

## An Intersemiotic Analysis of the Arabic Dubbed Version of Disney's *Frozen Let it Go*

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**Abstract:** In today's digital environment, verbal, visual and sound resources constantly collaborate to construct meaning in the audiovisual mediascape. Audiovisual Translation (AVT) studies have thus shifted focus to examine how such multimodal orchestration and meaning shifts are captured and transferred from one culture to another. Songs' AVT in animated musicals imposes (non)verbal constraints on translators who have to adapt/adjust to transfer not only the verbal and visual codes but also the musical. This article examines the intersemiotic relations among the three different semiotic modes when dubbing *Let it Go* from English into Arabic. It builds on Reus' (2020a/b) Triangle of Aspects to fit both academic and practical purposes. The results suggest that dubbing a song mainly relies on a quadrangular of parameters: meaning-making, technical, interpretative, and performative elements of translation. Verbally, the findings indicated that the translator oscillated between full adherence to disregard of the semantic meaning. Nonverbally, the findings revealed mixed results regarding the OS-DS (in)congruencies in which the translator foregrounded and/or backgrounded certain aspects to conform to imposed constraints. Four different intermodal relations were identified: addition, enhancement, modification, and deletion. This study offers a methodological contribution to the AVT scholarship, positing a framework that can be systematically followed in future research.

**Keywords:** Arabic, audiovisual translation, dubbing, *Frozen*, multimodal analysis, Triangle of Aspects

### 1. Introduction

The rise and sprawl of digital media ensured that diversified audiovisual materials permeate our everyday life, engendering a pressing need for intercultural exchange to dissolve boundaries via (non)verbal communication. While verbal communication refers to spoken or written messages, non-verbal refers to signs, gestures, sounds, images, and colors, among other semiotic resources. Technological advances in entertainment and multimedia industry, including animated musicals, have urged scholars to study audiovisual translation (AVT) from a multimodal lens. AVT is a form of transposition, where only a given portion of the source text (ST) is translated/adapted in its new shape within the same complex audiovisual ensemble (Perego & Pacinotti 2020). AVT is an overarching term for 'film translation', 'multimodal translation' (Piñero & Chaume 2009: 141) and 'multimedia translation' (Giri 2019: 1). Dubbing, a type of AVT, refers to replacing an original utterance in the Source Language (SL) with a translated one

in the Target Language (TL), through combining linguistic, cultural, technical, and creative elements to produce an audiovisual text (Chaume 2020). Dubbing specialists need to attend to the multimodal distribution of meanings across the different semiotic modes despite the various restrictions they face in the dubbing process (Martínez-Sierra et al., 2010; Perez-González 2014; Minutella, 2021).

Songs are semiotically complex (Carpi 2020). They involve a fusion of verbal, visual, and aural modes that create a rich multimodal experience (Bateman et al. 2017). Thus, songs fall within the remit of multimodality (Walker 2018). Adopting a multimodal approach to song translation and dubbing characterizes a burgeoning field of inquiry (Gambier & Pinto 2018). Song translation, Jun (2017) argues, has not received the appropriate academic attention due to the vagueness of the discipline which combines translation, semiotics, and musicology. Whether the translation is 'singable' or 'unsingable', Jun (2017:93) claims, has been the only category that was academically addressed in song translation. While the former, Jun explains, renders an adapted and dubbed singable version, the latter renders narrative-like lyrics that reflect the meaning only without the nonverbal features. Further, limited studies combine translation with other semiotic modes and many scholars still separate the AVT verbal elements from the nonverbal (Carpi 2020).

To fill this gap, the current study examines the intersemiotic relations among the semiotic modes of the dubbed version of *Let it Go* to highlight the significance of meaning representation through the orchestration of modes within certain sociocultural context(s) and to offer a specific model of analysis that would cover all three semiotic modes at play. In doing so, this study investigates the dubbing features and constraints that might hinder the delivery of dubbed songs (DS) to the target culture and studies the DS's (in)congruencies in comparison to the original song (OS) to further understand the MSA features. It reflects on the song's informative aspect that functions as a means of representation of different cultures to better understand songs. To the authors' best knowledge, there are no relevant studies that discuss song translation and the intersemiotic nature of AVT from English into Arabic or vice versa. Therefore, this study fills a gap in literature and reflects on the limitations that need to be addressed. To this end, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: To what extent is the OS (in)congruent with the MSA song?

RQ2: What are the recognizable patterns followed by the translator(s) in rendering the verbal aspect of the DS?

RQ3: What are the recognizable patterns followed by the translator(s) in rendering the nonverbal (visual and musical) aspects of the DS?

## 2. Literature review

Reviewing the literature on AVT and dubbing, four turns were identified. The first turn focused on the basic norms and disciplines of dubbing while highlighting AVT's constrained nature using monomodal frameworks (Chaume 2020). The second turn moved toward culturally oriented approaches that examine ideologies, power, stereotyping, and culture-related issues in multimodal data translation. In this turn, scholars attended to the transfer of culture through language, different

strategies, and techniques of culture-bound terms (CBTs) translation, cultural references, and idioms. The third turn shifted from focusing on the translated data to accentuating the translator's role as a mediator between languages and cultures. By the same token, dubbing research currently investigates the translators' role, their choices, what mediates such choices, the translation and adaptation of the audiovisual product, and the audience's active role in today's digitized and multimodal world (Chaume 2020). The last turn centered on AVT experimental research, where researchers test the audience perception of major dubbing features, like lip-synchrony and kinetic synchrony (Giovanni 2020).

Drawing on Low's (2005) Pentathlon Principle, Litola (2017) compared the subtitled and dubbed versions of *Let it Go* to examine their singability and how far they reflect the song's sense. A song translation, Low argues, is situated in a sociocultural framework in which the nonverbal modes can neither be ignored nor considered as complementary. A song translator, Low explains, is a pentathlete who needs to disseminate his efforts equally among five aspects: singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm, and rhyme. Litola's (2017) findings indicated that while the dubbed version was more singable, the subtitled version was closer to the ST and more reflexive of the OS's semantic features. Moving to investigating the dubbing techniques in song translation, Metin Tekin and Isisag (2017) investigated the dubbing of *Hercules* (1997) and *Frozen* (2013) to examine which techniques were more applicable. The results showed that the translators opted for applying the adaptation strategy in the Turkish dubbing. Similarly, Kaleş (2015) analyzed the translation of songs from English into Turkish from 1965 to 1980.

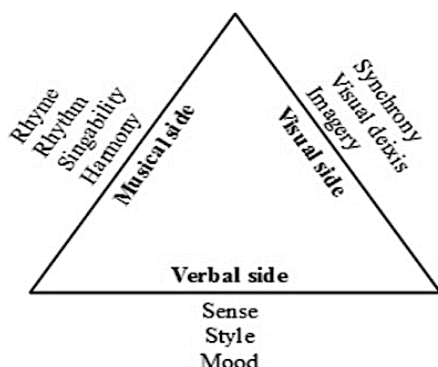
The findings showed that adaptation ranked the highest, replacement ranked second-best, while translation ranked the lowest applied strategy. Both studies concluded that the translators followed translation strategies that were essentially informed by (non)verbal factors such as melody, rhyme. They assert that the Target Text (TT) and target audience's expectations are more essential than the Source Text (ST) (Metin Tekin & Isisag 2017). They concluded that the dubbing process casts the ST into a culturally oriented TT through creating an adapted version of the songs that does not semantically reflect the ST, but pragmatically tailors it to fit in another context.

### 2.1. The Triangle of Aspects: An integrated model

Scholars have been trying to develop frameworks that can compete with the contemporary multimodal world. Informed by van Leeuwen's (1999) perspective of melody system and pitch parameters, Noad and Barton (2016) developed music systems to describe types of musical emotions represented in films to systematically analyze meanings and emotions in songs. Since 2017, Reus has conducted a series of case studies to test his Triangle of Aspects (ToA) in which he combined the songs' verbal, visual and musical aspects (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1.**

*The Triangle of Aspects (ToA)*



*Note. This Model was created by Reus (2020b) illustrating the components of the ToA*

The ToA offers a detailed framework of analysis of dubbed songs through providing quantitative tools for a qualitative research area. It offers a better understanding of the modal resources in use and how multimodal cohesion is realized through examining their density and intensity. Figure 1 illustrates that the verbal aspect incorporates three subspects: sense, style, and mood. The sense focuses on the reflection of the lyrics' semantic meaning on the TL, exclusive of the use of metaphors, idioms, or connotative expression(s). The style refers to the dubbed version's stylistic features, including register, idiolects, and word choice. When translating, certain parameters need to be set to identify the degree of formality and acceptability in language, which, *ipso facto*, involves the degree of formal to colloquial vocabulary to be used. Irrespective of the lyrics' grammatical mood, the mood aspect examines the relationship between the songs' narrative codes and lyrics, highlighting how metaphors, idioms, and connotations are translated (Reus, 2020b).

The visual aspect includes three subspects: synchrony, visual deixis, and imagery. Synchrony refers to the character(s)' mouth movement, and how close the mouth shape is to that of the OS. Visual deixis denotes the audiovisual

synchronization between the onscreen image and the characters' utterances. Imagery is the reflection of the onscreen visual structures, given that what can be expressed using certain lexical items and fitting in certain structures, can be portrayed in visual communication differently. Thus, when the visual mode of communication intertwines with the verbal one, they extend the meaning of texts (Kress & van Leeuwen 2020). Finally, the musical aspect focuses on four subaspects: rhyme, rhythm, singability, and harmony. Rhyme is analyzed through the song's rhyme scheme. Rhythm focuses on syllable count and stress pattern in the song. Singability investigates the song's vocal quality and ease with which it can be sung. Harmony tests the relationship between music and the pragmatic sense of the lyrics.

Drawing on Reus' ToA (2020a/b) and Low's Pentathlon Principle (2005), Alilović (2020) analyzed the translation of Croatian dubbed animated Disney films to identify the differences between the English OSs and Croatian DSs. The results indicated that while dubbing, Croatian translators pay more attention to the musical aspect, rendering them more musicocentric with a focus on both rhythm and rhyme more than the verbal pragma-semantic aspect. Similarly, Oosthuizen (2019) tested the ToA as a quality assessment tool for songs' dubbing for both academics and professionals. The findings suggested some improvements to the model in which she proposed to replace Reus' unit of analysis from 'multimodal phrase' to more specific units like 'visually' and/or 'musically' important syllables. The ToA's quantitative aspect, Oosthuizen claims, qualifies it to be a priceless tool and a dubbing success formula.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Why *Let it Go*?**

Drawn from Frozen I, *Let it Go* is the 2013 Academy Awards winning song. The song attracted academic and professional attention after being translated into MSA. *Let it Go* demonstrates the emergence of Elsa's self-realization when she decides to finally resolve her everlasting inner turmoil. It discusses the dilemma of the main character, who has been trapped in her castle, trying to conceal her true self ever since she was young. Princess Elsa was born with certain powers to manipulate ice and snow. Not only did she hide her powers, but she also pretended to be someone else. Her father, the king, asked her to hide her superpowers from everyone, including her siblings. Despite her efforts, Elsa's powers were inadvertently unleashed, causing eternal winter in Arendelle – the city she ruled. After Elsa's powers burst out, she realized she could not restrain them anymore. So, she isolated herself in a faraway kingdom of ice.

#### **3.2 Corpus of the study**

The song's original versions (English and Arabic) have been extracted from Apple TV, a Disney-authorized service media provider. Table 1 shows the data under investigation.

Table 1. Data under investigation

<b>Musical</b>	<b>Song</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>No. of Dubbed words</b>	<b>No. of verses</b>
<b>Frozen I (2013)</b>	Let it Go اطلقي سرك	3 min. 45 sec.	326	47

Following Reus' (2020a: 27) definition, 'songs' are defined as "animated musicals that begin when the first note is played and end when the last note is played; the musical, verbal and visual codes within that timespan can be considered the song." As songs are 'plurisemiotic' (Kaindl 2005). Thus, an integrated model of analysis is required to capture the nuanced details of the song's three modes of communication (verbal, visual, and musical) together with the interrelations between them.

### 3.3 Procedures

*Let it Go* was deemed sufficient data because it represents a musical animated song transdubbing phenomenon. Engaging with the co-authors and peer researchers controls research bias and maintains validity of results where all data analysis activities were conducted using data double coding in three separate rounds to allow the cross-examination of the data. Inter-and intra-rater reliabilities were measured using Cohen's Kappa (Cohen's  $\kappa = 0.90$ , Cohen's  $\kappa = 0.93$ , respectively).

#### 3.3.1 The verbal aspect: Sense, style, mood

To examine the translation's semantic functionality (sense), the OS was compared to the DS to evaluate the degree of difference in the semantic meaning. No semantic difference was assigned to the DS phrases that carried the exact meaning. Major difference phrases carried major difference in meaning, while minor difference phrases carried slight differences. To investigate style, both the register and formality that the singer/performer uses were examined. To study the mood, the translation of metaphors and CBTs were examined using Molina and Albir's (2002) classification. Table 2 illustrates Molina and Albir's translation techniques.

Table 2. Translation techniques of the mood – Molina and Albir's (2002) classification

<b>Technique</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Adaptation</b>	To replace a cultural element in the SL with one from the TL.	The <u>snow glows white</u> on the mountain tonight $\Rightarrow$ التلج اللبلة كالصحراء

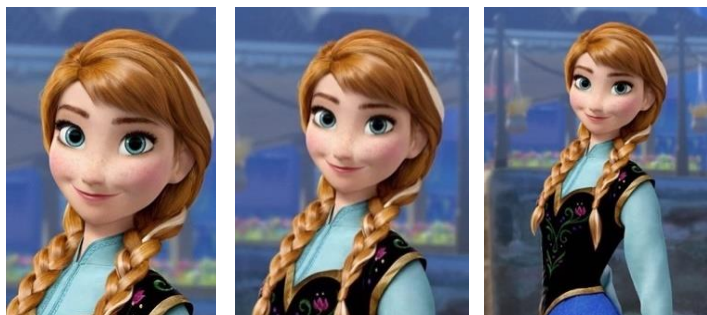
<b>Amplification</b>	To add information/details to the TL that were not existent in the SL.	Ramadan, the Muslims' month of fasting ⇒ شهر رمضان
<b>Borrowing</b>	To transliterate a word/an expression from one language to another.	Croissant (in French) ⇒ Croissant (in English)
<b>Calque</b>	To literally translate a foreign word/a phrase (lexical or structural)	The Cold War ⇒ الحرب الباردة
<b>Compensation</b>	To change the place of an ST element in the TT because it cannot be reflected in the same place in the TL	I was looking for you, flathead ⇒ انت الذي كنت ابحث عنه، أيها الأحمق
<b>Description</b>	To replace a cultural term/expression with a description of its function in the TL.	The traditional dish in Spain ⇒ Paella
<b>Discursive creation</b>	To create an out-of-context and an unpredictable equivalence	That perfect girl is gone ⇒ فقدت برانتي
<b>Established equivalent</b>	To use a term/an expression in a SL that is recognized as an equivalent of another in the TL.	Diamonds cut diamonds ⇒ لا يفل الحديد إلا الحديد
<b>Generalization</b>	To replace a word/an expression with a more general and unconcise one	Window ⇒ المشربية
<b>Linguistic amplification</b>	To add linguistic elements more than required that might (not) add to the meaning of the sentence; often used in interpretation.	No way ⇒ بلا أي طريقة من الطرق
<b>Linguistic compression</b>	To reduce linguistic elements in the TT; often used in simultaneous and consecutive interpretation	Yes, so what? ⇒ إذا؟
<b>Literal translation</b>	To translate a word/an expression word-for-word; when form corresponds with meaning and function	She is reading ⇒ إنها تقرأ
<b>Modulation</b>	To change the point of view and focus of the TT in relation to the ST (lexical or structural)	You are going to have a child ⇒ ستصبح أباً

<b>Particularization</b>	To use a more precise term	Window ⇒ مشربية
<b>Reduction</b>	To compress a ST information in the TT	Ramadan, the Muslims' month of fasting ⇒ شهر رمضان
<b>Substitution</b>	To replace a linguistic sign with a paralinguistic one	to translate the Arab gesture when they put their hands on their hearts as <i>Thank you/much appreciated</i>
<b>Transposition</b>	To change the grammatical category, e.g., from noun to adjective	<u>Laughing</u> , the girl told her father... ⇒ ضحكت الفتاة وقالت لأبيها...
<b>Variation</b>	To change the register, dialect, tone of the SL speaker	Watcha doin'? ⇒ ماذا أنت بفاعل؟

### 3.3.2 The visual aspect

To study the song's visual aspect, synchrony, visual deixis, and imagery were investigated. As for the synchrony, the speaker's mouth articulation was evaluated to identify the phonetic correspondence between the DS and the OS. The visually important syllables were determined based on the frames of clarity and shot sizes

Figure 2. Selection criteria of shot sizes in the analysis of synchrony



in lip synchronization detection (See Oosthuizen 2019). This criterion focuses on two aspects: the shot sizes and the vowel and consonant types.

To identify the important shot sizes, close-ups, medium close-ups, and medium shots were spotted and timecoded (See Figure 2). Figure 2 provides an example of a visually important shot.

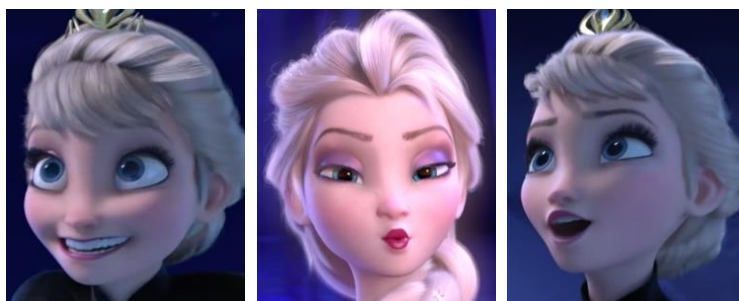
*Note.* From left to right (close-up shot, medium close-up shot, medium shot)

As for the vowel and consonant types, syllables are considered visually important if they are distinctively articulated. Labialized consonants, rounded vowels and consonants are more recognizable than velarized consonants. In the



synchrony aspect, the phonetic correspondence of the character's lip movement within the selected and timecoded shots was analyzed. Pronunciation of different vowels and consonants resulted in different mouth positions and shapes, as the mouth shape changes, and each sound has a distinct and recognizable articulation. Figure 3 shows how lip shape is considered: spread, rounded, or neutral. The sound /i:/ is produced with spread lips; /w/ is produced with rounded lips, while /ʌ/ is produced with neutral lips.

Figure 3. *Distinctively articulated syllables: Spread, rounded, and neutral*



*Note. From left to right (spread lips, rounded lips, neutral lips)*

Visual deixis refers to the verbal references coinciding with the onscreen visual context. If a character is pointing via language using verbal deixis to point at onscreen element, this should be reflected in the DS (Reus, 2018). Visual deixis is presented via animated characters' gestures and facial expressions. For example, a character's angry facial expression cannot utter a line expressing joy. Table 3 represents Reus' (2018) visual deixis categorization that was followed in the analysis.

Table 3. The categorization of visual deixis

<b>Retained</b> (√)	Visual deixis and verbal references are not modified or changed
<b>Altered</b> (/)	Verbal text differs in meaning from the original in a way that has different connection to character or scene
<b>Removed</b> (-)	Verbal text in the original song referring to visual elements is removed
<b>Added</b> (+)	Dubbed text added verbal elements related to the visual codes that were not in the ST

Imagery refers to the implicit relationship between the song lyrics and visual codes. The meaning of the visual codes is considered in conjunction with that of the verbal. Imagery is a compositional sub-aspect that investigates the staging and mise-en-scène. This sub-aspect is identified based on the story progression.

Songs, Reus (2020a) argues, have a narrative nature: beginning, middle, and end. Hence, the key scenes that reflect the story line development are analyzed through matching the denotative and connotative meaning(s) of the scenes (Barthes 1977). The denotative meaning (signifier) appears in the scene(s') representation and the verbal codes. The connotative meaning of the scene(s) (signified) is presented in the interpretation of the basic concepts while attaining the signifier's implied meaning. Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) and Machin and Hansen's (2018) visual analysis, the connotative meaning was interpreted through analyzing the character(s') gaze, color composition, shot size, and camera angle.

To analyze the musical aspect, rhyme, rhythm, singability and harmony were investigated. However, this study restricts itself to rhyme, singability, and harmony. Rhythm is excluded for time and space constraints. The song's rhyme scheme was analyzed and quantified where each type of rhyme was marked with a symbol. Table 4 is illustrative.

Table 4. Identifying rhyme scheme

A	A*	A~	/	*
Rhyming word(s)	Repetition of rhyming word(s)	Approximately rhyming word(s)	Unrhyming word(s)	Repetition of unrhyming word(s)
	Rhyming lines		Unrhyming lines	

To analyze singability, prominent syllables were extracted then the pitch and vowel quality were examined. Following Reus' (2020a/b/c), syllables are considered prominent if they occur in the upper register: scales from C4 to C6 (See Figure 4). *Let it Go* is sung by sopranos (the general range of a soprano varies from C4 to C6). Accordingly, syllables were sung on a note between C5 and C6 which are considered high, and thus, prominent (See Oosthuizen 2019).

Figure 4. Illustration of notes C4, C5, and C6



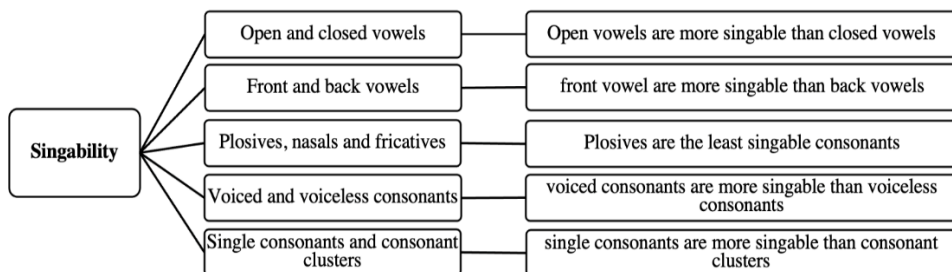
To maintain validity, the notes were verified using Musical Instrument Digital Interface file (MIDI) which contains descriptive information about songs and tracks: chords, sequence, tempo, time signature, and pitch. The files were inserted on GarageBand software (See Figure 5) to read the music notes (an application that gives access to people to create and read automated music). Figure 5 is an illustrative sample of how GarageBand reveals a detailed description of the music note, denoting which sounds are produced and identifying pitch, sound positions, volume, and tempo (the speed/pace).

Figure 5. Screenshot of GarageBand program



Based on Reus’ (2020a/b) Five Principles rule, singability was analyzed as to how comfortable and easily sung the dubbed lyrics are. Figure 6 illustrates how the five principles of singability are systematically analyzed.

Figure 6. Singability of the lyrics - five principles rule



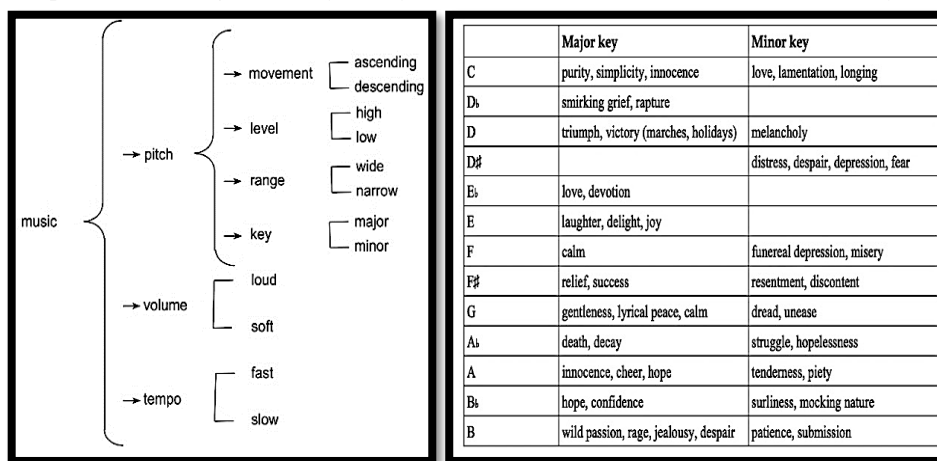
Note. This figure is designed by the authors and is adapted from Reus’ (2020a/b) Five Principles rule.

Drawing on Reus’, harmony analyzes the musical affordances and semiosis to understand the meaning of consecutive and/or simultaneous sounds and the relationship between lyrics and music. It also investigates the intermodal coherence between texts and sounds in both the OS and DS, highlighting the orchestration of different modes in meaning representation. Segments were determined following the imagery selection criteria, by highlighting the song’s key scenes. The harmony analysis was conducted qualitatively through listening to the song and reading the music sheet as evidence for the interpreted signified meanings (Hansen & Machin 2018). Figure 7 illustrates a proposed model of analysis to systematically analyze and evaluate music

Figure 7 illustrates Noad and Barton’s (2020) and Beaudry’s (2015) models of analysis which were combined and adopted to analyze the harmony. To analyze the data, the music key signature (the arrangement of sharp or flat signs, music notes, on a particular line and space of a musical staff indicate the corresponding notes) was examined to identify the mood that each piece of music orchestrates along with the singer’s performance (Beaudry 2015). Drawing on Noad and Barton’s (2020) system of music scores, the song’s harmony is revealed through its tempo, volume, and pitch. This system extends the melody system of pitch parameters proposed by van Leeuwen (1999) which mainly highlighted the emotional significance of the different music parameters along with the lyrics to

**Figure 7.**

*Proposed model of harmony analysis – Noad & Barton (2020) and Beaudry (2015)*



communicate meaning.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Verbal analysis

#### 4.1.1. Sense

The results revealed equal percentages (40.5%) of major semantic differences and zero differences. Out of a total of 47 verses, 19 occurrences (40.5%) showed major semantic differences, 19 (40.5%) equal semantic meaning, and 9 (19%) minor differences. The translator(s) alternated between two extremes in which they either preserved or largely ignored the semantic meaning. Table 5 shows that the DS lines do not semantically reflect the same meaning of the OS lines.

Table 5. Samples of the major semantic differences

No.	OS	DS	Back Translation
1	The snow glows white on the mountain tonight	الثَّلج اللَّيْلَة كَالصَّحراء	The snow tonight (is) like the desert
2	That perfect girl is gone	فقدت براءتي	I lost my innocence

Example 1 illustrates that the translator rendered a version that is more domestic to the Arab recipients, comparing “snow” to الصحراء (‘desert’). Although ‘desert’ sounds more familiar to the target audience, it creates an unfamiliar simile to the audience. The dubbed line does not allow recipients to accurately visualize the scene as the conceptual meaning of ‘desert’ does not classify it as ‘glowing’ and ‘white’ – which were omitted in the dubbed version – but rather as parched and yellow. Example 2 demonstrates how Elsa rebels against the perfect girl her father envisaged, saying: “That perfect girl is gone” which was translated into ‘فقدت براءتي’ (Lit. I lost my innocence). The negative connotation used to link ‘perfection’ to ‘innocence’ totally changes the intended meaning presented in the OS. Arabs associate girls’ innocence with sexuality. Therefore, the DS word choice bears deeper layers of negative connotations than intended. Not being a perfect girl does not necessarily mean that she lost her innocence. What the OS meant is that Elsa would not restrain herself to the surrounding sociocultural environment. Therefore, linking innocence to self-realization was not the intended meaning or image. Table 6 shows a sample of the minor semantic differences.

Table 6. Samples of minor semantic differences – MSA Song

No.	ST	TT	Back Translation
1	It looks like I’m the queen	أحكمها بسلام	I rule it peacefully
2	Conceal, don’t feel	تخفي الإحساس	(She) hides the feeling
3	To test the limits and break through	كي أختبر كل القدرات	So that I (can) test all the capabilities

In example 1, ‘It looks like I’m the queen’ (Lit. يبدو أنني الملكة) was translated into ‘أحكمها بسلام’ (Lit. I rule it with peace) which reflects a minor semantic difference between the OS and DS. Although the literal translation of both sentences is not fully equal, they are not semantically distant, offering a modulated idea that fits the context: Elsa is the queen, who rules the country. Example 2 articulates what Elsa’s father has asked her to do all her life: to ‘conceal, don’t feel’ (lit. لا تشعرني (إخفي). Minor changes were made to the meaning in the TT line ‘تخفي الإحساس’ which (Lit. (She) hides the feeling) – a command that linguistically compresses two imperative verbs (‘hide’ إخفي and ‘don’t feel’) into one declarative verb (تخفي الإحساس), restricting the target audience’s interpretation to only one idea. Example 3, ‘To test the limits and break through’ (Lit. كي أختبر كل (الحدود وأخطاها), was translated into ‘كي أختبر كل القدرات’ (Lit. so that I (can) test all the capabilities). With slightly different perspectives, both the ST and TT showcase Elsa’s capability to break free from her constraints.

#### 4.1.2. Style

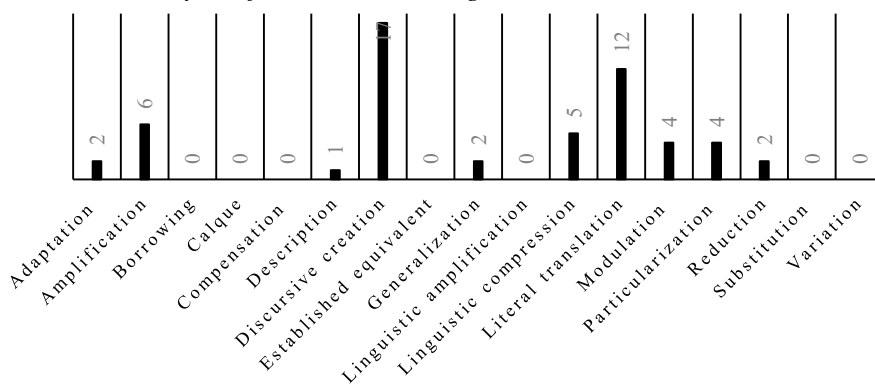
Although the OS is in colloquial English, it was dubbed into MSA. The register difference creates inconformity with the formality level where MSA is deemed formal when compared to the semi-formal OS (Yahiaoui et al. 2020). Such

difference falls under the dubbing professional constraint and may lead to some linguistic discrepancy (Martínez-Sierra et al. 2010). MSA is considered a read-only language variant that is not used in the daily conversation unless dialect differences impede communication. The translator had to follow Disney's requirements to dub a colloquial English song into MSA. This can be detected in the translator's choices in: 'I don't care what they're going to say' into 'لا أخشى كل ما سيفال' (Lit. I do not dread all that will be said). Another noteworthy example is 'Let it go, can't hold it back anymore!' which was dubbed into 'اطلعي سرّك، لن أتحمّل العذاب' (Lit. Divulge your secret, I shall not bear the torment).

#### 4.1.3. Mood

The results showed that while discursive creation was identified as the most prominent translation tool (17 occurrences), description was the least used (1 occurrence). Figure 8 illustrates the translation analysis and the number of occurrences.

**Figure 8**  
*Quantitative analysis of mood – MSA song*



**N= 47 occurrences - 17 translation techniques**

Using the discursive creation tool resulted in an out-of-context translation. Despite the frequent use of that tool, the translator manages to mold the out-of-context lines in a new context that unites them all. As a translation for 'kingdom of isolation' (Lit. مملكة العزلة), the translator opts for 'مملكة للحيارى' (Lit. a kingdom for the confused), which changes the meaning and fails to capture the alienation theme. The use of explicitation in the translation of 'don't let them in, don't let them see' into 'لا تكشف سرّ الجليد' (Lit. don't reveal the secret of the glaze), exemplifies how

two words 'سر' and 'الجليد' were discursively created. The second most-occurring strategy is literal translation (12 occurrences) as in: 'I'm never going back' was translated into 'انا حتماً لن أعود' (Lit. I'm certainly not going back).

The third and fourth most used strategies are amplification and linguistic compression. Amplification is identified in 'be the good girl you always have to be' that was translated into 'كوني كما شعبيك يريد' and (Lit. be like what your people want you to be). In this line, the OS does not explicitly state that Elsa has to be a good girl for the sake of her people, nor was that implied by her father. The translator, however, limited the meaning to one point. Using amplification restricted the audience interpretations. Linguistic compression was realized in 'no right, no wrong, no rules for me' which was translated into 'بلا حدود تمنعني' (Lit. without boundaries to stop me). The translator here weaves two ideas into one, given the fact that it is the 'right' and the 'wrong' that constitute the 'boundaries' (الحدود) within which one has to operate.

Modulation and particularization techniques were deployed at equal rates (4 occurrences). Modulation was detected in 'not a footprint to be seen' which was translated into 'لم تلمسه اقدام' (Lit. Nobody stepped a foot on it). The translator modulated the audience's perception of 'أقدام' (feet) which acted as doer in the OS yet was translated as part of a verbal idiomatic expression in the DS ('stepped a foot on'). Particularization was employed to translate 'here I stand' into 'أرضي هنا' (Lit. my land is here), where the translator particularizes 'here' as 'my land', alluding to where Elsa truly belongs.

Reduction, generalization, adaptation, and description were sparingly deployed (1-2 occurrences). Reduction was used in translating 'and one thought crystallizes like an icy blast' into 'وتتبلور فتكون قذيفة من جليد' (Lit. and it crystallizes forming a bolt of ice). The translator omitted 'thought' which resulted in a semantic shift in the Arabic translation, as the agent of "تتبلور" (crystallizes) may have any antecedent referent other than the 'thought'. Generalization was employed in 'and I'll rise like the break of dawn' which was translated into 'وسأشرق مثل النور' (Lit. I'll rise like the light). The metaphor 'break of dawn' means 'انبلاج الفجر' in the TT. The translator's choice, however, reflects a more general reference, i.e., 'light' 'نور', instead of 'dawn' 'فجر'. Adaptation was identified in translating 'heaven knows I've tried' into 'حاولت جاهدة' (Lit. I tried so hard). The dubbed line has been domesticated to fit the target culture. Although the source culture refers to 'heaven' as a controlling divine entity, the Arabic culture does not share the same ST ideology. Finally, description was detected in translating 'and it looks like I'm the queen' which was translated into 'أحكمها بسلام' (Lit. I rule it peacefully), using the function of ruling to refer to the queen.

## 4.2. Visual analysis

### 4.2.1. Synchrony

Thirty-seven shots of lip-synchronization were identified as visually important syllables: 28 medium shots, 6 medium close-up shots, and 3 close-up shots. The number of rounded, spread, and neutral lip positions were calculated using the International phonetic Alphabet transcription. The results showed discrepancy

between the OS and DS lip synchronization with 17 instances of rounded lip position in the OS and 7 in DS, 9 instances of spread lip position in the OS and 12 in DS, and 11 instances of neutral lip position in the OS and 18 in DS. While the character's mouth movements concurred with the dialogue, intonation, and articulation of the voice actor in the OS, the dubbing process imposes constraints to adjust the spoken lines with the mouth movements to become visually acceptable. Calculating the number of (mis)matching syllables, results showed discrepancies in the number of rounded, spread, and neutral lip positions in the OS in comparison to those in the DS, where 59% lip synchronization matched the dubbed song against 41% mismatches. It is widely argued that matching syllables furnish viewers with an engaging experience while mismatching syllables disturb their perception of the movie. In 'Heaven knows I've tried' which was dubbed into 'حاولت جاهدة', the syllable /nəʊz/ coincides with the DS syllable /hɑwæltu:/. In doing so, the lip position in both the OS and DS is rounded, making the syllable appear natural in DS. As for the spread lip position, it appears in 'No rules for me' which was dubbed into 'بلا حدود تمنعني'. The syllables /mi:/ and /təmnaʃuni:/ appear on the exact same timing on screen, allowing a similar spread lip position of both utterances to synchronize. As for the neutral lip position, it appears in 'the past is in the past' which was dubbed into 'الماضي بعيداً صار'. The syllable /pæst/ coincides with /sʰar/, imposing a match of both OS and DS. The mismatch of syllables appears when an utterance is made with a certain lip position but is dubbed in another, causing disturbance to viewers. One of the most significant lip synchronization mismatches appeared in the song's title line: 'Let it go, let it go', where the character utters them twice and where it was dubbed into a single elongated utterance 'اطلقي سرك'. Although the syllables colored in red in the OS and DS lines intralingually coincide, their synchronization mismatched: /let it gəʊ, let it gəʊ/ and /ʔʃlɑqj: səraki:/.

#### 4.2.2. Visual deixis

Thirty-two occurrences of visual deixis linked to verbal references were identified, in which the character verbally points at something and sings about it. In doing so, the character uses some hand gestures that reflect her feelings and/or thoughts, or uses facial expressions that reflect her emotional status. The analysis of visual deixis reveals that 63% of these verbal references were retained, 26% were altered, 7% were removed, and 4% were added. Since retaining the verbal references is generally regarded as the norm, the discussion, for space limitations, will focus on alterations, removals, and additions. An example of altered verbal reference appears in 'can't hold it back anymore' which was dubbed into 'لن أتحمل العذاب' (Lit. I won't bear the torment). This utterance changes the way the audience perceives the visual



deixis, as building a snowman is a fun activity that is not related to torture (See Figure 9).

**Figure 9.**

*Sample of altered verbal references – Let it Go*

Altering the verbal reference has resulted in dissonance between the visual and verbal codes. Where Elsa's facial expressions reflected a sense of relief for her self-unleash, the DS lyrics referred to 'torture'. Removed verbal references appeared at the end of the song when Elsa sang 'let it go, let it go' for one last time which was dubbed into 'لن يعود، لن يعود' (Lit. It won't come back, it won't come



back). This scene exemplifies how the DS removed the link between the visual deixis and verbal referents. Figure 10 is illustrative.

**Figure 10.**

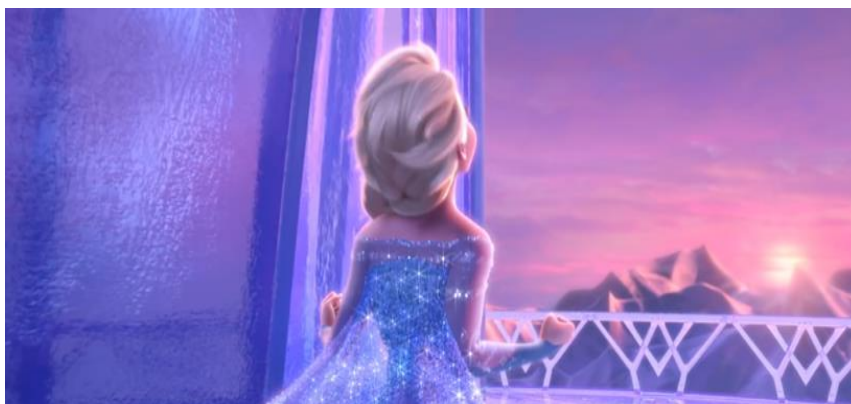
*Sample of removed verbal reference - MSA Song*

Figure 10 presents the scene in which Elsa breaks free from all constraints: she unties her permanently tied-up hair to unleash her powers. While the verbal references rely on the visual codes to make meaning, the DS orchestrates the verbal and visual codes, blocking the visual codes from complementing the verbal references.

Figure 11 exemplifies how the verbal references are added to the visual deixis. After Elsa builds her own 'kingdom of isolation', she sings: 'Here I stand in the light of day' which was translated into 'ها أنا الآن، أفف أمام الناس' (Lit. Here I am now, standing before the people).

**Figure 11.**

*Sample of added verbal reference - MSA Song*



This OS line communicates the sense of freedom that Elsa experienced after her long trap in the castle. She is finally able to see the sunlight in her kingdom. However, this DS line refers to an idea that is quite antithetical to the OS's, as Elsa does not face her people; she is rather hiding from them in her 'kingdom of isolation'.

**4.2.3. Imagery**

Figure 12 presents the OS line 'Turn away and slam the door' which was dubbed into 'إغلقني خلفك الأبواب' which coincides with the shots.

**Figure 12.**

*Example (1) - Imagery analysis of Let it Go*



This is a medium shot of Elsa, dressed up as a queen, wearing a crown with a tied-up hair, and surrounded by frozen fractals that shatter once she moves her hands. Her gaze is pointed upward and off frame. This scene is characterized by cold colors and her dress is embroidered with rosemaling with no direct source of light. This scene communicates Elsa's inner dilemma using a medium shot where Elsa is represented as desperate and confused as to whether to choose herself and unleash her powers. Representing Elsa in an upward off-frame shows that she is looking forward to a better future, where she can realize herself with her gaze and hands movement directed in the same direction to intensify her intentions and consolidate her powers. She widely spreads her hands backwards, throwing everything behind. Her relaxed hands and wide-open fingers show that she embraces freedom. Figure 13 illustrates Elsa's lifechanging character transformation scene.

**Figure 13.**

*Example (2) - Imagery analysis of Let it Go*



She dresses differently which represents her self-realized character. Her new garb maintains some features of the old one but fits her free spirit. She removes the gloves, cape, and crown. The garb's fabric becomes lighter, stressing the fact that 'the cold never bothered her anyway' 'الثلج لا يشعرني باكتئاب'. The change in attire and style reveals the shift she experienced from a conservative life to a free one: her colors were cold and dark, and the collar was high and uptight. She threw away the high-neck cape, freeing herself from the constraints that stifled her self-realization. Centered in a long shot, Elsa appeared in a new gown with a direct gaze that engages viewers to indicate the emergence of change. She spreaded her hands open and loosened her hair to mark the shift in her attitude. Colors became brighter and the sun has become the light source to signify a new beginning. Figure 13 corresponds with the OS line 'Here I stand in the light of day' that was dubbed into 'أرضي هنا وبها سابقى'.

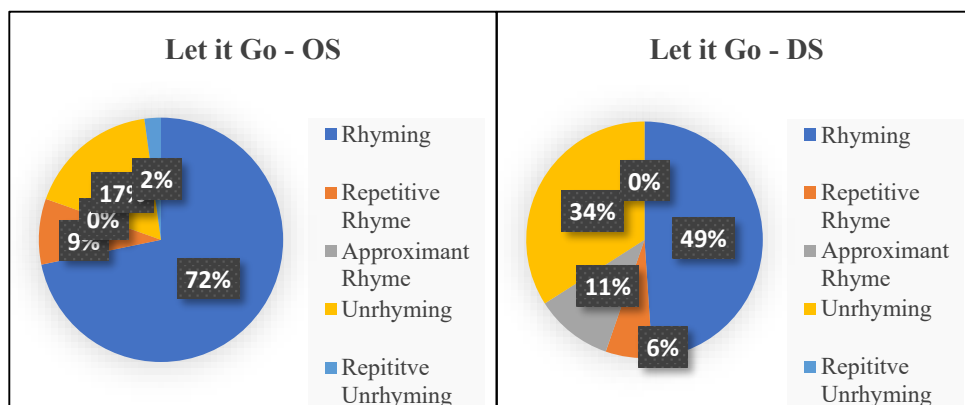
### 4.3. Musical analysis

#### 4.3.1. Rhyme

Results showed that while 72% of the OS lines rhyme, only 49% do in the DS. As for the unrhyming lines, 17% of the OS do not rhyme while 34% do not in the DS. Figure 14 illustrates other scales of (un)rhyming in both versions.

**Figure 14.**

*Quantitative analysis of the rhyme of the OS and the DS - MSA Song*



The discrepancy in the rhyme congruence between the OS and DS reflects the translator's ideology and choice in distributing the labor among the semiotic modes in which certain modes carry most of the meaning at a certain point, prioritizing other aspects over the rhyme.

#### 4.3.2. Singability

The analysis of singability indicates that the DS is more singable than its OS counterpart. Comparing the musically prominent vowels in the OS with those of DS, results showed that the DS is 77% more singable than the OS. That finding might be the result of the Arabic diacritics system which allows songs dubbed in MSA to be more singable, with more open vowels in a single word. According to Reus' (2020b/c) singability framework, open vowels allow songs to be more singable. The analysis of this subaspect does not evaluate which version is better, however, it tests the differences between the two aspects to reflect on the division of labor among the semiotic modes.

#### 4.3.3. Harmony

The song begins with foregrounding the sound of icy wind chimes that is sustained throughout. The sound of the wind chimes situates the listeners in Elsa's new life in a frozen land. The song's first line coincides with the wind chimes that starts with 'The snow glows white on the mountain tonight', which was dubbed into 'التلج كالصحراء الليلية' (Lit. the snow tonight is like the desert). The OS line goes in harmony with the sound effects produced, while the DS line creates a tension between the verbal and musical semiotic relations. The pitch analysis shows that the song starts

in G major which, according to Beaudry (2015), reflects a calm, yet ominous, and dark atmosphere. The song maintains the same note and a narrow pitch range in the first verse, which reflects on Elsa’s emotional and physical state: she is trapped in her own kingdom that she resents. The notes descend starting from the second syllable of the word ‘mountain’ and ‘seen’. This descending melody creates a gloomy and dark effect (van Leeuwen 1999), embodying Elsa’s suffering that night and how she ended up alone (See Figure 15).

**Figure 15.**  
Screenshot (1) of *Let it Go* music sheet



The song starts with a soft volume and slow tempo that give a heads-up to the changes that will occur in Elsa’s character. Elsa’s hesitation appears in the eighth rest pause when she says ‘it looks like... I’m the queen’ which was dubbed into ‘احكمها .... بسلام’ (Lit. I rule it.... peacefully). The hesitation communicated in the OS differs from that the DS. The DS represents Elsa as a queen who experiences an inner conflict. However, the OS communicates Elsa’s hesitancy as to whether to be the queen. The translator’s heedlessness of the effect of the eighth rest (a sound symbolizing silence) places the audience in a tensed position with DS.

**Figure 16.**  
Screenshot (2) of *Let it Go* music sheet



The song’s volume accelerates when Elsa decides to ‘Turn away and slam the door’ which was dubbed into ‘اغلقني خلفك الأبواب’. She discards her old life to start



**Figure 17.**  
Screenshot (3) of *Let it Go* Music Sheet

afresh with a powerful tone and an ascending pitch, echoing her determination and power. Both the OS and DS reflected the same meaning in alliance with music. A sudden rising pitch appears when Elsa sings 'I' in 'I don't care what they're going to say' which was dubbed into 'لا' in 'لا أخشى كل ما سيقال' (See Figure 17).

The rise in pitch in the OS symbolizes Elsa's embrace of power. The sudden rise in 'going' asserts Elsa's fearlessness of the future, for the first time ever she does not dread the future (holding no anticipatory fear). It also grabs the listeners' attention to Elsa's character development from frailty to self-determination and power. This transformation harmonizes with the OS's theme. The rising pitch in 'كل' ('all'), however, does not come in harmony with the song's theme, adding tension to the DS version.

## 5. Findings and discussion

The intersemiotic relation of the verbal, visual and musical modes equally contribute to the transfer of songs to the TL. Prioritizing some aspects over others, the translator foregrounds and backgrounds the different modes of communication to deliver a dubbed version that is communicatively acceptable to the target audience (cf. Chaume's (2020) third turn of dubbing research). This multimodal analysis demonstrates how some aspects contribute to the song's meaning making while others act as merely sub-categorical tasks. However, each aspect serves a certain purpose and affects other aspects. The findings of the analysis suggest that the translator aims at serving four main purposes: meaning-making, technical, interpretative, and performative.

The meaning making was gleaned from the analysis of sense and mood. Discursive creation (Molina and Albir, 2012) was identified as the most frequently used technique which renders the song with new interpretations different from that of the OS which characterizes the intermodal relation of addition. The DS showed instances of major semantic differences coinciding with the use of discursive creation, reduction, linguistic compression, and particularization. The use of discursive creation resulted in a non-equivalent DS when compared to the OS. The translator used certain techniques to modify, delete, and/or focus on certain OS ideas at the expense of others (enhancement and/or modification).

When comparing the results of this study with other scholars', we find our argument converges with Metin Tekin and Isisag (2017) and Kaleş (2015) who contend that the use of adaptation technique has provided Arab recipients with a more domestic version and reflected the same cultural features when compared to the OS. The major semantic differences that were detected in this study did not only reflect difference in meaning but also have resulted in either mitigating or accentuating certain ideas in comparison to the OS. The translator's use of the word 'desert' as a simile for 'snow' in 'التلج الليلة كالصحراء' exemplifies such discrepancy. The choice of 'desert' reflects the translator's awareness of the target audience's natural environment and culture. Although it sounds unnatural and reflects a mismatching representation when compared to the visual codes, it indicates the translator's ability to produce a DS that is culturally familiar to the target audience. This goes in line with Yahiaoui et al. (2020) who claim that the success of a

translated product depends on the creativity of the translator in finding a culturally equivalent expression of the OS. The translator intensifies the meaning of ‘that perfect girl is gone’ by dubbing it into ‘فقدت براءتي’. According to Arab culture, when a girl is described to have lost her innocence, it is always accompanied with negative connotations. The OS bears more layers of meaning when decontextualized from the movie. It forces the community to focus more on the injustice that women face by being trapped in a patriarchal society that imposes certain boundaries on them at a very young age. Elsa is the first Disney princess who focuses on her choices and desires. Disney attempts to educate younger generations of both genders to respect women’s capabilities through embodying independency and superiority in a female character, communicating a self-empowerment message.

Rhyme and lip-synchronization are considered the technical aspects of the ToA. While the formation of rhyme is one of the main features of songs, lip-synchronization serves as a key dubbing constraint. The results show that the translator’s focus was more musico-centric when he was in a position to choose between a musical element and a verbal one, which characterizes the intermodal relation of modification. This concurs with Alilović’s (2020) relevant findings. The implementation of these two aspects cannot be neglected or separated from the triangle. The errors and mismatches occurring in the OS in comparison to the DS do not hinder the translation process but makes the DS look and sound foreignized to the target audience and makes the translator’s work visible to the audience.

Singability and visual deixis represent the performative aspects, as they both affect the translator’s offscreen performance and character(s’) onscreen performance. The song’s singability is determined as more singable when compared to the OS, exemplifying clear cases of enhancement and modification. It should be noted that the production of a more easily performed song does not indicate that the DS is better than OS. This may be attributable to the fact that the Arabic language differs from the English language in several features, one of which is the diacritics system (*Tashki:l*). MSA is characterized by being fully diacritized which means that every letter must be followed by a diacritic, allowing MSA to have more syllables and open vowels. The singability results go in line with Litola’s (2017) findings that indicate that the DS has more singability features than the OS. Litola, however, did not prove that the DS was ‘more’ singable. In the analysis of visual deixis, the song retained approximately two thirds (63%) of the original representation of visual codes in accordance with the verbal codes. The disturbance in the correlation between the visual and verbal codes in the analysis resulted from the translator’s adoption of the discursive creation technique. One reason for this might be what Yahiaoui et al. (2021) have discussed as the effect of the visual codes on the translator’s perception, contributing to the translator’s choices and directing their view in certain ways.

The ToA’s interpretative aspect is the result of imagery and harmony analysis. The kind of analysis conducted on these two parts particularly focuses on the unintentional influence of the multimodal ensemble on the target audience. The in-depth analysis of the effect of the visual and musical codes in relation to the

verbal ones embodies their inadvertence in relation to the audience perception, adding multiple layers to the song's meanings (addition, enhancement, and modification relations). The ToA's interpretive aspect is a reflection of the recipients' background knowledge and culture. The song presented some traces of the Norwegian culture in the representation of similar architectural building and the rosemailing drawing on Elsa's clothes. The interpretive aspect allows recipients to delve deeper into the representation of the connotative meaning of the music and visuals, giving the song a deeper level than what it might denotatively imply.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper aims to fill an existing gap in the field of translation studies and to posit a model for the analysis of the translation of songs, where the message is expressed via verbal, visual, and musical semiotic resources. In so doing, it examines the intersemiotic relations in the transdubbing of *Let it Go* into MSA using a multimodal approach. The results showed that the ToA created a square of aspects each serving a certain purpose in the song's dubbing: meaning-making, technical, interpretive, and performative. Four different intermodal relations were identified: *addition*, *enhancement*, *modification*, and *deletion*. While *addition* signals the introduction of a new meaning that did not exist in the OS, *enhancement* marks the extension/reapplication of an available one. Whereas *Modification* provides an additional interpretation to the OS, *deletion* removes a meaning that already existed. This article argues that not only the verbal semiotic resources express songs' full meaning/message, but also the visual and musical semiotic resources introduce, enhance, modify, and/or delete meaning, which should then be addressed when translating songs. This study offers a methodological contribution to the AVT scholarship, positing a framework that can be systematically followed in songs' translation to analyze all three semiotic modes separately and in interaction. The findings of the verbal aspect analysis showed that the translator opted for using 'discursive creation' to match an already mismatching level of register. Given the constraints imposed on the translator, his choices became rather limited, when trying to produce a DS with features analogous to the OS. Nonverbally, the findings revealed mixed results regarding the OS-DS (in)congruencies in which the translator foregrounded and/or backgrounded certain aspects at some point being responsive to the imposed constraints. This discrepancy might be attributed to the restrictions imposed on the translator. The multimodal nature of the analysis facilitates different interpretations.

The findings of this study should benefit academics and professionals as it reflects and comments on the translator's effort being distributed among the different semiotic modes. This study also contributes to the available literature of song transdubbing and calls for the incorporation of multiculturalism and multimodality in future song translation research. This study has three main limitations: (1) Time and space, resulting in limitation in the data; (2) The available literature in English-Arabic song translation and vice versa, developing a constraint in situating the findings therein; (3) Dealing with the abstraction of music from a



perspective that reflects it as a means of sociality instead of entertainment imposed a major challenge in this study. Very limited number of linguistic studies dealt with music as a cultural tool that reflects certain meanings rather than merely being a source of entertainment, focusing on the particularities of song as a multimodal medium. It can thus be said that incorporating a musical aspect can be considered a point of departure in this study that can be further exploited in future research.

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