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Variation across the Border: Dialect in Arabic/English Translation

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ABSTRACT

Translation is a multifaceted process that involves decisions at the phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and textual levels. This paper examines dialect-related issues, which may involve one or more of these levels, from a translational perspective. It employs Halliday's (1978) socio-semiotic approach to explore dialect-related features that are of relevance to the process and product of translation. The authentic textual data clearly shows that translators need to be sensitized to both user-related features and use-related features. While the former include dialectal and idiolectal features that may entirely or partially mark a discourse, the latter pertain to register-defining components, namely field, tenor, and mode of discourse. Athough there is a significant connection between these features, the present study focuses exclusively on user-related aspects The translator's awareness of the various ways people use language to reflect their power, solidarity, status, education, and other aspects of social identity can significantly enhance the quality and naturalness of their translation.

1. Introduction:

The use of dialect/idiolect and register, which is governed by key sociolinguistic scales including social distance, formality, power and function scales, pervades all language communities. These scales are further consolidated by several social variables like social class, region, education, age, gender, ethnicity, etc. Thus, the way a boss addresses his secretary at work is different from the way she addresses him (e.g. use of first name vs. use of title of address plus family name, respectively). This address manner changes between them when at the pub if they happen to have developed a personal relationship, e.g. the secretary calls her boss by his first name rather than by a title of address plus family name. A similar kind of discrepancy may be noticed in a conversation between an educated and a lay person in an English-speaking country (e.g. the former may use standard forms, whereas the latter customarily employs vernacular forms like consonant cluster simplification and double/multiple negation). Rosa (2012:77) rightly states: "Language homogeneity is a fallacy". For an elaborate discussion of sociolinguistic scales and social variables, and how they impact the way people use language, see Holmes (1991/2004; Almanna and House 2023).

Back in 1972, Dell Hymes accounted for language use in different discourse situations by suggesting his SPEAKING model which appeals to seven components representing the letters in the word 'speaking'. They are:

'setting/scene', 'participants', 'ends', 'act sequences', 'key', 'instrumentalities', 'norms', and 'genres'. For example, the 'scene' will distinguish between the language use in discourse produced in the corridor and that produced in the classroom - the former being informal while the latter being formal. Similarly, the 'key' differentiates between when an utterance like *'thank you'* begs a standard response like *'Don't mention it!'* or a strong apology like *'I don't know what to say to you!'*, depending on the act which has triggered it. In fact, the components of this model cogently explain the parameters of language use in a discourse situation/context (for more details, see Renkema 2004).

2. Statement of the problem and research questions

One of the key challenges faced by translators when rendering a text that contains colloquial expressions from Arabic into English, or vice versa, is the dilemma of selecting the appropriate dialect to use in their translation. This task involves not only identifying the specific dialect employed by the author in the original text but also determining which dialect in the target language best corresponds to the nuances and cultural context of the original. The variation in dialects within both Arabic and English further complicates this process, as each dialect carries its own regional, social, and cultural significance. This study seeks to explore these challenges in-depth, focusing on the difficulties translators encounter when working with dialectal differences and examining the strategies they employ to navigate this complex aspect of translation.

Based on this, the study sets out to answer the following questions:

(1) To what extent can dialects be translated between Arabic and English?
(2) If translation is possible, what strategies should translators employ to effectively convey dialectal nuances?
(3) If translation is not feasible, what alternatives should translators consider in such instances?

3. Objective of Study

This study aims to see how relevant dialect-related features to translation between English and Arabic. By examining a number of excerpts from translation works, the study seeks to unravel dialect/idiolect issues that may have a bearing on the translation process in order to observe how sensitive translation practitioners are to them. Such investigation, albeit based on limited translational data, is expected to benefit different categories of translators/researchers working within the domain of translation studies.

4 Theoretical Framework

Dialect and register variation was first generally approached by Halliday et al. (1964). They hold that language has many functions and takes different shapes according to the situation in which it is used. A year later, Catford (1965: 83) supported the idea of having "a framework of categories for the classification of 'sub-languages',

or varieties within a total language". Some years later, Halliday (1978) put forward a socio-semiotic approach, which is adopted by this study.

Halliday's socio-semiotic approach (1978), which looks at variation in language use in terms of user-related and use-related dimensions, is grounded in his systemic functional linguistics (SFL), a linguistic theory that conceptualizes language as a social semiotic system. This approach highlights the dynamic relationship between language and the social context in which it operates, asserting that meaning is shaped not only by linguistic structures but also by the social functions language fulfills (Almanna and House, 2023: 175–176). As a socio-semiotic system, language is viewed as a system of signs that people use to make meaning, which is dynamic in nature, as individuals may use and interpret signs differently depending on the context. This, therefore, underscores the dynamic and functional nature of language. Thus, Halliday's socio-semiotic approach focuses on how language evolves to meet the needs of its users in specific social and cultural contexts.

Halliday (in Matthiessen, 1985/2014: 25) holds that we "use language to make sense of our experience, and to carry out our interactions with other people". This means that language cannot be used in isolation from what is going on outside the linguistic system. Rather, there is always some sort of interaction between the language and what is happening in the context enveloping it. He posits that language functions primarily to interpret human experience and to mediate social interaction. This view emphasizes that language operates within its external environment, maintaining a dynamic interplay with the context in which it is embedded, rather than functioning in isolation from extralinguistic factors (Almanna and House, 2023: 176). According to Halliday, the transformation of sociocultural experiences into linguistic expression occurs in two steps.

(1) Experiences and interpersonal relationships are first converted into meaning within the realm of semantics.
(2) These meanings are then further encoded into wording through the system of lexicogrammar.

Meaning is encoded into wording, realized through the selection of words, structures, conjunctions, and other linguistic elements chosen by the language user. These choices might include certain dialectal features. As such, these linguistic choices are systematically linked to the language variety deemed suitable for a particular context (register), shaped by the conventional text type (genre), which, in turn, is influenced by the broader sociocultural environment (for more details, see Almanna and House 2023: 176).

Halliday's socio-semiotic approach integrates the concept of 'register', which refers to the variation in language use based on context. He identifies three variables that shape a register. They are:

(1) 'field', i.e. the subject matter or activity being discussed; it mirrors the ideational function of language.
(2) 'tenor', i.e. he roles and relationships of the participants; it mirrors the interpersonal function of language.
(3) 'mode', i.e. the channel of communication (spoken, written, standard, dialectal, etc.); it mirrors the textual functional of language.

This socio-semiotic approach can be divided into two main categories: user-related varieties, i.e., dialects, and use-related varieties, i.e., registers (see also Toury 1995; House 1997, 1981, 2009; Rosa 2012; Almanna 2014;

Lapshinova-Koltunski 2015; Quesada 2020; Almanna and House 2023; among others). However, in this study, only the first category, i.e., user-related varieties, is examined from a translational perspective.

5 Methodology

One of the challenges faced by translators when translating a text that includes colloquial expressions from Arabic into English or the other way round is to determine which dialect to adopt in their translation, and which dialect in the target language can be considered equivalent to the dialect used by the author in the original text. This study aims to examine the challenges translators face when working with dialects. In order to address this issue in-depth, a qualitative research design is employed to gain a deeper insight into the problem. Qualitative research is often characterized by the use of text-based data, which can include sources such as interviews, written documents, or observational notes, as highlighted by Saldanha and O'Brien (2014: 22). This approach enables researchers to explore complex phenomena in some detail.

To this end, qualitative data are used, primarily drawing on a carefully selected sample of authentic textual data loaded with dialects. The data is sourced from two main genres, namely literature and religion. Each example is scrutinized from a translational viewpoint, offering a critical discussion of how the translator has dealt with dialects found in the original text.

6. Dialect

User-related language use, i.e. dialects/idiolects, is based on the user's contribution to the text. Such variation occurs due to, for example, the geographical, temporal, social, idiolectal, standard and non-standard uses of language (cf. Gregory and Carroll 1978; Hatim and Mason 1990; Almanna and House 2023). To begin with, geographical variation refers to varieties used in a particular geographical area, for example the Egyptian dialect, the Iraqi dialect, the Syrian dialect, and so on. As such, when features of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar are studied, the geographical area that the language user comes from is given serious consideration (Almanna and House 2023: 225). Temporal variation, however, refers to varieties used in a particular period. Some lexical items, for instance, were acceptable in a certain period, but they have either died out or evolved new meanings over time. An example of this is the lexical item *'petty'* which was used to mean *'slow'* in Macbeth; however, it now means *'trivial'* (Hatim and Mason 1990: 42). In some cases, the primary meaning of a word becomes a secondary one and a new sense claims primacy, e.g. nowadays *'gay'* has the sense of 'homosexual' as its primary meaning and *'happy'* as its secondary one. Arabic examples may include هلك *halaka 'died'* and انصرف *'inSaraf 'left'* which used to have a neutral attitude, but they have over time acquired negative connotations comparable to those in *'kick the bucket/croak'* and *'get lost'*, respectively. Social variation, for its turn, refers to varieties used by members of a specific group or community, for example, Arabic or English used in cities as opposed to Arabic in the countryside or varieties used by different social classes. The use of *'ain't'* in English, for instance, is a good example that can be considered as socially marked form (Almanna and House 2023: 225). Closely related to social variation is standard and non-standard use of language,

for instance, Standard English vs. Cockney English or Standard Arabic vs. Arabic vernaculars. Finally, idiolectal variation refers to an individual's ways of using language.

Al-Rubai'i (1996: 61), advocating Hatim and Mason's (1990) views, states that all these "types of variations under user-related varieties do not represent categories that have clear-cut boundaries but a continuum with the respective features of variation in constant interaction". Approaching a text charged with variation in language use, the translator's progress will automatically slow down in an attempt to cope with this type of constraint by employing different varieties of language available in the original text and to functionally cater for such variation.

7. Discussion

In this section, a carefully selected sample of authentic textual data loaded with dialects is discussed with a view to arriving at comprehensive and sufficient answers to the research questions posed by this study. In presenting these examples, the source text (ST) is provided first, followed by a literal back translation (BT) if it is in Arabic, and then the target text (TT). However, if the ST is in English, the TT is presented first, followed by the BT. Let us begin the discussion with an example quoted from Karīm 'Abid's story السيدة غرام (ع) *'The Passion of Lady A'* and translated for the purposes of this study:

ST	قالت : لا بد أن أبي سيُعيد نفس الأسطوانة عن تأخر الوقت .لم يكن أبوهما موجودا فهدَأتْ مشاعرهما. سمعتا حركة أمهما في المطبخ، قالت (ع) تخاطب أمها :الشباب اليوم يموجون في الشارع مثل عرايش الياسمين، يلعن أبوهم شو حلوين!!
BT	She said: My father will certainly repeat the same record about lateness. Their father was not there so their feelings calmed down. They heard the movement of their mother in the kitchen, (A) said addressing her mother: youths are undulating in the street like jasmine arbours, damn their father how beautiful they are.
TT	She said, our father will be angry about our coming home late. But their father wasn't there and they relaxed. They heard their mother bustling in the kitchen and Miss A said, addressing her mother, there were a lot of youths undulating in the street like jasmine arbours. Gee, what a handsome bunch of boys they are!

In the example above, there is an instance of code-switching from standard Arabic into vernacular Arabic, viz. يلعن أبوهم شو حلوين literally meaning *'damn their father how beautiful they are'*. Having recognized such a dialectal feature, the translator needs to opt for a certain local strategy that caters for such a shift from Standard Arabic to Vernacular Arabic. The search may necessitate use of some colloquial/informal English features, viz. *'Gee, what a handsome bunch of boys they are!'* to signal the shift. The suggested rendering, as can be seen, invests in colloquial interjections *'Gee',* informal usage *'bunch'* and colloquial, extended figurative meaning *'boys'*. This demonstrates how translators may suffer while trying to decide on the most appropriate features that would reflect such a shift in dialect with a minimal loss. Consequently, a dialectal shift in the ST is supposed to be rendered appropriately by improvising a comparable shift in the TT.

In the following example extracted from a short story titled صورة ياسمين *'Yasmine Picture'* by Hanan al-Shaykh translated by and cited in Husni and Newman (2008: 152– 3), there is also an instance of intralingual code switching from standard Arabic into non-standard Arabic:

ST	(1) يتمشى في البيت، يدخل كلّ الغرف. يكتفي بالنظر، يفتح الخزائن والأدراج، وزوجته تقول له وهي تبتسم: ولو شو صاير لك. رد كاذبًا: ((بفتش على كتاب ...)).
BT	[He (was) walking around the house, going into every room. He was content with just looking; he (was) opening cupboards and drawers. His wife said to him while smiling: "So, what happened to you?" He answered, lying: "I am looking for a book …"]
TT	He walked around the house, going into every room. He was content with just looking; he opened cupboards and drawers. His wife smiled and told him: "So, what are you up to?" He answered with a lie: "I am looking for a book …".

In this example, there is an instance of intralingual code-switching from Standard Arabic to a non-standard variety: ولو شو صاير لك meaning *'So, what happened to you?'* and بفتش على كتاب meaning *'I'm looking for a book'*. In this instance, the author appears to employ code-switching as a deliberate stylistic choice, likely aiming to enhance the vividness and authenticity of the text while subtly conveying underlying information about the speaker. However, the translators have rendered these as *'So, what are you up to?'* and *'I am looking for a book ...'*, thus failing to preserve the dialectal features. In this regard, Almanna and House (2023: 231) hold that such a loss "has nothing to do with their translation competence, but rather has something to do with the notion of the 'untranslatability' of such dialectal features". Untranslatability, as conceptualized by Cui (2012: 826; also discussed in Almanna and House 2023: 231), denotes a characteristic inherent in a text or any linguistic expression within a given language, where an equivalent expression or textual representation cannot be accurately reproduced in another language. This phenomenon arises from cultural, contextual, or structural disparities between languages, making certain meanings, nuances, or stylistic elements resistant to direct translation without any loss.

A closer examination of the translators' rendering of the utterance بفتش على كتاب, translated somehow formally as *'I am looking for a book'*, reveals that a significant part of the discourse's original dynamism and stylistic nuance has been lost in the TT. In the actual act of translation between language *A* and language *B*, translators make use of a range of localized strategies to address various challenges; however, the task of translating dialects presents a distinct set of difficulties. This clearly shows translators' suffering while dealing with texts that incorporate diverse linguistic varieties.

To reinforce this point, the following example extracted from a short story titled طبلية من السماء by Yusuf Idris translated into English by Husni and Newman (2008: 276– 7) as *'A Tray from Heaven'* can be considered:

ST	أنت عايز مني أيه. تقدر تقول لي أنت عايز مني أيه؟ ... كان يقول موجهًا كلامه إلى السماء ....
BT	He was saying addressing the sky: You want what from me? Can you tell me what you want from me?

TT	He said, addressing the sky: "What do you want from me? Can you tell me what is it that you want from me?"

Here, as one may observe, there is an example of code-switching from standard Arabic into vernacular Arabic, viz. عايز meaning *'need'* and أيه meaning *'what'*. Here, although identifying the dialect used in the ST, namely the Egyptian dialect, is straightforward, the challenge lies in determining which dialect the translator might adopt in such cases if they wish to transfer the dialectal features from the ST to the TT. As can be seen, they have opted for *'What do you want from me? Can you tell me what is it that you want from me?'* where no attempt was made to reflect the dialectal features used in the ST. Again, this has nothing to do with the translators' competence, but it is related to 'untranslatability'. It reflects the inherent difficulty in transferring certain linguistic features, such as dialectal nuances. These features do not lend themselves to being easily and accurately conveyed in the TT without losing their original impact.

The translation of social dialects can also be very challenging between English and Arabic as both languages involve tremendous variation in the speech of different social classes. While English vernacular features like double/multiple negation and *h*-dropping are characteristic attributes of low social classes in all English-speaking communities regardless of the geographical area (Holmes 2008), Arabic vernacular features may also designate both social and regional variation. Witness how Gerges Al-Rashdi (1967) has rendered the speech of 'the Flower Girl' in Shaw's *'Pygmalion'* into a variety of Egyptian Arabic that marks her social status.

ST	The FLower GIRL. Well, if you was a gentleman, you might ask me to sit down, I think. Dont I tell you I'm bringing you business? HIGGINS. Pickering, shall we ask this baggage to sit down or shall we throw her out of the window?
TT	بائعة الزهور: إن كنت جنتلمان زي الست مبتقول، كنت قلت لي أقعدي. ياخي دنا جايبالك شغل. هجنز بيكرنج: هل ندعو هذه البقجة للجلوس أم نلقي بها من الشباك؟
BT	Flower Vendor: If you are a gentleman as the lady says, you would ask me for sitting down. O brother (come on) I'm bringing you business. Higgins: Pickering, shall we invite this baggage to sit down or throw her from the window?

The translator in the above example has chosen the Egyptian Arabic vernacular for the 'flower girl' as opposed to Standard Arabic for Higgins in order to reflect differences in social class and education. Other things being equal, one should note that Standard Arabic is a marker of a good education, whereas vernacular Arabic is a marker of a lack of literacy. Not only does the translator take care of this socially significant distinction, but he also invests in a key linguistic feature of social significance within the Egyptian vernacular, viz. he has chosen the pharyngealized velar /G/, which is a shibboleth of countryside (Upper Egypt) speech in Egypt, as opposed to the glottal stop /'/, which is the hallmark of urban Egyptian Arabic, to represent the standard Arabic uvular /q/. Thus, the flower girl pronounces

the words mabit'uul as mabitGuul, 'ultli as Gultli, and 'u'ʻudi as 'uGʻudi. Also, the flower girl uses vernacular lexical items, e.g. زي instead of كما meaning *'also'*, and دنا instead of أنا meaning *'I'*.

By contrast, Higgins' speech is characterized by standard grammatical features, e.g. the use of the interrogative particle هل (which is never used in vernacular Arabic), as well as lexical features, e.g. ندعو meaning *'to invite'*, للجلوس meaning *'to sit down'*, and نلقي meaning *'to throw'*. Below is a reproduction of what Higgins would have said in urban Egyptian Arabic:

TT	إنئول للبنت تؤعد ولا نرميها منشباك؟
BT	We say to the girl to sit down or throw her from the window.

Note that the translator has also successfully accounted for Higgins' lexical shift from the standard to the slang in his use of the word *'baggage'* by rendering it into an Arabic derogatory word بقجه meaning *'worthless person'*.

In contrast with the above example where the translator has employed a familiar vernacular (Egyptian Arabic) for most Arabic native speakers to reflect socially significant nuances, Ihsan Aabbas (1998) has chosen a highly localized Sudanese Arabic vernacular to represent the speech of poor and uneducated black characters in Melville's *Moby-Dick*. Consider the following excerpt in which Flask (the black old man) addresses the sharks:

ST	Fellow-critters: I'se ordered here to say dat you must stop dat dam noise dare. You hear?
TT	أكواني المكلوقات: أنا مأمور أن أقول أنه توقفوا ديك الدوشه الملئون هناك. اسمئتوا؟
BT	Brothers creatures: I am ordered to say that you stop that damn noise there.You hear?

While Abass's option for a Sudanese Arabic vernacular may succeed in capturing the sociolinguistic implications, it fails to reach a large Arab readership, who are unfamiliar with this borderline Arabic dialect. For example, the reduction of the voiceless verlar fricative /x/ to a voiceless velar stop /k/ and the voiced pharyngeal stop /ʻ/ to the glottal stop /'/ are an extremely marked phenomenon, which coincides with what most foreigners do when speaking Arabic. It is also a familiar strategy for naturalizing Arabic names in English, viz. علي */ʻalii/* is phonologically modified to *Ali* and خالد */xaalid/* to *khalid*. An option for an upper Egypt or a countryside Levantine vernacular would have won him a much larger readership. In many cases, the Sudanese vernacular has to be rendered into a more familiar vernacular in order to be understood.

Sometimes, the translator needs to pay utmost attention to the idiolect of the speaker in order to maintain the coherence of the ST. To explain, the following example extracted from McCarthy's novel *'The Road'* (2006) and translated into Arabic by Farghal (2009: 265) can be considered:

ST	**... But you should go with me. You'll be all right.** **How do I know you're one of the good guys?** **You dont. You'll have to take a shot.** **Are you carrying the fire?** **Am I what?** **Carrying the fire.** **You're kind of weirded out, arent you?** **No ...**
TT	... لكن ينبغي أن تذهب معي. ستكون على ما يرام. - كيف لي أن أعرف أنك من الناس الطيبين؟ - لن تعرف. عليك أن تخاطر. - هل تحمل البندقية الآن؟ - هل أنا ماذا؟ - تحمل البندقية؟ - لقد فقدت صوابك، أليس كذلك؟ - لا ...
BT	But you should go with me. You'll be all right. - How could I know that you're one of the good people? - You won't know. You must take the risk. - Are you carrying the rifle now? - Am I what? - Carrying the fire? - You have lost your mind, haven't you? - No ...

In the above example, the stranger man tries to convince the little boy to go with him following the death of the boy's father in the wilderness during their search for survival in the wake of a total apocalypse. In this encounter, the boy uses the word *'fire'* to mean *'gun'*, which the man could not comprehend. The boy's mention of *'fire (gun)'* may have been cued by the little boy's literal, wrong interpretation of the idiomatic expression *'take a shot'* in the man's preceding utterance.

One can clearly see that the mishandling of an idiolectal feature has caused serious damage to the coherence of the translation on two grounds. Firstly, it is inconceivable in a face-to-face encounter for one to ask whether the interlocutor is carrying a rifle or not, for it would be clearly visible to him/her. Secondly, it is inconceivable for an adult English native speaker to not understand what the word *'rifle'* means. Being the translator, the second-named

researcher should mention that it is the reviewer and/or commissioner who edited my original translation below into the translation above without consulting me. The problem here has to do the boy's ideolect in which the word *'fire'* is used to mean *'gun'*. The boy's ideolectal feautre needs to be preserved in the translation in order for the TT to be coherent.

ST	**... But you should go with me. You'll be all right.** **How do I know you're one of the good guys?** **You dont. You'll have to take a shot.** **Are you carrying the fire?** **Am I what?** **Carrying the fire.** **You're kind of weirded out, arent you?** **No ...**
TT	لكن ينبغي أن تذهب معي. ستكون على ما يرام. - كيف لي أن أعرف أنك من الناس الطيبين؟ - لن تعرف. عليك أن تخاطر. - هل تحمل النار الآن؟ - هل أنا ماذا؟ - تحمل النار. - لقد فقدت صوابك، أليس كذلك؟ - لا ...
BT	But you should go with me. You'll be all right. - How could I know that you're one of the good people? - You won't know. You must take the risk. - Are you carrying the fire now? - Am I what? - Carrying the fire. - You have lost your mind, haven't you? - No ...]

The issue of standard vs. vernacular Arabic becomes a key question when translating English comics, e.g. cartoon series into Arabic. Nowadays, most cartoon series are dubbed into vernacular Arabic (mainly the Egyptin vernacular) in order to capture the humorous and casual nature of the discourse. Witness how the excerpt from the cartoon movie

'Timon and Pumbaa', in which Timon is reluctantly serving his master Pumbaa, is dubbed into vernacular Egyptian Arabic:

ST	**Here is your food, I hope you choke. I mean, I'm Timon and I'll be your waiter. Here is your royal nourishment, oh mighty, all powerful Pumbaa.**
BT	آدي الدود بتاعك بالسم الهاري. أصدي أنا تيمون أرسون سعاتك وده فضلة خيرك أكل جنابك يا بمبا.
TT	Here the worms that belong to you. May they poison you. I mean I'm Timon your waiter and this is from your endowment your food Mr. Pumbaa

As can be observed, the English humor has been appropriated linguistically as well as culturally by opting for the Egyptian vernacular in rendering the casual humor. Rendering such humor into Standard Arabic may offer stilted, flat discourse. This does not mean that Standard Arabic cannot be employed in all cartoon series. On the contrary, historical cartoon series may require the use of Standard rather than vernacular Arabic, where formality is an indispensable feature. Other genres, e.g. the dubbing of foreign soap operas, would tolerate both varieties of Arabic. In the late nineties and early 2000 the tendency was to dub Mexican soap operas into Standard Arabic, which proved very successful. Later on, however, there was a steady shift to the Syrian vernacular in dubbing both Mexican as well as Turkish soap operas. Both strategies have succeeded in drawing tens of millions of TV viewers across the Arab World (for more details, see Al-Maleh 2013).

The temporal factor, for its turn, may impose some constraints on the translator. Quran translators, for example, tend to employ an archaic variety of English in an attempt to preserve the literariness and sanctity of the religious text. Consider the following Quranic verse, along with Pickthal's 1930/2006) translation:

ST	إنكم لتأتون الرجال شهوة من دون النساء بل أنتم قوم مسرفون. (سورة الأعراف، 8)
BT	You come to men lustfully instead of women; rather you are an extravagant folk.
TT	Lo! ye come with lust unto men instead of women. Nay, but ye are wanton folk.

One can readily note the archaic structure and vocabulary used, viz. *Lo*, *ye*, *unto*, and *nay*, which is indicative of a bygone period of time.

Sometimes, the temporal factor may confuse Quran translators. For example, the word شهيد *shahiid* in Quranic Arabic could mean either *'a martyr'* or *'a witness'* depending on the context. However, it could only mean *'a martyr'* in Modern Standard Arabic. This shift in the meaning of the word has proved problematic to some Quran translators. Witness how the two translations below are based on different premises due to the confusion caused by the said semantic shift:

ST	يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ خُذُواْ حِذْرَكُمْ فَٱنفِرُواْ ثُبَاتٍ أَوِ ٱنفِرُواْ جَمِيعًا. وَإِنَّ مِنكُمْ لَمَن لَّيُبَطِّئَنَّ فَإِنْ أَصَـٰبَتْكُم مُّصِيبَةٌ قَالَ قَدْ أَنْعَمَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَىَّ إِذْ لَمْ أَكُن مَّعَهُمْ شَهِيدًا (سورة الناس، 71-72).
TT 1	O you who believe! Take your precautions, then advance in groups, or advance all together. Lo! among you there is he who loiters; and if disaster overtook you, he would say: Allah has been gracious unto me since I was not present with them. (Pickthall, p. 78)
TT2	O believers, take your precautions; then move forward in companies, or move forward all together. Some of you there are that are dilatory; then, if an affliction visits you, he says, 'God has blessed me, in that I was not a martyr with them'. (Arberry 1955/1996, p. 110)

As can be seen, because of the confusion caused by a historically ambiguous word, the two translations offer different scenarios; the former of a 'witness' and the latter of a 'martyr'.

8. Conclusion

Language has many functions and is realized differently according to the social context in which it is used. Therefore, approaching a text laden with user-related variation necessitates the translator's awareness of the various ways people can use language to reflect their power, solidarity, social class, education, ethnicity, etc. The present paper has selectively explored, with several illustrative examples, communicative features that translators need to be alerted to when handling dialectal features.

The study shows that translating dialectal features between Arabic and English may inherently involve some degree of loss. This phenomenon may have nothing to do with the competence that a translator should have. Rather, it may stem from what is called in translation studies 'untranslatability', i.e. the elements within a text that resist interlingual translation due to cultural, linguistic, or contextual nuances. There are some cases, however, when the translator's competence may fall short of rendering dialectal features that can be captured in the TT.

Regarding the strategies employed by translators, the study reveals the absence of universally applicable strategies that can be systematically adopted in all cases. Instead, the choice of translation strategy is heavily influenced by the specifics of the translation brief. Factors such as the type of text, the purpose behind the translation, the intended audience, and the conventions of the genre play pivotal roles. Additionally, practical considerations, including deadlines and financial constraints, also significantly shape the translation process. Therefore, each translation scenario demands a tailored approach, guided by its unique requirements and circumstances. Despite this, various strategies of handling dialect-related problems may be considered with hopes of bringing them into the consciousness of student as well as practicing translators. Together with other considerations including grammatical, semantic, pragmatic, and cultural aspects, the translator's work will definitely become an informed act.

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Beyond Words: Decoding Nonverbal Communication in Arab Didactic TV Shows

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ABSTRACT

Effective communication between interlocutors on TV requires harmony between the available meaning-making resources. However, a few research has recently focused on the study of verbal and nonverbal cues in different TV shows and investigated their possible functions. Moreover, didactic TV shows have not been given much attention despite their remarkable influence on the youth, especially at critical times such as the outbreak of the Arab Spring. This study, thus, aims to examine the interplay between speech acts and body language in two didactic TV shows from KSA and Egypt. Employing a qualitative, descriptive analysis, (10) episodes from a Saudi show and (4) from an Egyptian one were selected and transcribed, and the nonverbal language of the two presenters was retrieved via screenshots from the videos. Searle's (1979) speech act theory and Knapp, Hall, and Horgan's (2014) nonverbal communication were used to analyze the verbal and bodily resources, respectively. In a contrastive analysis, the results exhibited that the shared functions of the manifested speech acts and their nonverbal counterparts included audience engagement, clarification, warning, urgency, and speech regulation. Verbally, both assertives and directives were utilized, but the former were found to be the most frequent. Nonverbally, no emblems were used; rather, the two presenters relied only on illustrators. Besides, the face was the most frequent and mutual cue to attain most functions. Hand gestures and head movements also contributed to conveying the intended meanings, despite their variations by the two presenters. The study identified some common verbal and nonverbal features shared between the two Arab shows that distinguish this genre of TV shows.[1]

1. Introduction:

Human communication is a process of exchanging different messages between interlocutors in a given context who rely on a number of resources, such as verbal, nonverbal, or visual channels, to interpret the intended meaning because language, as Poyatos (1993) confirmed, is not monomodal. The accurate interpretation of the ongoing process

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of communication helps the involved participants to gain knowledge about themselves, each other, and the world around them. The interplay between the various modes of communication enriches the meaning of the interaction in any social context. However, many researchers have considered nonverbal communication as the most important resource due to its more powerful role in comprehending the intended meaning than words and influencing the receivers. Uzun (2020), for instance, believed that in a communicative act, words are the least effective channel to influence others, constituting 7%, compared to body language, which represents 55%, whereas the remaining load (38%) accounts for the discourse.

Nonverbal communication was seen as "a process in which communicators use the natural features of their bodies to deliver information and express specific meaning instinctively to the other communicator" (Guan, 2004, p.90). However, movement has not been seen as a mere physical action. Merleau-Ponty declared: “Bodily movement is not simply a passive movement in the geometric space of classic physics. Rather, it actively assumes and appropriates both space and time in the service of its own projects” (1992[1962], p. 102; as cited in Baldry & Thibault, 2006, p. 203). **Gestures**, therefore, have gained much attention and interest since some significant studies were conducted on them in the 19th century. They have been given several definitions that share the focus on their form, functions, and relation to speech. Regarding form, for Kulp, Cornetto, and Knapp (2005), “[g]estures are generally defined as movements of the body used to communicate as idea, intention, or feeling. These purposeful movements include those made with the hands, arms, and legs as well as those made with the face and head” (p. 1277). Similarly, Knapp, Hall, and Horgan (2014) identified the form of gestures as “arm and hand movements, but head gestures are also well known” (p. 200). Concerning their considerable functions, Knapp et al. (2014) distinguished between two roles gestures play: namely, intrapersonal and interpersonal functions. Apparently, the former refers to the benefit of gestures on one’s self, whereas the latter denotes the interactional effects of gestures among individuals.

Several studies have examined classifications and functions of speech acts in different communicative events, such as literary works (Ojo, 2024; Raflis & Mulyono, 2024), EFL classrooms (Azhari, et. al., 2018; Basra & Thoyyibah, 2017; Budiasih, 2016), political discourse (Oder, 2023; Sari et al., 2021; Srikandi, 2020; Vinni, 2021), campus activism (Olusola, 2024), advertisements (Adiniu & Uchenna, 2023; Şimon & Dejica-Cartis, 2015; Widyaka, 2014), and social media platforms (Fatmawati, 2023). TV genres have been recently included in pragmatic studies using speech act theory. For example, Handayani and Cahyono (2023) explored the speech acts of a popular politician and public speaker called Abdullah Azwar Anas when hosted on *Kick Andy* TV show, an Indonesian inspirational program. The results showed that assertives prevailed to inform, voice opinions, give explicit and implicit orders, and express appreciation. Another study focused only on the directives produced by the characters to give commands in the Japanese TV series *Death Note* and confirmed the use of direct and indirect command speech acts (Nurfitrah, Nursidah, and Taqdir, 2024).

Previous research has also been concerned with the study of nonverbal communication in certain interactions. For example, Habulan and Bagaric (2021) examined some paralinguistic and nonverbal features of Croatian journalists reporting sudden crisis news, such as wars, on TV and found hand movements to be the most frequently

used gestures to align with their unprepared speech. In another quantitative and qualitative study, Mancera and Díez-Prados (2024) analyzed the forms and functions of some English entrepreneurs' bodily movements in a business TV reality show while they were persuading the investors or funding agencies with their projects and compared them to their Spanish counterparts in a similar TV show. The results revealed that facial expressions are the most frequent and that nonverbal varied kinesic cues utilized in both English and Spanish TV shows obtained the same functions of emphasis, organization, emotional and attitudinal display, and/or content contribution (Mancera & Díez-Prados, 2024, p. 19).

However, the interplay between speech acts and body language in TV shows has recently been of interest to researchers. Nevertheless, most of these studies focused on the political discourse. In a mixed-method study, Radhi et al. (2022) explored the forms, functions, and frequencies of gestures and their corresponding verbal counterparts in English political TV interviews with Boris Johnson, Trump, Hilary Clinton, and Obama. They, thus, integrated Kulkarni's (2013) body language and Searle's (1979) speech act theory. Radhi et al. observed the dominance of assertives and the use of similar gestures to reflect almost the same functions of emphasis, explanation, agreement, and emotional and attitudinal manifestation when they align with the speech, but they can communicate negative feelings such as disagreement, anxiety, and ambiguity when they mismatch with the speech.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no linguistic studies have investigated the harmony between speech and body movements in didactic socio-religious TV shows. Therefore, the current study aims to explore the use and functions of the nonverbal cues used by Arab presenters from two different countries, i.e., Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and their relation to the speech acts utilized for persuasive and preaching purposes. Accordingly, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the relations between nonverbal communication and speech acts in Arab socio-religious TV shows?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the Saudi and Egyptian TV shows in terms of the verbal and non-verbal meaning-making resources?
3. What are the functions of nonverbal communication in didactic TV shows?

The significance of the study lies in the identification of verbal and nonverbal rhetorical features that characterize this genre through a comparison between the two shows.

2. Theoretical Background

Speech acts were defined by Searle (1979) as "the basic or minimal units of all linguistic communication" (p.16). He assorted **them** into five types, namely **assertives**, **directives**, **commissives**, **expressives**, and **declaratives**. First, the **assertives** are performed by the speaker or the writer to express a state of affairs which can be either true or false. Second, the **directives** enable one to get his audience to carry out a certain action. Third, the **commissives** allow the speakers or the writers to commit themselves to a certain action. Fourth, the **expressives** reflect the speaker's or the writer's inner emotional or psychological state. Fifth, **declaratives** tend to change the world in a certain institution by uttering them.

The relation between gestures and speech has been given much attention recently, as shown in some researchers' definitions of the gesture. For example, Bull and Doody (2013) adopted Kendon's (2004) view and defined it as "a visible body action which communicates a message; gesture can occur both in conjunction with, and in the absence of, speech" (p. 206). Moreover, McNeill (1992) formulated his view of gestures in the following words:

> Gestures are symbols different from spoken language....They are created—in contrast to retrieved—by the speaker at the moment of speaking. They coexist with the words and sentences of speech but are qualitatively different from those words and sentences. They are a separate vehicle with their own history, and finding their own outlet in space, movement, and form. (p.105)

Gestures have been classified based on the relation between gestures and speech, distinguishing them into **speech-independent** and **speech-dependent** gestures. First, **speech-independent** gestures are also called **emblems** (Ekman, 1976, 1977) or **autonomous gestures** (Kendon, 1984). Emblems, according to Ekman and Friesen (1981), are significantly characterized by their potential to be lexically replaced. They refer to "those nonverbal acts that have a direct verbal translation or dictionary definition" (Kulp et al., 2005, p. 1277). Second, **speech-dependent** gestures are also referred to as speech-related gestures, co-speech gestures, or ***illustrators***. They are closely associated with the speech that accompanies them; "[i]llustrators can repeat, substitute, contradict or augment the information provided" (Ekman & Friesen, 1981, p. 77). Illustrators, for instance, nonverbally describe their verbal counterparts: "*He is that tall.*" Like emblems, illustrators require both awareness and intentionality. Speech-dependent gestures were further categorized into four types, namely (a) the **speaker's referent** gestures, (b) **the speaker's-relationship-to-the-referent** gestures, (c) **punctuation** gestures, and (d) **interactive** gestures (Efron, 1972; Ekman, 1977; McNeill, 1992, 2000; Streeck & Knapp, 1992; as cited in Kulp et al., 2005, pp. 1277, 1278).

The first three sub-categories of **speech-dependent gestures** can be accomplished in a speaker's monolog. First, **referent-related gestures** are movements whose function is "to characterize the content of our speech" by depicting the concrete or abstract referents (Knapp et al., 2014, p. 212). An obvious example would be **pointing movements**, which refer to a thing, a person, or a place. An additional example includes **pictorial gestures**, drawing a picture of the referent in space, which function "to help a listener visualize features associated with concrete referents," such as signaling an attractive curvaceous woman by drawing an hourglass figure in the air (Knapp et al., 2014, p. 212). **Metaphorical gestures** can also represent abstract ideas, such as cup-shaped gestures with the two hands attached together to indicate the possibility of the idea or concept discussed. Second, the **gestures indicating a speaker's relationship to the referent** are produced to "comment on the speaker's orientation to the referent rather than characterizing the nature of the thing being talked about" (Knapp et al., 2014, p. 212). For example, the way the speakers position their palms indicates their orientation towards the referent; uncertainty, pleading, or begging can be signaled by palms up, certainty by palms down, assertion by palms out opening up in the direction of the listener or embracing a concept by palms opening in the direction of the speaker. Third, the **punctuation gestures**, according to Knapp et al. (2014), help "accent, emphasize, and organize important segments of the discourse" (p. 214). The last sub-category of speech-dependent gestures, **interactive gestures**, can be recognized in an interaction between two

or more participants because they "acknowledge the other interactant relative to the speaker and help regulate and organize the dialogue itself" (Knapp et al., 2014, p. 214).

Finally, for Knapp et al. (2014), there are some major factors determining the frequency of making gestures. First, interactive communication encourages more gestures than monologues due to the presence of the addressee(s) (Alibali & Don, 2001; Bavelas et al., 2002; Cohen, 1977; Cohen & Harrison, 1973). Second, the enthusiasm or excitement of the speakers leads them to gesture more.Third, the more the speaker's urge to attract the attention of the addressee or to guarantee the understanding of the topics being discussed, the more the gestures increase, "especially in difficult or complex communicative situations" (Knapp et al., 2014, p. 217; Bavelas et al., 2002; Goldin-Meadow, 2003; Holler & Beattie, 2003). Fourth, the content of the speech highly affects the gesturing frequency; more gestures are implemented when giving instructions about manual activities than when describing (Feyereisen & Harvard, 1999). In addition, cultural differences should also be considered. For instance, gestures in the American culture tend to occur more often than in the Chinese culture (So, 2010). Finally, gestures increase when the speaker shares verbally- and visually-learned information more often than the information the speaker communicates only verbally (Hostetter & Skirving, 2011).

Head movements, in addition to gestures, help convey certain messages in an interaction. According to Norris (2004), head movement is defined as "the study of ways that individuals position their heads" (p. 33). Norris (2004) emphasized that the interpretation of head movements is affected by cultural differences and individual differences because

> it is important to keep in mind that the same head movement may have a different meaning in different situations, as interactional meaning is always dependent upon the individuals performing the movement *and* the individuals interpreting it. Meaning is always co-constructed, and unintentional actions may be just as communicative as intentional ones. (p. 33)

Face has been deemed a critical part of the body essential for communication. It has been found to be a complex nonverbal behavior. Ekman (1982), for instance, observed that "the face is probably the most commanding and complicated, and perhaps the most confusing" (p. 45). Knapp et al. (2014) identified significant roles the face plays in interaction, such as displaying emotional states, giving feedback nonverbally, and providing communicative information together with verbal signals. Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) pointed out the facial expressions' interactive part in demand images engaging the participants of the visual:

> [The represented participants] may smile, in which case the viewer is asked to enter into a relation of social affinity with them; they may stare at the viewer with cold disdain, in which case the viewer is asked to relate to them, perhaps, as an inferior relates to a superior; they may seductively pout at the viewer, in which case the viewer is asked to desire them. (p. 118)

3. Methodology

The present study employs a qualitative, descriptive approach to examine the functions of the nonverbal communication used by two Arab presenters of didactic TV shows and their relation to the uttered speech acts. *"And My Life*," one of the two selected TV shows under study, was broadcast in four seasons, in Ramadan 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2017, and presented by the Saudi physician and motivational speaker Dr. Al-Fitaihi. *"Live the Moment"* for the Egyptian new *da'ia* and popular socio-religious televangelist Mustafa Husni was televised in Ramadan 2014. The two presenters are the scriptwriters for their shows, making them the protagonists in the arguments advanced in each.

Al-Fitaihi (2013, 2014) and Husni (2014) have been selected for their influence on youth that appeared in the large numbers of followers on their social media platforms. Their two shows aired at a critical phase in the Arab world, i.e., after the Arab Spring, aimed at reforming Arab societies and improving people's lives, urging them to start with themselves to be able to rebuild their societies and share in their progress. Therefore, *"And My Life*" discusses different topics on the individual and societal levels, such as anxiety, optimism, sexual harassment, child verbal abuse, etc., and *"Live the Moment"* focuses on the turning points in people's lives, such as moments of anxiety, happiness, charity, and divorce. In their argumentations, the Saudi and Egyptian presenters tackle the topics from social and religious perspectives, yet Al-Fitaihi uses the scientific approach as well due to his medical background. Each presenter strives to persuade his audience, and potentially skeptic antagonists, about their points of view utilizing different means of communication: verbal, nonverbal, and visual. However, the current study focuses only on the first two meaning-making resources.

The researchers randomly selected (10) episodes from the first two seasons of the Saudi show (2013, 2014) and (4) episodes from the Egyptian show. However, the difference in the number of episodes collected from each study stems from the variant length of the episodes in each: Husni's episode lasts for about 24 mins, whereas Al-Fitaihi's in the first season takes around 8 mins, and in the second season, approximately 12 mins. Thus, to ensure internal validity, the total episodes selected from the two shows are nearly equal, i.e., the total time of the episodes selected from each show is around 97 mins.

To achieve the objectives of the study and answer the research questions, the procedures below were followed. First, the selected episodes were transcribed, and the utilized frames were captured via screenshots. The researchers selected the frames that indicate the most frequent body language that tends to be repeatedly performed to communicate the most significant speech acts in the argumentations presented in the two shows. Second, extracts of the presenters' speech were analyzed using Searle's (1979) speech act classification and compared to their bodily counterparts, applying the nonverbal communication of Knapp et al. (2014). Third, the researchers translated the selected extracts and used the translations of Muhsin Khan and Tadi-ud-Din al-Hilali for the Qur'anic verses available on the *Qur'an* mobile application. Finally, the researchers interpreted the results in relation to the objectives of the study and the posed research questions.

4. Results

In didactic argumentative shows such as *"And My Life"* and *"Live the Moment*," characterized by their monologue-induced nature, the presenters need to ensure that their standpoints and supporting arguments are clearly and effectively conveyed to their audience. Therefore, no emblems were observed in both shows; rather, Al-Fitaihi (2013, 2014) and Husni (2014) depended mainly on **illustrators**, i.e., **speech-dependent gestures**, supported with relevant facial expressions and head movements that serve different functions in the genre at hand. The most two common types of gestures utilized in Al-Fitaihi's show are the **speaker's-relation-to-the-referent** and **punctuation** gestures.

4.1 Nonverbal Communication in *"And My Life"*

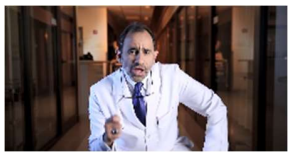
First, the **speaker's-relation-to-the-referent** gestures reveal Al-Fitaihi's (2013, 2014) stance on the addressed arguments and target audience. They can explicitly or implicitly communicate the intended meaning of their accompanying verbal counterparts. Serving the didactic and persuasive purposes of the show, the speaker's-relation-to-the-referent gestures adopted in *"And My Life"* express warning or prohibition, criticism, dramatic urgency, and agreement seeking.

Non-verbal manifestation of warning speech acts clarified their implicit illocutionary force. The highlighted parts in the examples shown below comprise assertive speech acts that co-occurred with the presenter's body language in Frames 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. The warning effect is communicated via his frowny face, firm pose, and affirmative cautionary hand signals, such as the pointed index finger with an up-and-down shaking motion of the palm-closed hand in Frame 1, the raised right hand with the index and middle fingers pointed in the audience's direction in Frames 2 and 3, the closed fist of the right hand with the thumb pressing on the index finger in Frame 4, and the decisively prohibitive palm-down hand movement from left to right in Frame 5.


Frame 1


Frame 2


Frame 3


Frame 4


Frame 5

(1) وتعليم الطفل في البيت والمدرسة... ليقول لا لأي فعلٍ غير طبيعي وإن صدر من أي شخصٍ **"كان من كان"** دون اعتبار لأي صداقة أو قرابة أسرية.

[*Children should be taught at home and school to say "No" to any unusual action done by anyone, **whoever** they are, without any consideration to friendship or kinship.]*

(2) فقد أصبح جزءاً من طبيعة حياة معظم سكان المعمورة واعتادوا عليه **ولم يدركوا عظيم خطره عليهم**.

[*It has become a part of the nature of most earth populations' life, and they got used to it,* ***yet they have not realized how dangerous it is for them***.]

(3) إنها معادلة واضحة جليَّة إذا لم نفهمها اليوم ونطبقها **فإننا سندفع ثمن تقاعسنا غالياً** في المستقبل القريب.

[*It is a crystal-clear equation: If we do not understand and apply it today****, we will pay dearly for our inaction shortly***.]

(4) وبالرغم من كل الدراسات والإحصاءات التي **تحذر** من خطورة عدم الأخذ بأسباب تعزيز الصحة على مستقبل الفرد والمجتمع...

[*Despite all studies and statistics that* ***warn*** *of the hazards of not taking measures to enhance health on the future of individuals and society,…*]

(5) **وقد نهى رسول الله-ص- نهيا باتا** أن يضرب الوجه حتى في حالة القتال والدفاع عن النفس.

[***The Prophet -PBUH- strictly prohibited*** *hitting the face even in cases of fights and self-defense.]*

Metaphorical gestures can also reveal the interlocutor's attitude toward the discussed subject matter and, thus, act as **speaker's-relation-to-the-referent** gestures. They can represent warning by nonverbal portrayal of negative outcomes. Frame 6, for instance, shows the presenter's use of his two hands, the right in a fist gesture signifying power and the left in a palm-down position reflecting weakness, to demonstrate the two opposite possible consequences of the parents' optimistic vs. pessimistic influence on their children, as shown in the assertive speech act in Example (6). Moreover, Al-Fitaihi's (2014) metaphorical hand gesture in Frame 7, forming a circle with his thumb and index fingers of both hands, figuratively denotes choking development as a result of failure to understand and implement the health enhancement concept as illustrated in Example (7).

Frame 6

Frame 7

(6) فإما أن تتأصل فيهم هذه الفطرة وتقوى وإما أن تنتكس وتضعف.

[*This instinct is either rooted and strengthened or relapsed and weakened.]*

(7) بل سيؤدي لا محالة إلى **خنق التنمية** واستنزاف الشعوب التي غفلت عن الاستثمار الصحيح في مراحله المبكرة.

[*But this would definitely lead to* ***choking development*** *and draining the peoples who have overlooked the correct investment in its early phases.]*

Other **speaker's-relation-to-the-referent gestures** indicate the presenter's criticism towards negative approaches or attitudes. They usually correspond with either directive or assertive speech acts with a tone of indignation. For example, Al-Fitaihi (2013, 2014) asked rhetorical questions to condemn the indoctrination-oriented educational systems in the Arab countries and sanctuary the society's passivity against sexual harassment crimes, as shown in Examples (8) and (9) below that conform to Frames 8 and 9, respectively. In the former, the presenter is depicted in an offer image with a frown on his face and in adding punched finger hand gesture (i.e., the fingertips of a hand touch each other while moving up and down, questioning what occurs at schools, as if he asks the audience

indirectly: Is this acceptable? In Frame 9, he rebuked society for their avoidance of facing the harsh reality of sexual assault crimes with facial expressions of disgust (i.e., downturned mouse, furrowed eyebrows, and scrunched nose) and forward movement of head and torso.

Frame 8

Frame 9

(8) ما الذي يحدث في المدرسة؟

[What happens at school?]

(9) فإلى متي **نبقي رؤوسنا مغروزة في الرمال** وندَّعي أن كل شيءٍ على ما يرام؟

[*Till when **we'll keep our heads buried in the sand** and claim that everything is fine?*]

In addition to the directives, condemnatory nonverbal communication can be expressed in assertive speech acts, such as Example (10) illustrated in Frame 10, in which Al-Fitaihi (2013) reported Umar bin Al-Khattab's disapproving attitude toward the blame-shifting father who came to complain about his son's disobedience. The presenter's body language implies his agreement with Umar bin Al-Khattab's view; his denunciation appears in a direct address with a frowny face and pointed index and middle fingers with a directional push toward the viewers as if he indirectly speaks to those who commit the same deed.

Frame 10

(10) قال الفاروق للرجل: جئتني تشكو إليَّ عقوق ابنك **وقد عققته قبل أن يعقك** وأسأت إليه قبل أن يسيء إليك؟

[*Al-Farouq (Umar bin Al-Khattab) told the man, "You came to me complaining about your son's disobedience, **and you had disobeyed him before he did to you**; you had offended him before he did to you?]*

Furthermore, criticism can be expressed nonverbally, using **metaphorical gestures**. Al-Fitaihi's (2013, 2014) frowny face, in addition to his hand gestures in Frames 11 and 12, reflects his disapproval of the "narrow" definition of health adopted by the Arab health systems. In the former, hence, he used his thumb and index fingers held together to each other with a small gap in between that expresses limitedness (see Example (11)). His rejection of the superiority and indoctrination-based Arab educational systems stated in Example (12) was communicated in the latter with a palm-down hand gesture with fingers spaced in a hold-a-ball-like shape that implies unfavorable control or dominance.

Frame 11

Frame 12

(11) إلا أننا نرى أن كثيراً من الدول العربية ما زالت تعيش في التعريف السطحي **الضيق** للصحة.

[*Yet we see a lot of Arab countries that still live in the shallow, **narrow** definition of health.]*

(12) وهذه نتيجة متوقعة ومحصلة حتمية **لهذه الآلية التلقينية الفوقية** للتعليم والتربية.

[*This is an expected result and an inevitable outcome of **such a superior indoctrination-based mechanism** for education and upbringing.]*

Dramatic urgency nonverbal signals aim to show a problem's magnitude and prompt the intended audience to take the necessary actions to tackle it. The assertiveness in Examples (13) and (14), displayed in confirmatory body language in Frames 13 and 14 from *"E-Communication Generation"* and *"Health Enhancement*", respectively, state the ultimate adverse effects of the addressed dilemmas. With a frowny face, the presenter, in the former, performed the ring hand gesture with the thumb and index fingers in a circle shape to alert about the hazards of E-communication obsession that could turn into an addiction. In the latter, he moved his hands in a palm-down position from left to right assuredly to endorse the impossibility of medicine-caused coverage due to the increasing rates of obesity- and smoking-related diseases.

Frame 13

Frame 14

(13) بل ويشعر بتوتر وقلق شديدين في حالة وجود أي عائق للاتصال به **وقد يصل ذلك إلى حد الاكتئاب** وهذه ذروة الإدمان!

[*He even feels intense stress and anxiety in case there is any barrier that hinders e-connection, **which might reach the level of depression**, and that is the peak of addiction!]*

(14) بالطبع ستتضاعف الأمراض الناتجة عن السمنة والتدخين مما سيؤدي إلى "استحالة" تغطية تكلفة العلاج واستنزاف الدخل القومي لهذه البلاد.

[*Definitely, the smoking- and obesity-related diseases will multiply, leading to the impossibility of covering the costs of medication and draining the countries' national income.]*

Furthermore, *dramatic urgency* could be obtained by appealing to the audience emotionally and evoking their empathy. Sorrowful body language indicates the speaker's position regarding the subject matter, on the one hand, and impacts the audience and inspires them to ensure some action, on the other hand. Frames 15 and 16 from *"Questions"* and *"Forgotten Dutifulness"* correspond with the assertive speech acts in Examples (15) and (16), in which the presenter slightly shakes his head repeatedly with a frowny face expressing disappointment and grief.

Frame 15

Frame 16

(15) وبذلك انحصرت حضارة الإنسان المسلم!

[*Accordingly, the civilization of the Muslims has been degraded!]*

(16) فالوجه أشرف ما فينا وفي صفعه **إذلال وإهانة لكرامة الإنسان**.

[*The face is the most noble in our body, and slapping it entails* ***humiliation and insult to one's dignity***.]

The **speaker's-relation-to-the-referent** gestures also highlighted the presenter's guiding part in the show. Al-Fitaihi (2013, 2014) attempted to clarify his recommendations, stated in assertive speech acts, and foster their comprehension by attaching them with **metaphorical gestures** to create a mental image of these recommendations in the audience's minds that allows visualizing and remembering them. In Frame 17, the presenter referred to children's possible faulty attitude as a ball-shaped object with his left hand with his left hand and pointed at it with the index finger of his right hand, asking the intended audience to focus on this behavior that needs modification without insulting or hurting their children (see Example (17)). Frame 18 also depicts family security that should be maintained for the children as a crucial protective method from sexual assault, with the two hands open palms facing each other as if they are holding a ball that figuratively entails inclusion or containment of the children in a safe environment (see Example (18)).

Frame 17

Frame 18

(17) **ننتقد السلوك الخاطئ بعيداً عن** الإهانة والتجريح لشخصهم.

[***We criticize the faulty attitude away from*** *insulting and humiliating them.]*

(18) إن أهم طرق حماية الطفل من الاعتداء الجنسي هي الوقاية وذلك بتوفير **جو من الأمان الأسري**.

[*The most important method to protect a child from sexual assault is precautions by providing* ***an environment of family security***.]

In his monologue-based argument, Al-Fitaihi (2013) attempted to build virtual connections with his audience via the use of self-evidenced rhetorical questions, such as those shown in Examples (19) and (20) from *"And If Anyone Saved a Life"* and *"Comprehensive Concept of Medication"* episodes. He sought to create a common ground with the viewers to foster the persuasiveness of the arguments and respond to potential rebuttals by establishing the logical link between the standpoints and their defenses. The presenter's body language pinpointed the *agreement-seeking function* of the directive speech acts of the rhetorical questions. In Frame 19, the raised eyebrows signify questioning,

and in Frame 20, he relies only on his side-tilted head and this stable eye contact with the viewers to communicate the intended effect of the corresponding rhetorical question.

Frame 19

Frame 20

(19) فهل هناك شيءٌ أقيم وأغلى وأثمن يتعلمه أبناؤنا من إحياء النفس؟

[*Is there something more valuable, priceless, and precious that our children can learn than reviving a soul?]*

(20) وهل أُرسِلَ الرسل إلا ليقدموا لنا نموذج حياة؟

[*Were the messengers sent for anything but to present a life model for us?]*

The second common illustrators employed in *"And My Life"* encompass the **punctuation gestures**, which have similar functions as grapheological devices to highlight certain pieces of information in written texts and punctuation marks to organize the flow of ideas. The frames below depict various **punctuation gestures** with *emphasis*, *listing*, and *transition* functions. *Emphasis and precision* were realized verbally in assertive speech acts and nonverbally in three body signals. First, the OK hand gesture, sometimes with all fingers curved to form an O shape, was the most frequently used to accentuate a specific point, specifically when pronounced with stress, such as underlining the superiority of self-preservation in Shari'a that shall be obtained by rescuing the injured with instant first aid (see Example (21), Frame 21), the crisis of trust in our capabilities to explore the world caused by educational systems (see Example (22), Frame 22), and the possibility of developing optimistic and pessimistic mindsets via learning, as Dr. Seligman (2006) confirmed (see Example (23), Frame 23). The OK gesture can also be performed to add specificity to certain phrases, warning that the excessive use of e-communication devices can lead to addiction (see Example (24), Frame 24), defining the mood-regulating hormone as "dopamine" or "happiness hormone" (Example (25), Frame 25), and specifying the "mother" as the one from whom children can learn optimism and pessimism (see Example (26), Frame 26). Second, the steepling gesture (i.e., the fingertips of both hands are touching each other, forming a steeple), as shown in Frame 27, was also made to intensify the authority and credibility of Dr. Camprly Yung as "one of those who dedicated themselves to studying the phenomenon of Internet addiction"(see Example (27)). Third, the other body signals that communicated emphasis include a forward side-tilted head movement with serious facial expressions, as portrayed in Frame 28, to affirm the efficacy of the "few minutes" of rapid first aid in saving one's life (see Example (28)).

Frame 21

Frame 22

Frame 23

Frame 24


Frame 25


Frame 26


Frame 27


Frame 28

(21) وفي الأخذ بأسباب إنقاذ المصاب تحقيق أولى **وأعلى مقاصد الشرع** ألا وهي حفظ النفس.

[*Taking measures to rescue the injured achieves the first **and most superior objectives of Shari'a**, i.e., self-preservation.]*

(22) وهكذا يسير التعليم بمجتمعاتنا بخطى ثابتة نحو الوراء **لأنه ببساطة يخلف وراءه أزمة ثقة** في قدراتنا على استكشاف الحياة.

[*That's how education moves our societies steadily backward **because it simply leaves behind a trust crisis** in our capabilities to discover life.]*

(23) **يؤكد د. سيلجمان** أن التفاؤل والتشاؤم يعلَّمان.

[***Dr. Seligman stresses** that optimism and pessimism are taught.]*

(24) استخدام شبكة الإنترنت لما يزيد عن 38 ساعة أسبوعيا أي ما يعادل 5 ساعات في اليوم **يعد إدماناً**.

[*Using the Internet for more than 38 hours weekly, that is around 5 hours a day, is considered **"addiction"**]*

(25) فتغذية الدماغ بصورة إيجابية يؤدي إلى زيادة إفراز هرمون **يسمى بهرمون الدوبامين أو هرمون السعادة**.

[*Feeding the brain positively leads to an increase in the release of a hormone **called dopamine or happiness hormone**.]*

(26) ويتعلم الأطفال التفاؤل والتشاؤم من خلال علاقتهم بوالديهم، **وخاصة الأم**.

[*Children learn optimism and pessimism through their relationship with their parents, **especially the mother**.*]

(27) وتؤكد عالمة النفس الأمريكية كامبرلي يونغ والتي تعد من أوائل أطباء علم النفس **الذين عكفوا على دراسة ظاهرة إدمان الإنترنت** بأن...

[*The American psychologist Camprly Yung, one of the pioneers of psychology, **who dedicated themselves to studying the phenomenon of Internet addiction**, confirms that…]*

(28) ولكن بمعرفتنا بمبادئ الإسعافات الأولية يمكن أن نصبح بإذن الله سبباً في إنقاذ حياة إنسان **في تلك الدقائق القليلة.**

[*With our knowledge of first aid principles, we can become -God willing- a reason to save one's life **at those few moments**.]*

Punctuation gestures, in addition, are used for *organizational purposes*, such as *listing*, *pauses*, and *transitions*. Frames 29, 30, and 31 display listing key points corresponding with the highlighted phrases in the assertives in Examples (29), (30), and (31). Using fingers to visually list aims to emphasize the listed elements and aid the audience in retrieving the multiple factors under discussion. Concerning pauses, they are made between phases or sub-phases to mark the end of a segment and prepare the audience for the next. They coincide with the last utterance of the segment and are illustrated in a steady no-body-movement posture with sustained eye contact and serious or frowny facial expressions, conveying the intensity of the presented ideas, as shown in Frames 32, 33, and 34 from *"Questions"*, *"Forgotten Dutifulness"*, and *"Health Enhancement*", respectively.


Frame 29


Frame 30


Frame 31


Frame 32


Frame 33


Frame 34

(29) ننتقد السلوك الخاطئ بعيداً عن **الإهانة والتجريح لشخصهم**.

[*We criticize the faulty attitude away from* ***insulting and humiliating them****.]*

(30) العنف اللفظي...بل وتؤثر سلبا على نمو الطفل **جسدياً وعقلياً وروحياً ونفسياً وعاطفياً واجتماعياً وأكاديمياً**.

[*Verbal abuse…also negatively affects the child's growth* ***physically, mentally, spiritually, psychologically, emotionally, socially, and academically****.]*

(31) وهي السرية التي تغلب على مثل هذا النوع من الجرائم خوفاً من الفضيحة والخزي والعار وحمايةً من الملاحقة القانونية للمعتدين **من الأقرباء أو الأصدقاء أو الجيران**.

[*It's the confidentiality that dominates such kinds of crimes due to the fear of scandals and shame and the tendency to protect the assaults,* ***if relatives, friends, or neighbors****, from legal pursuit.]*

As for the *transitional* gestures, they were observed in *contrast*, *correlative*, and *conditional* structures, expressed in assertive speech acts. The shared nonverbal signal between the three organizational structures is the raised eyebrows to stress the communicated idea, accompanied by varied head movements and hand gestures. Al-Fitaihi (2013, 2014) denotes *contrast* with his side-tilt head movement as in Frame 35 when he introduced the opposite sad example of the Saudi kid who drowned in the pool (see Example (32)), compared to the previously-highlighted successful model of Jeffrey, who managed to rescue his younger brother thanks to the fast first aid he provided see example. Likewise, *contrast* is portrayed in a forward side-tilted head motion in Frame 36, in which the presented demonstrated the problem of stress, despite its relative necessity in life (see Example (33)). Moreover, the two *correlative* structures represented nonverbally in Frames 37 and 38 are signaled by raising the index finger with the eyebrows to accentuate the "but also" clause of the given structures, highlighted in Examples (34) and (35). The "unless" *conditional* clause in Example (36) is similarly illustrated, as shown in Frame 39, yet with positioning the raised index finger in front of the presenter's face, magnifying the importance of realizing the issue's cruciality. However, the conditional and result clauses in Example (37) were marked with tilting heads right and left for each (see Frames 40 and 41).


Frame 35


Frame 36


Frame 37


Frame 38


Frame 39


Frame 40


Frame 41

(32) **في المقابل** نجد أن ماجد ذا السبعة عشر ربيعاً في مدينة جدة غرق في رحلة مدرسية.

[***In contrast***, *we find Majid, 7 years old, from Jeddah, who drowned in a school trip.]*

(33) التوتر هو ردة فعل الإنسان واستجابته البدنية والعقلية والعاطفية تجاه حدث معين وكل إنسان يحتاج إلى مستوى معين من الضغوط والتوتر لإنجاز أي عمل ولكن المشكلة تكمن في حدة هذا التوتر واستمراره لفترات طويلة.

[*Stress is one's reaction and physical, mental, and emotional response towards a specific event. Every person needs a certain level of pressure and stress to accomplish any work,* ***but the problem*** *lies in the intensity of this stress and its continuation for long periods of time.]*

(34) إن أطفالنا أمانة في أعناقنا فالتربية ليست طعاماً وشراباً ولباساً وأموراً مادية فحسب **إنما** هي رعاية وعناية جسدية وعقلية وروحية.

[*Our children are our responsibility; upbringing them is not only limited to food, drink, clothes, and materialistic matters,* ***but*** *it is physical, mental, and spiritual care.]*

(35) وهذا ما يؤكده علماء البرمجة اللغوية العصبية من أهمية أن ننظر إلى جميع التحديات التي نواجهها في الحياة على أنها قابلة للحل، **بل** وأن نستثمرها ونحوّلُها من سلبية إلى إيجابية.

[*This is what neuro-linguistic programming scientists confirm: The importance lies in looking at all challenges we encounter in life not only as resolvable* ***but also*** *as opportunities to invest, turning them from negative to positive.]*

(36) ولن ننجح في نشر الوعي، **إلا إذا أدركنا أهمية القضية**.

[*And we won't succeed in spreading awareness* ***unless we realize the importance of the cause****.]*

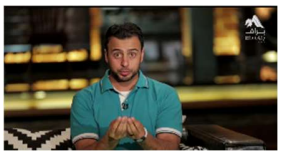
(37) إذا استمر رفضه كثيراً، فسيكف عن السؤال وسيغط في نوم عميق.

[*If rejecting him continues for a long, he will stop asking and sleep deeply*.]

4.2 Nonverbal Communication in *"Live the Moment"*

Similar to Al-Fitaihi (2013, 2014), the most common gestures Husni (2014) utilized are the speaker's-relation-to-the-referent. They mainly function to *build rapport* and manifest *warning* and *urgency*. First, Husni was concerned throughout the episodes of *"Live the Moment"* about establishing a trustworthy relationship with his audience, demonstrated, hence, in **speaker's-relation-to-the-referent gestures**. Despite their absence, he used some interactive linguistic structures, supported by face and body illustrators, which aimed to create a bond with them.

This desired intimacy stems from Husni's (2014) role as a preacher or a mentor to his audience, so he tends to directly address them with directive speech acts using second-person pronouns, highlighted in the examples below. Nonverbally, Husni's concern to inform and advise his audience is manifested in his overall body language, including hands, head, eyes, and face. For instance, the rhetorical question in Example (38) was asked with raised eyebrows, wide-open eyes, downward tilted head movement, and his two hands attached in a punched fingers gesture, as shown in Frame 42.



Frame 42

(38) عارف حكمة ربنا إيه بإنه بيعرض عليك وبيحط في طريقك فرص الخير؟

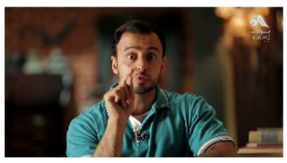
[*Do you know what the wisdom of Allah is of offering you and putting opportunities of benevolence in your way?]*

In addition, imperatives were also used to give instructions, advice, or motivation. First, in Frame 43, the presenter firmly instructs the audience to pay attention, urging them to thoroughly contemplate the definition of the moment of anxiety, as shown in Example (39). He wants them to realize that there is no actual reason for the pain they feel during this moment. Therefore, he tilts his head downwards as he maintains eye contact with raised eyebrows, and his two palms are slightly curved inward and positioned opposite to each other as if he is holding a ball. Second, Frames 44 and 45 visually display the negative directives in Examples (40) and (41), in which the presenter advises the audience not to ignore or procrastinate acts of kindness. Thus, in the first, he raises his index finger and shakes his hand right and left in a rejection gesture, and in the latter, he uses the OK gesture with curved fingers in a cautionary gesture, followed by a multiply pointed index finger directly towards the audience, as illustrated in Frame 46, that accompanied the multiple second-person pronouns, highlighted in Example (41). Moreover, the raised index finger with raised eyebrows and wide-open eyes can be interpreted as an advisory gesture that aligns with the directive speech act in Example (40). Third, the motivational directive speech act in Example (42) is communicated with raised eyebrows, stable eye contact, and clenched fists raised up and slightly shaken repetitively to imply strength and resilience (see Frame 47).

Frame 43

Frame 44

Frame 45



Frame 46

Frame 47

(39) **ركز معايا**، لحظة ألم وخوف من أشياء قد تحدث ولكن بدون منطق.

[***Pay attention to me****! [Anxiety moment is] a moment of pain and fear of things that may happen, yet irrationally!]*

(40) أي حد يقدر يعمل خير، بفكر حضراتكم، يا تعملها بإيديك، يا تنقلها برسالة، بتليفون لحد يقدر، **لكن متدّيش ضهرك.**

[*Anyone is able to do good. Let me remind you! Either do it yourself or pass it with a message or a call to someone else who can,* ***but don't turn your back****!*]

(41) **إوعى تسوّف**، خليك إنت دايما سبَّاق بالخير، لإن ربنا بيعرضها عليك **إنت**، ويقصدك **إنت** في لحظة عمل الخير.

[***Never procrastinate****. Always hasten in benevolence because God offers it to* ***YOU*** *and means* ***YOU*** *at the moment of charity.*]

(42) **اجمد وسيطر** وعيش لحظة القلق بالطريقة الربانية.

*[****Be strong, take control****, and live the moment of anxiety in a divine way.*]

In addition to second-person pronouns manifested in directives and visually represented in **speaker's-relation-to-the-referent** gestures to build rapport with the audience, these gestures can communicate the same function with the use of plural first-person pronouns. This combination of verbal and nonverbal resources creates a common ground between the two involved parties by fostering a sense of unity. By the end of each episode, Husni's (2014) prayers are conveyed in directive, expressive speech acts: They are directive because they represent humble requests from God and are expressive as these prayers reflect spiritual connection and encompass sincerity. While praying, he raises his hands in a *du'a* gesture, cupping his two attached palms and sometimes closing his eyes, which signifies humility and supplications. This religious act emphasizes the shared beliefs between the audience and the presenter, enhanced with the inclusive plural first-person pronouns used in the prayers, as indicated in Examples (43) and (44) in Frames 48 and 49, respectively.

Frame 48

Frame 49

(43) اللهم يا رازق البشر والطير افتح علينا جميع أبواب الخير واجعل ما رزقتنا سبباً في إسعاد الغير، يا الله!

[*O Allah, O provider and sustainer of humans and birds, open all goodness doors to us and make what you granted us with a reason to make others happy. O Allah!]*

(44) فاللهم يسِّر علينا كل عسير من أمرنا واكتب لنا السعادة فيما بقى من عمرنا يا الله يا الله!

[*O Allah, make difficult matters easy for us and grant us happiness for the remainder of our lives. O Allah, O Allah!]*

Warnings can also be communicated verbally in the form of directive speech acts and nonverbally in **speaker's-relation-to-the-referent** gestures. Compared to advice, warnings are expressed with a higher pitch, more stress on keywords, and more intensified, prohibitive body language. Hence, the Arabic warning marker "اوعى" (i.e., "never") that starts the negative directives in Examples (45), (46), and (48) is delivered with a raised index finger, serious facial expressions, and downward or upward tilted head, movement, as in Frames 50 and 51, respectively. Besides, the divine warning articulated in an assertive speech act in Verse 231, Surat Al-Baqarah, concerning wrongdoings against women in divorce (see Example (47)) and Husni's (2014) directive remark on the same point in Example (48) are visually illustrated with another form of the OK gesture, positioned inwards on the edge of the hand, as shown in Frames 52 and 53. The face is also expressive of the warning force of the act; the frown on the face in the former and the glaring eyes and upward tilted head in the latter indicate absolute disapproval.

Frame 50

Frame 51

Frame 52

Frame 53

(45) خد بالك، **اوعى تتجنب حياتك** لو قلقت من شيء!

[*Be careful! **Never avoid living your life** if you are worried about something!]*

(46) أنا هطلّع عينيكِ عشان تبريني، **اوعى تعمل كده**.

[*I'll give you a hard time to waive me (of your rights)! **Never do that!]***

(47)**"ومن يفعل ذلك فقد ظلم نفسه"** (البقرة، آية 231)

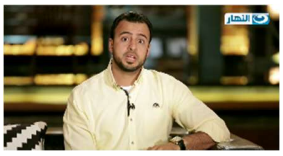
[***"And whoever does that, then he has wronged himself"** (Al-Baqarah, 231)]*

(48) **"اوعى تضيِّع الحق!"**

[***Never deprive someone of their right!]***

In addition to *rapport building* and *warning*, the **speaker's-relation-to-the-referent gestures** help illustrate *urgency*. The words stress on the number of the world population suffering from anxiety in the assertive speech act shown in Example (49), and the surprising facial expressions with raised eyebrows and a glaring eye gaze illustrated in Frame 54 convey the magnitude of the problem and the necessity to address it and find out solutions to deal with such moments. Similarly, the gesture on the presenter's face and hands and his backward tilted head movement in

Figure 55 seamlessly reflect the assertive speech act stating the shocking percentages of divorce in the Arab countries, followed by the exclamatory expression "يا نهار أبيض" (i.e., "Oh, my goodness!) in Example (50).



Frame 54

Frame 55

(49) **ربع سكان العالم، بنتكلم أكتر من مليار ونص** مثلا بيشعروا بالقلق من حاجة.

[***A quarter of the world population-we're speaking about around more than a billion and a half-*** *feels anxious about something*.]

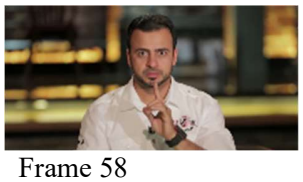
(50) وأنا بقولك تاني: نص إللي بيتجوّز بيطلّق، 40% قربوا على النص، وساعات في بعض الدول الإسلامية 45%، **يا نهار ابيض!**

[*And I'm telling you again! Half of those who marry get divorced; they're 40%, almost half, and sometimes in some Arab countries, it's 45%.* ***Oh, my goodness!****]*

Like *"And My Life"*, **punctuation gestures** in *"Live the Moment"* mark *emphasis*, *lists*, and *transitions*. First, when **punctuation gestures** are integrated with some prosodic aspects, such as high pitch and word stress, they can signify *emphasis* or *confirmation* to draw the audience's attention to the highlighted premises. The most frequent punctuation gesture employed to accentuate a certain claim is the raised index finger. In addition, facial expressions, such as the raised eyebrows and wide-open eyes in Frames 56 and 57 or the serious look in Frame 58, and head movements, such as the backward tilted head in Frame 57, can also contribute to grabbing attention to the stressed claims in the assertive speech acts in Examples (51), (52), and (53). Another variation for the index finger that can also imply affirmation is the pointed index towards the viewers, displayed in Frame 59 to endorse the assertive speech act in Example (54). Moreover, confirmation can be communicated via different gestures, such as the O gesture made with the two hands, and the fingers are curved and attached to each other, as shown in Frame 60, which corresponds with the assertive speech act in Example (55). Additionally, the inward, sideway OK gesture with the edge of the hand directed downwards aligns with "حقاً" (i.e., "truly") in Verse 241, Surat Al-Baqarah (see Example (56), Frame 61). The very close shot of Frame 62 displays the role of closed eyes in stressing the divine threat in Verse 81, Surat At-Tawbah (see Example (57)).

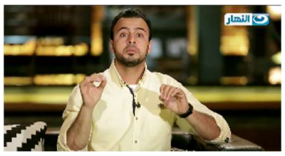
Frame 56

Frame 57



Frame 58

Frame 59


Frame 60


Frame 61


Frame 62

(51) علماء النفس **ليهم كلام خطير في الحتة دي!**

[*Psychologists **have a serious say in this part***!]

(52) "لا تكلَّفُ نفسٌ **إلا** وُسعها" (البقرة، آية 233)

*["No person shall have a burden laid on him greater **than** he can bear." (Al-Baqarah, 233)]*

(53) لأنه ديننا كامل وقت ما تستحيل العِشرة ففي منفذ، **ولكن** شاء ربنا يظهر معادن الناس في لحظة الانفصال.

[*Because our religion is complete, whenever it feels impossible to remain in this relationship, there is a way out, **BUT** Allah wills to reveal the true colors of people at the breakup moment.]*

(54) دي فايدة لحظة القلق!

[*This is the benefit of anxiety!*]

(55) إذن لحظات القلق لحظات تضخيم المخاوف بدون منطق.

[*Thus, anxiety moments are moments of nonsense fear exaggeration.]*

(56) "وللمطلقات متاع بالمعروف "حقا" على المتقين" (البقرة، آية 241)

["And for divorced women, maintenance (should be provided) on reasonable (scale). This is a duty on Al-Muttaqun (the pious)." (Al-Baqarah, 241)]

(57) "قل نار جهنم أشد حراً لو كانوا يفقهون" (التوبة، آية 81)

["Say: "The Fire of Hell is more intense in heat", if only they could understand!" (At-Tawbah, 81)]

Second, **punctuation gestures** are also manifested to *list* sub-arguments, as shown in Frames 63, 64, 65, and 66, in which the presenter uses his fingers to outline the distinct people's reactions to the four selected moments, as shown in Examples (58-61). Third, the bodily pauses made by the presenter at the end of a segment prepare the audience for the next and allow them to take these few seconds to absorb the information they have received in the previous segment. Therefore, the deliberate silence and stillness instantly precede the blackout transitions between segments; the two Frames 67 and 68, for instance, are the last ones in the second segments of "Anxiety" and "Divorce," respectively.

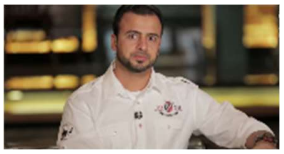

Frame 63


Frame 64


Frame 65


Frame 66


Frame 67


Frame 68

(58) لما الإنسان بتحصلُّه لحظة القلق دي، **بيعدي بتلات ردود أفعال، المسارات**.

[*When a man experiences such an anxiety moment,* ***he goes through three reactions (or paths).***]

(59) لما بتهجم عليك لحظة الفرحة، **إنت عندك اختيار من تلاتة**.

[*When the happiness moment strikes you,* ***you have one of three choices***.]

(60) وتتعرض عليك لحظة عمل الخير هدية من ربنا عشان يشغَّلك في وظيفة "إني جاعلٌ في الأرضِ خليفة"...**حاجة من إتنين والقرار عندك**، مين اللي هيسيطر: البشرية ولا الربانية؟

[*And the moment of charity is offered to you as a gift from Allah to employ you in the job ""...****One of two and the decision is yours****. Which will dominate: humanity or godliness?]*

(61) ف **يا ظلم، يا حق، يا إحسان!**

[*So* ***either wrongdoing, righteousness, or benevolence****!*]

5. Discussion

Because the TV shows under study are monologue-induced, and there are no interactions with interviewees or the audience, the presenters need to ensure clarity and enhance the persuasiveness of their points of view to achieve the objectives of these didactic shows. Therefore, no emblems are performed by the two presenters; instead, every speech act is accompanied by illustrators with different functions. Similar to Mancera and Díez-Prados' (2024) findings, nonverbal cues utilized in both shows aimed at engaging the audience, appealing to them emotionally, grabbing their attention, reinforcing critical points, and structuring the speech. However, unlike Mancera and Díez-Prados' English political TV interviews context, some functions characterize the genre of the didactic socio-religious TV shows, such as warnings, urgency, and criticism.

Concerning speech acts, assertives were found to be the most dominant in both shows. This is similar to the context of political TV interviews; Radhi et al. (2022) asserted that "[a]ssertive is the most frequent strategy which is used by the interlocutors to emphasize and explain their viewpoint" (p.504). Nevertheless, in the context of didactic TV shows, the use of assertives verifies their roles as advocates and preachers who attempt to inform, clarify, advise, and deliver moral messages. In addition, assertives can also reflect confidence in their information, which projects their credible persona and develops a trustworthy relationship with their audience. However, more directives were used in *"Live the Moment*," basically in the form of negative or affirmative imperatives to advise, warn, or motivate the audience, than in *"And My Life,"* structured in rhetorical questions to seek agreement.

Facial expressions are the most frequent body language in the two shows. They were used mostly to effectively communicate the meaning beyond speech acts and emotionally influence the audience. For instance, Al-Fitaihi's (2013, 2014) frowny face with dramatic effects of sorrow, disappointment, or grief, and Husni's (2014) surprising or shocking facial features

with his glaring eyes conveyed urgency to impel the audience to step forward and change the status quo. Moreover, warnings were expressed both in the face (i.e., Al-Fitaihi's frown and Husni's seriousness) in addition to other cautionary hand gestures. Pauses also were marked in both by a freezing pose with a serious look and sustained eye contact with the camera to reflect the severity of the addressed claims.

Both presenters depended mainly on two kinds of gestures to achieve relatively similar functions: the speaker's-relation-to-the-referent and punctuation gestures. In terms of function, the first indicates urgency and warning and engages the audience either by seeking agreement, as in Al-Fitaihi, or by building a trustworthy relationship by giving constructive instruction, advice, or encouragement, as in Husni. The second, mainly stated in assertives in the two shows, regulates the speech serving the functions below: emphasis, precision or confirmation, listing, and transition. Regarding the form of the nonverbal cues employed by Al-Fitaihi and Husni, despite the variations to achieve each of the aforementioned functions, a few gestures are common, maybe due to their universality, such as the raised pointed index finger for warning and the display of the emotional attitudes of the speakers on their faces to communicate urgency. Finally, another nonverbal similarity between the Saudi and Egyptian shows is the integration of some prosodic features, such as high pitch and word stress, with nonverbal and verbal aspects, yet they are highly prominent for warning and emphasis to highlight the phrases meant to attain the force of the uttered speech acts.

6. Conclusion

Presenters of didactic TV shows tend to influence their audience and attempt to convince them with the topics they discuss to make a change either on the self or the societal levels. The emergence of new ideas and influential speakers, especially at the critical times of the Arab Spring, greatly affected the form of religious speech on TV. They do not depend in their discussions on religious arguments, but they address them from other perspectives. Al-Fitaihi (2013, 2014), in his doctor's gown and Saudi attire, tackled the issues from social, scientific, and religious perspectives, and Husni (2014), in his casual wear, discussed turning points in one's life from social and religious viewpoints. They do not present this genre of shows to preach, but they also aim to provide information and advocate.

Having ample time to prepare and fix shots, they try to foster the effectiveness of their messages by using all possible resources to convey the intended meanings. Thus, the interplay between verbal and nonverbal cues plays a critical role in persuasive, guiding, and informative communication. This paper, hence, investigated the relation between speech acts and body language to achieve these purposes of this genre. The findings showed that the Saudi and Egyptian presenters only used speech-dependent gestures to avoid any ambiguity on the part of the audience. The similarities between the two shows may reveal some of the features of this genre, such as the use of speaker and punctuation gestures for audience engagement, warning, urgency, clarity, and speech organization. The most frequent speech acts employed in didactic TV shows are assertive to establish the speakers' credibility due to their confidence in the presented claims and their attempt to inform and explain. Besides, directives can be used economically to warn, advise, and motivate; in this case, they are not used out of power or domination but out of guidance. Presenters of this show may use distinct forms of nonverbal communication to fulfill the intended meanings, yet some bodily cues remain universal, such as facial expressions of despair, criticism, sorrow, etc., and some cautionary hand signals, such as the pointed index finger.

The large number of the selected episodes included in the study and their relatively long duration aimed at validating the generalizability of the results to uncover the features of nonverbal communication and their corresponding common speech acts that may distinguish the genre of Arab didactic TV shows. Therefore, future researchers need to apply quantitative methods to a limited number of episodes from different shows of the same genre to guarantee the internal validity of the results. Moreover, further studies can be conducted to compare the verbal and nonverbal meaning-making resources in this genre to other genres of TV shows.

Awareness of effective hand gestures, eye gaze, eyebrow movements, head movements, and facial expressions that match their speech acts while presenters of this genre of TV shows prepare for their episodes will foster their overall communication proficiency. Therefore, as social influencers, they are encouraged to deepen their knowledge about the common nonverbal features that would help them enhance the persuasive impact of their argumentations on their audience, taking into consideration the skeptic ones, and effectively achieve the didactic purposes of the show of preaching and informing. Likewise, Bassey-Duke (2018) and Habulan and Bagaric (2021) recommended producers and narrators of TV documentaries and journalists, especially sudden crisis reporters, respectively, to further study the nonverbal channels to ensure conveying powerful communication with the audience.

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The Sexual Desdemona: Two Adaptations of William Shakespeare's *Othello*

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the concept of adaptation, particularly in relation to William Shakespeare's *Othello*, examining how adaptations are not mere imitations but independent reinterpretations shaped by new contexts. Drawing on Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation as "recontextualization," the study highlights the creative process involved in adapting texts, where fidelity to the source is secondary to innovation. This study focuses on two adaptations: Oliver Parker's 1995 film *Othello* and Paula Vogel's 1993 play *Desdemona: A Play About a Handkerchief*. Parker's film emphasizes sensuality, using cinematographic techniques to foreground Desdemona's sexual power, whereas Vogel's feminist reimagining presents Desdemona as a sexually adventurous, discontented woman navigating societal constraints. By analyzing these adaptations, the paper underscores how shifting mediums and perspectives transform audience perceptions of the original work. Ultimately, it argues that adaptations breathe new life into classic texts, showcasing the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation.

Introduction:

The Legacy of Shakespeare and the Art of Adaptation

William Shakespeare's reputation as one of the greatest playwrights in English literature has made his works a frequent subject of revisions and adaptations. Linda Hutcheon asserts that adaptations are "so much part of Western culture that they seem to affirm Walter Benjamin's insight that 'storytelling is always the art of repeating stories'" (2). Adaptations are often viewed as imitations of the original text, with a hierarchical relationship in which the source is seen as the authentic or superior version. Negative perceptions of adaptation arise from "thwarted expectations," either from fans seeking fidelity to the original or from educators needing close alignment with the source text for teaching purposes (Hutcheon 4).

However, widely recognized works often enable their adaptations to be judged on their own merit. For example, while millions watched the 2002 film *Adaptation*, directed by Spike Jonze and starring Nicolas Cage, far fewer knew

it was based on Susan Orlean's 1998 nonfiction book *The Orchid Thief*. Those unaware of Orlean's book rarely compared it to the film to assess originality or fidelity. Even so, the source text's influence often "shadows the one we are experiencing directly," establishing an overt relationship between the two (Hutcheon 6). This view, however, requires reconsideration, as adaptations should not be evaluated solely based on their faithfulness to the original. Instead, they are independent creations that emphasize specific aspects of the source. The adapter acts as an interpreter, not a replicator of the original work. Fischlin and Fortier describe the adapter's role as "fitting [the adapted text] to a new context," a process known as "recontextualization" (3).

Critics and theorists suggest that adaptations, whether written or cinematic, should be understood within their new contexts rather than as acts of "borrowing." Philosopher Jacques Derrida defines "iterability" as "the power of being transferred from one specific context to another" (Norris 109). He argues that all acts of writing and meaning inherently transcend their original context, unfolding in infinite new settings where their significance continually changes (Fischlin 5). Thus, adaptations should be viewed as creative processes involving reinterpretation and re-creation (Hutcheon 8). This transformation may involve shifts in medium—such as converting a play into a film—or maintaining the same medium with innovative reinterpretations.

"Recontextualization" and the Two Adaptations of *Othello*

This paper examines the process of "recontextualization" through the adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello*, focusing on how Desdemona's portrayal in adaptations alters audience perceptions of the original work. The study analyzes three texts: Shakespeare's *Othello*, Oliver Parker's 1995 film adaptation, and Paula Vogel's 1993 off-Broadway play *Desdemona: A Play About a Handkerchief*. Parker's adaptation shifts from Shakespeare's "telling" mode to a "showing" cinematic medium, while Vogel's play remains in the "telling" mode of the original text but introduces a feminist reinterpretation. By focusing on Desdemona's characterization, the paper highlights how adaptations reshape audience engagement with Shakespeare's tragedy.

Shakespeare's plays have been adapted and reinterpreted for nearly four centuries, with countless variations across different mediums. Interestingly, Shakespeare himself was an adapter, transforming existing materials into new artistic creations. *Othello* "was written between 1602 and 1604, soon after *Hamlet* and not long before *King Lear*" (Bevington 303). It is one of Shakespeare's works that has captivated playwrights, screenwriters, and directors. Even *Othello* is an adaptation. According to Bevington, "Shakespeare found the plot in Giraldi Cinthio's collection of tales, *Hecatomithi* (1565) . . . Cinthio's is a sordid, melodramatic tale of sexual jealousy" (303).

This study examines two adaptations of *Othello*: Oliver Parker's 1995 film *Othello* and Paula Vogel's 1993 play *Desdemona: A Play about a Handkerchief*. Parker's film, starring Laurence Fishburne, Irene Jacob, and Kenneth Branagh, premierred during the 1995 Christmas season (Hodgdon 65) and marked Fishburne as "the first black actor

to play the role in a major film" (Maslin C11). While Parker's adaptation stays relatively close to Shakespeare's text, it eliminates and rearranges some scenes. (Kolin 65). Building on Fishburne passion and the beauty of Irene Jacob's Desdemona, "Parker developed a highly erotic *Othello*. His film was incontrovertibly rated 'R.' The way Parker interpreted Shakespeare's script evocatively foregrounded the sensual" (Kolin 65). Through cinematic techniques, Parker foregrounds sensuality, crafting a highly erotic interpretation of *Othello* distinct from Shakespeare's portrayal of Desdemona.

Vogel's *Desdemona: A Play About a Handkerchief* presents an even more radical reinterpretation, reimagining the character of Desdemona in a feminist, postmodern context. In this revisionist account, Desdemona, Emilia, and Bianca navigate their own counterplot behind the scenes of *Othello*. Given its "first staged reading in October 1987 at Cornell University with Vogel herself directing, the play has been restaged by, among others, the Bay Street Theater Festival in Sag Harbor, New York, and in November 1993 at the Circle Repertory Theater in New York City" (Fischlin 234). Vogel's *Desdemona* has been called "a rollicking, bawdy, postmodern, feminist reading of Shakespeare's *Othello* with no male characters" (Peterson 341).

Desdemona, a sexually adventurous Venetian woman, seeks independence and excitement, frequenting Bianca's brothel and yearning for the freedoms enjoyed by men. Disillusioned with her marriage to the exotic and dark-skinned Othello, Desdemona conspires with Emilia, her devoted servant, to escape her confining life. Vogel's bold portrayal reframes Desdemona as a defiant, liberated character who directly contrasts Shakespeare's more traditional depiction. The play ends with Desdemona, made acutely aware of her husband's jealousy, plans to feign sleep because she is certain that he is not to kill a sleeping woman. But when she goes to her bed, Emilia starts brushing her mistress's hair and counts from the number One. The ending line of the play is Emilia's uttering numbers endlessly.

This study analyzez *Othello* and its two adaptations through the lens of how Oliver Parker and Paula Vogel reinterpret and recontextualize the character of Desdemona. Both adaptations present a transformed Desdemona who aligns more closely with Iago's accusations in Shakespeare's play—depicting her as a sexual and unfaithful woman. The twentieth-century adaptations by Parker and Vogel add new layers to Desdemona's character, offering audiences and readers a contemporary perspective distinct from Shakespeare's original vision.

Shakespeare's Desdemona

Before examining how the two adaptations alter Desdemona's character, it is important to first understand Shakespeare's portrayal of Desdemona. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, Desdemona is the only character whose actions align with her true nature: "the heart and the hand go together; she is what she seems to be. Ironically, she alone is accused of pretending to be what she is not . . . and her chastity is brought into question in a world where every other major character is in some degree touched with sexual corruption" (Kernan lxiv).

Desdemona's devotion to her duties as a wife is evident when she tells her father, in front of Venetian society's generals and elites, that her loyalty must first lie with her husband. She states:

My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided duty.
To you I am bound for life and education;
My life and education both do learn me
How to respect you. You are the lord of duty;
I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my
husband,
And so much duty as my mother showed
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor my lord. (1.3.182-91)

This statement highlights that Desdemona can never be doubted as an unfaithful wife. Iago's accusation of infidelity only gain traction because Othello, feeling inferior to her due to her beauty and high status, believes he is unworthy of her. Her noble character, however, transcends such superficial concerns, like racial differences. Tragically, she is murdered for a sin she did not commit. She cannot be grouped with the women Iago accuses her of being like, and even the mere suggestion of it pains her. She tells to Emilia, ". . . I cannot say 'whore:' / It does abhor me now I speak the word: / To do the act that might the addition earn / Not the world's mass of vanity could make me" (4.2.168-71). Throughout the play, Desdemona's faithfulness remains unquestionable, even in the face of Othello's false accusations, and as the audience, we continue to trust in her integrity.

Oliver Parker's Desdemona

Oliver Parker's adaptation of *Othello* distorts the pure image of Desdemona seen in Shakespeare's play. In his film, Parker heavily cuts and rearranges scenes, and uses flashbacks, to create a "highly graphic, intensely erotic" experience (Kolin 65). As Potter notes, "Parker cut nearly fifty percent of the text and provided plenty of visual excitement to accompany what remained" (193). The rearrangement of scenes plays a key role in emphasizing Desdemona's sexuality. For instance, Parker includes an explicit shot of a couple engaging in sexual intercourse in a crude wagon, followed by a scene where Iago whispers to the passive Roderigo that Desdemona loves Cassio (28:30). The film then cuts to an image of Desdemona laughing up at Cassio as they dance. As Hodgdon observes, "juxtaposing the two spaces permits the one to bleed over into the other, serving, finally, less to mark the difference between 'romance' and 'sex' or between what occurs in each" (67). It is this connection between Desdemona's dance and the couple's sexual act which makes Desdemona's sexuality connotated; it blurs the line between romance and sexuality.

A few minutes later, Parker again uses visual techniques to focus on Desdemona's body as a sexual object in the "bed scene" (31:40). The camera shows Othello, bare to the waist, removing his boots while Desdemona takes off her slippers. Both "appear equally eager to consummate their marriage" (Hodgdon 67). As Othello undoes his belt, Desdemona steps back, enticing him to come closer. The camera angle, showing Othello from behind, reveals Desdemona's exposed breast. Although she is in her marital bed, this portrayal of Desdemona "gives the role a new dimension—for a sexual Desdemona can create sexual worries" (Kolin 65). These worries, however, are not based on real acts of infidelity, but rather are psychological doubts in Othello's mind.

Initially, Othello is reluctant to believe Iago's accusations. However, Iago's repeated attempts to tarnish Desdemona's reputation cause Othello to become increasingly suspicious with the image of Desdemona's smile while she dances with Cassio in his mind. The flashback technique intensifies the emotional impact of the scene: "An extreme close-up of Iago's profile is matched by one of Othello's eyes, which keys a flashback cut-in of Desdemona laughing up at Cassio as they dance" (53:08). This flashback positions Othello in a state of heightened jealousy, prompting him to create another imagined "bed scene." In this instance, Othello, dressed similarly to the first scene, approaches a white-curtained bed with a knife, parting the curtains to reveal Desdemona and Cassio in a compromising position.

Barbara Hodgdon comments on the way Parker uses Desdemona's sexualized body, stating that the repeated imagery of her body makes her "an especially contradictory ground for engendering fantasy." She is depicted in two contradictory ways: first as a confident woman who speaks before the senators and tries to calm her father, and second "shows her open smile transformed by Othello's licentious imaginings, scripted by Iago. The film uses (and uses up) her body to feed those fantasies. (70)

In Parker's adaptation, Desdemona is transformed, in Othello's fantasies, into a promiscuous woman. While Shakespeare's Othello imagines the same thing, the visual portrayal of Desdemona's body in intimate situations makes it difficult for the audience to continue viewing her as the faithful wife she is portrayed as in the original play. Linda Hutcheon emphasizes that in adaptations from print to performance, from the "telling" to the "showing" mode "the emphasis in usually on the visual, on the move from imagination to actual ocular perception" (40). This visual shift challenges the audience's belief in Desdemona's fidelity, creating doubt and prompting the question: why not?

Paula Vogel's Desdemona:

In Oliver Parker's *Othello*, Desdemona's supposed promiscuity exists solely within the realm of fantasy, but in Paula Vogel's *Desdemona*, it is a reality. By shifting the focus away from the tragic hero, Vogel "foregrounds and enacts the threat of female desire that incites the tragic action, and disrupts the familiar categories of virgin, whore, and faithful handmaiden by forging links with gender ideology and class status" (Friedman, *Revisioning* 131).

Vogel's Desdemona is a stark departure from Shakespeare's portrayal, presenting a character who is morally more flawed than the one Iago paints her to be. From the outset, she exhibits a playful, even provocative side in her conversations with Emilia. She expresses frustration with Othello's jealousy and accusations, particularly regarding Michael Cassio. Emilia teasingly notes that Cassio is "[t]he only one [Desdemona hasn't] had" (238), to which Desdemona retorts that she's not interested in him, not out of moral restraint but rather out of desire: "And I don't want him, either" (Vogel 238).

In Vogel's adaptation, Desdemona embraces her sexual freedom without restraints or remorse, even rejecting the concept of honesty in the context of adultery. She boldly declares: "What does honesty have to do with adultery? Every honest man I know is an adulterer" (242). For her, sex is not merely for pleasure but a form of rebellion against the societal confinement of women. She criticizes the restrictive roles assigned to women, describing them as "clad in purdah . . . decent, respectable matrons, from the cradle to the altar to the shroud . . . bridled with linen, blinded with lace" and bound by societal norms that limit their freedom (242). This drives her attraction to Bianca, whom she sees as a symbol of independence: "[S]he's a free woman – a new woman – who can make her own living in the world, who scorns marriage for the lie that it is" (242).

Marriage, for Desdemona, represents a form of enslavement, where she loses her autonomy. Adultery becomes her means of escaping this "prison," and of fulfilling her "desire to know the world" (242). She visits Bianca's brothel to experience a sense of liberation, engaging with men of various appearances and backgrounds. These encounters serve as a form of mental and emotional escape, where she imagines herself traveling through different worlds: "And they spill their seed into [her]… seed from a thousand lands, passed down through generations of ancestors, with genealogies that cover the surface of the globe. And [she] simply lie[s] there in the darkness, taking them all into [her]. [She] close[s] [her] eyes and in the dark of . . . mind – oh, how [she] travel[s]" (242-3). For Desdemona, sexual encounters are not about satisfaction; they are about the freedom to experience and connect with worlds she could never otherwise access.

Desdemona's exposure to different worlds through sexual experiences leads her to prefer Bianca's lifestyle over her own. She mistakenly believes Bianca avoids the constraints of marriage. She asks her, "Oh, Bianca—oh, surely… you're not the type that wants to get married?" (250). Bianca's response challenges this assumption: "All women want t'get a smug, it's wot we're made for, ain't it? We may pretend different, but inside ev'ry born one o' us want smugs an' babies, smugs wot are man enow t' keep us in our place" (250). Bianca's acknowledgment that marriage is seen as a woman's natural path frustrates Desdemona, who replies, "I don't think I can stand it" (250). This view contradicts Shakespeare's Desdemona, who honors marriage and duty to her husband. In Vogel's version, however, Desdemona's respect for marriage is undermined. By the end of the play, Desdemona is murdered for her devotion.

Vogel's Desdemona learns from Shakespeare's Desdemona that her own freedom outweighs the societal expectations of women in marriage.

From the outset of Vogel's play, Desdemona's unhappiness in her marriage is apparent. Her conversation with Emilia in the eighth scene reveals the abusive behavior of patriarchs toward women. Emilia comments on the volatile nature of men, saying, "men get itchy heat rash in th' crotch, now and then; they get all snappish, but once they beat [women], it's all kisses and presents the next morning—well, for the first year or so" (241). Desdemona responds that, in addition to physical abuse, the patriarch offers sex. She remarks that Othello "is much too miserly to give [her] anything but his manhood" (241). In scene five, when Desdemona goes to see her husband, "*we hear the distinct sound of a very loud slap. . . .and DESDEMONA returns, closes the door behind her, holding her cheek. She is on the brink of tears"* (239). Such physical abuse is understood to be thello's reaction to his doubts about his wife's infedility. This depiction of abuse contrasts with Shakespeare's portrayal of Othello, where there is no mention of him physically harming Desdemona although he has the same doubts as Vogel's Othello. By adding this element, Vogel illustrates one of the reasons for Desdemona's disdain toward marriage: women are objectified by the patriarch. For Desdemona and Emilia, women serve as outlets for a man's emotions; when he is angry, he beats her; when he is passionate, he seeks intimacy.

Paula Vogel's sexual identity may contribute to her depiction of marriage as a trap in her adaptation, as well as her choice to eliminate male characters from the play. Vogel's candid acknowledgment of her sexuality reflects her boldness: "I don't hate being a lesbian woman playwright. I think there's no choice. And I'm aware that the thing has kept me out of a lot of theater companies, or has slowed down the progress of the career" (qtd. in Fischlin 233). Her portrayal of Desdemona as a sexually liberated woman can be seen as a rejection of the societal roles assigned to her. Vogel's gender politics aims not only to reveal how women are confined and oppressed but she is also devoted "to exposing not just how women are entrapped and oppressed, but to the possibilities that figures like Desdemona . . . [has] to contest, subvert and redefine the roles they have been assigned" (Savran xi).

In Vogel's play, Desdemona is no longer the innocent lover or the one "forgiving of all transgressions against her." Instead, she is "sexually adventurous . . . She is seemingly voracious in her appetites, manipulative of anyone who can feed them" (Friedman 118). This shift in Desdemona's character may stem from her tragic fate in Shakespeare's original, where she is killed for a crime she did not commit. Vogel seeks to reverse the roles in her adaptation, making Desdemona no longer a passive victim. Instead, she takes agency to resist the patriarchal oppression she faces, albeit in ways that reflect her own limitations. This transformation echoes the notion, as Savran notes, that "Shakespeare's women are not quite the innocent victims of masculine desires they appear to be but active makers" of their own destinies (x). The changes Vogel makes to Desdemona's character could imply a different ending from the original play. While Shakespeare's version leaves the audience knowing Desdemona will eventually be murdered, in Vogel's

adaptation she "has ceased to be a tragic or heroic icon and becomes an ordinary, if upper-class woman" who loses the audience's sympathy (Novy 70).

William Shakespeare's reputation as one of the greatest playwrights inevitably sparks controversy when his works are revisited or adapted, as Paula Vogel does in her play. Vogel's approach to Shakespeare's original text echoes the work of other writers, critics, readers, directors, and actors who have reinterpreted his plays, often through a feminist lens. This feminist perspective is the lens through which Vogel reimagines Shakespeare's *Othello*, offering a voice to the oppressed woman who deserves a play bearing her name. At the heart of the play, Vogel rewrites Shakespeare's *Othello* from the viewpoints of its female characters—Desdemona, of course, but also Emilia and the courtesan Bianca. This aligns with Vogel's feminist goal to create "fully dimensional" female characters, something she argues that male playwrights in the past have rarely done, or even attempted. Vogel aims to portray women as more than just daughters, wives, and mothers bound to private family roles (Pellegrini 476).

Vogel is inspired by the marginalization of women in *Othello*, as Dace notes, to give them "everything Shakespeare denies them: full portraits of the three women… high spirits that do not willingly suffer the men's foolishness" (qtd. in Fischlin 234). The adaptation also addresses contemporary issues, such as the danger of Desdemona's promiscuity, which could lead to AIDS, highlighting the play's exploration of modern concerns that Shakespeare could not have foreseen. This is the role of the adapter: to interpret contemporary circumstances and align them with historical themes and values, even when these are at odds with the current moment (Fischlin 18).

Conclusion

The order in which I have discussed the two adaptations does not follow a chronological sequence. I begin with Oliver Parker's *Othello*, even though it was released eight years after Paula Vogel's *Desdemona*. This choice is deliberate, as the degree to which these adaptations redefine Desdemona's character differs significantly. It felt less startling to first address the portrayal of Desdemona's sexuality as part of Othello's fantasies before transitioning to the morally opposite depiction of her as a "whore" in Vogel's work.

Both adaptations of Shakespeare's *Othello* stand as independent literary creations, even as they respond to a prior canonical text. While some might view Parker's film as a reproduction of the original with minor adjustments, both adaptations successfully "recontextualize" the source material, adapting it to fit new contexts. They serve as reminders that "there is no such thing as . . . an original genius that can transcend history, either public or private" (Hutcheon 111).

For those who mythologize Shakespeare's works as untouchable masterpieces, it is worth remembering that many of Shakespeare's plays themselves are adaptations. As Edward Said observes, literature operates as "an order of repetition, not of spontaneous and perpetual originality." While repetition theoretically implies sameness, in practice, it generates difference—manifesting in new ideas, perspectives, and contexts shaped by changing cultures, languages, and histories (354). These differences are natural, as adaptations inevitably reflect the era in which they are created. The reception of Shakespeare's works in the 20th century, for instance, differs dramatically from that of the 17th century. Reception and reader-response theories emphasize how the meaning of texts from the past evolves when they appear under new conditions (Fischlin 5). Adaptation, therefore, is an essential cultural activity that prioritizes reworking and reinterpretation in fresh contexts. This process is often more indicative of cultural development than notions of originality in creation or fidelity in interpretation.

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