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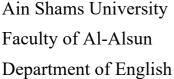




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Challenges of Recreating Spectator Experience between Engagement and Disengagement:

A Socio-semiotic Study of E/A Film Subtitling Strategies in Four Films by Francis F. Coppola and Martin Scorsese

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Audiovisual Translation

By

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Summary

Despite the symbiosis between subtitling and film in the context of international film distribution, subtitling-enabled spectators, who are the main benefactors of this symbiosis, remain largely understudied in both fields. This thesis attempts to address this gap in the literature by questioning the overaccommodating attitude underlying text-reduction strategies of subtitling, devised to maintain multimodal cohesion, hence spectator engagement, in subtitled film texts. This revision of the strategies is informed by Odin's (2011) Space of Communication theory which posits that emotional engagement is only one among countless other outcomes of film-mediated communication. This is explained by the fact that film-mediated communication can assume several modes, the formation of which hinges on semiotic factors (rhythm regularity as generated by multimodal cohesion) as well as social factors (the mutuality of intent among persons handling the film text at any phase of its life cycle from production to spectatorship and beyond). The extent to which these factors align between filmmaker and spectator, for example, can determine the mode and outcome of film-mediated communication in terms of engagement with a given film or lack thereof.

The thesis transfers this social semiotic view to the field of subtitling, using as a case in point Netflix's Arabic subtitles of four films; namely, *The Godfather* (1972) and *The Godfather II* (1974) by Francis F. Coppola, and *Mean Streets* (1973) and *Goodfellas* (1990) by Martin Scorsese. It argues that the

indiscriminate use of text-reduction strategies as a remedy to breakages in multimodal cohesion ensures that—regardless of the mode adopted by either director—engagement remains the only experience available to subtitling-enabled spectators.

The thesis is divided into an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The **Introduction** lays out the research problem, research objectives and research questions of the thesis. It provides a comprehensive review of relevant literature. The literature review discusses subtitling challenges brought on by the multimodality of film texts, focusing on the challenge of maintaining multimodal cohesion and strategies adopted by the subtitling industry to face this challenge. This discussion then develops into a critique of the techno-lingual strategies known as text-reduction strategies (Diaz Cintas & Remael, 2014). The critique targets the accessibility-driven attitude underlying the strategies, which seems to be based on an outdated understanding of spectatorship. The second section of the review is dedicated to exploring binary paradigms of spectatorship in film studies that might have indirectly informed this attitude. These paradigms assume that spectators are either passive consumers or active critical agents in the face of film's emotional appeal. Odin's (2011) SoC Theory is introduced as a more fluid, or hyper(active), paradigm of spectatorship where spectators can exercise or suspend their agency at will by adopting one or more of three modes of experiencing film. The proposed social semiotic methodology is briefly outlined in the rest of the introduction.