* Furthermore, the study explored the role of British and American English interlingual subtitling as tools for regulating the subtitled AV content aimed at adolescent viewers. Through a qualitative research approach using an aligned parallel corpus of the source text and the target texts, the study has identified five distinct categories of bullying language: threat, insult, taunt, rumors, and deflecting with humor expressions and analyzed the subtitling practices employed to censor the delivery of the show's themes.

The study's findings suggest differences between the use of bullying language in American and British English subtitles. Specifically, the findings indicate that British English tends to employ more implicit and euphemistic expressions, while American English is often more straightforward in its use of language. This may be due to cultural differences and the specific norms and values associated with each language variety. Understanding these differences is essential for subtitlers and other language

professionals, as it can inform their decisions when translating and adapting content for different audiences.

Additionally, these findings have implications for how we understand and address the issue of bullying, as cultural and linguistic factors may play a role in perpetuating this form of aggression. The findings also highlight the urgent need for effective regulations to minimize the negative impact of bullying language on adolescent viewers. The study has limitations, including using a single TV show and focusing on British and American English interlingual subtitling. Nonetheless, the insights provided by this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on the portrayal of bullying language in media and its potential implications for media censorship policies and practices.

It is recommended that future research considers a broader range of AV materials and subtitling practices to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of subtitling practices in regulating media content. Eventually, this study's contributions have implications for media regulators, subtitlers, and content creators to ensure that AV materials targeting adolescent viewers are appropriately regulated and free from bullying language.

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