

Cinematic adaptation in the Realm of Linguistics: A Multimodal Analytical Study

Mohamed Tohamy

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Suez Canal University

Mohamed_tohamy@suez.art.edu.eg

Yasmeen EL-Sayed Ibrahim Azab

Faculty of Arts _ Banha University

sema_cat91@yahoo.com

Abstract

'Adaptation', 'Inspiration', 'Quotation', and 'Borrowing' are diverse terminologies used in cinematic field to denote the notion of exchanging ideas in cinematic production. This study investigates movie posters of Hollywood and their Egyptian replicas to unearth the degree of adaptation as well as the similarities and differences between them. To achieve these goals, the researchers choose Multimodal Semiotic Theory as a theoretical framework, and apply Kress and van Leeuwen's framework (2006), and van

Leeuwen's model (2006) to the selected posters. The results of the study reveal strong resemblance between the Western-made posters and their Egyptian replicas. Although there are blind copied Egyptian posters, there are also authentic and creative copies which are localized and domesticized to suit Egyptian spectators and their culture.

Key Words: *Adaptation, Posters, Movie Posters, Multimodality*

الاقتباس السينمائي في مجال اللغويات: دراسة تحليلية متعددة الوسائط

ملخص البحث

يهدف البحث إلى التعرف على دور النهج السيميائي متعدد الوسائط كاتجاه للدراسات اللغوية في تحليل ملصقات الأفلام. وفحص ملصق الفيلم يتضمن فكاً ترميز الموارد متعددة الوسائط المعقدة؛ وتفاعل النص مع الأدوات السيميائية المستخدمة في الملصق لتوليد المعنى. إنتشرت ظاهرة تلوين الأفلام الأمريكية بالروح المصرية من هوليوود لتبدو "مصرية"، وتُعرف هذه الظاهرة في مصر باسم "الاقتباس" أو "التمصير". وتميل الدراسة أيضاً إلى إظهار قابلية تطبيق نهج الوسائط المتعددة في استكشاف أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين الملصقات المصرية المعدلة والنسخ الإنجليزية الأصلية من وجهة نظر لغوية. طبقت هذه الدراسة نموذجاً مختاراً متعدد الوسائط حيث انتقى الباحث منهج العالمان اللغويان كريس و فان لويين (2006) للوسائط المتعددة في كتابهم: "قراءة الصور: القواعد النحوية للتصميم المرئي". بالإضافة أيضاً إلى ذلك قام الباحث بانتقاء نموذج فان لويين "نحو سيميائية للطباعة (2006)". قام الباحث بدمج النموذجان لتقديم نموذج انتقائي لفحص تفاعل مختلف أنماط الاتصال (الصورة واللون والطباعة) في ملصقات

الأفلام لتحقيق تحليل شامل للملصقات العربية ونسخها الأصلية و استخراج أوجه التشابه و الاختلاف بينهما.

1. Introduction

Linguistic studies make a shift to investigate non-verbal means of communication and scrutinize interaction between them. Multimodality is the process of meaning-making through the interaction of "a multiplicity of modes such as image, gesture, posture, gaze, action, music, color, 3D objects, alongside speech and writing" (Wong, 2019, p.2). One of the most significant multimodal communication means used in this information age is advertising (Fill, 2009. P.47). Advertising is a way of communicating information about products or facilities which a company or an individual wants to market to the public. Advertisements are conveyed through words, images, music, and actions in a medium which is used by the prospective buyers (Vilanilam & Varghese, 2004, p.4). As a type of print advertisement, a movie poster is composed of a mixture of semiotic resources; it includes an image or a scene from the movie, title of the movie, names of movie's heroes, and production company or director's name and the date of publication (Aisala, 2018, p.6). The chief target of a movie poster is to attract many viewers into the movie theatre (Fagerholm, 2009, p.6).

2. Research Problem

This study is an attempt to investigate multimodal nature of Western movie posters and their Egyptian copy. The process of cultural borrowing, importing, translating or adapting foreign scripts is problematic in Egyptian (and to a large extent in Arab) cinema. This raises the question of creativity and authenticity in the Egyptian film industry. So, a comparison between English poster and its Egyptian replica is crucial to investigate the phenomena of adaptation. The problem lies also on clarifying the ability of multimodality, as a linguistic interdisciplinary approach, to unearth visual messages of movie posters.

3. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate the role of multimodal semiotic approach, as trend of linguistic studies, in analyzing images (movie posters). The study also tends to show the applicability of multimodality in exploring the similarities and differences between multiple adapted Egyptian posters and their original English copies from a linguistic point of view. It also examines, linguistically, whether or not the poster of adapted movie is a replica or a blind copy of the original one. Further, the study illuminates how the amalgamation of Systemic Functional multimodal discourse analysis of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) and van Leeuwen's "Semiotics of Typography" model (2006) is a comprehensive effective model for identifying cultural

dialogue between Egyptian cinema and Hollywood from a linguistic pattern.

4. Research Questions

- 1- To what extent is multimodal analysis applicable to examining and identifying similarities and differences between the original English posters and their Egyptian copies?
- 2- Are the changes made in the Egyptian adapted posters authentic and significant to show cultural differences between the original and the replica?
- 3- To what extent can modifications of graphic elements in the English poster (in the Arabic copy) successfully convey the intended content of the Arabic movies?
- 4- What are the most common multimodal tools used in the Egyptian adaptation process?

5. Research Methodology

In this study an English movie poster (*Monster-in-Law*) and its Arabic replica (*Game Over*) are investigated from a multimodal perspective. The posters are available online on elcinema.com and internet movie database, two online databases that provide information about English and Arabic movies.

To fulfil the objectives of the research, this study applies a multimodal model based on Kress and van

Leeuwen's (2006) approaches to multimodality in their work: *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2006). In addition, the model adopted in this study is also based on van Leeuwen's framework in his seminal work: *Towards a Semiotics of Typography* (2006). This model is used to scrutinize titles of movies. The two models are handled to give an eclectic model for examining the interaction of diverse modes of communication (image, color, and typography) in movie posters.

5.1. **Kress and van Leeuwen's Grammar of Images (2006)**

- 1. Representational Meta-function:** The representational meta-function signifies objects and their relations with people, places and things in visuals through two essential processes: narrative process and conceptual process.

Narrative Processes

Narrative process is characterized and distinguished by the presence of 'vector'. Vector is "a line, often diagonal, that connects participants, for instance an arrow connecting boxes in a diagram" (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 141).

Conceptual Process

Unlike narrative representations which focus on action and reactions between RPs, the conceptual pattern does not include action or reaction between participants. Otherwise,

the conceptual pattern represents participants "as what they are rather than what they do" (Vare, 2014, p.12).

2. Interactional Meta-function: Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) use the term 'interactional meta-function' in order to establish a kind of imaginary relationship between participants in images. This meta-function utilizes the relationships between represented participants and interactive participants (Li, 2016).

- **Contact:** Contact (as an imaginary relation between RPs and IPs) is established through gaze direction or eye line of the RPs in relation to the viewers (Jewitt& Oyama, 2001, p. 145). Contact entails either '*Direct address*' or '*Indirect address*'
- **Social Distance/ Size of Frame:** The viewer can notice the RPs from Close-up shot, Medium shot, or Long shot (Jewitt& Oyama, 2001, p. 146). Furthermore, the viewer can notice the Represented Participants from different distances /positions: Close Personal Distance, Far Personal Distance, Close Social Distance, Far Social Distance, or Public Distance (Kress& van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 124-125).
- **Perspectives /Attitude**

Kress and van Leeuwen discuss the system of perspectives in visual resources to articulate an 'attitude' or 'point of view' towards represented participants (RPs). This

includes a horizontal angle which implies the relation between image-producer and RPs in the frontal plane (Kress& van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 134), and vertical angles which denotes power of Rps.

3. Compositional Meta-function

According to Kress and van Leeuwen, compositional metafunction connects the representational and interactional meanings of image to each other and makes all elements of an image into a meaningful integration (Thompson & Bowen, 2009, p. 23). According to Kress and van Leeuwen, compositional metafunction connects the representational and interactional meanings of image to each other and makes all elements of an image into a meaningful integration through three interrelated system: information value, salience, and framing.

4. Modality

Modality is "the social semiotic things as though they truly exist in this way or as though they are imaginary (Kress& van Leeuwen, 2006, p.156). Kress and van Leeuwen indicate that visual modality can be expressed through the following markers: colour variation, Contextualization, Representation, Brightness, Illumination, and Depth.

5. Colour

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identify six features of the grammar of colour as follows:

- **Value:** the scale from maximally white to maximally black
- **Saturation:** the scale from most saturated colors to full de-saturation.
- **Purity:** the scale that runs from maximum 'purity' to maximum 'Hybridity'
- **Modulation:** the scale that runs from modulated to flat colours.
- **Differentiation:** the scale that runs from monochrome to varied colours
- **Hue:** the symbolic association of the color itself; what each color denotes or refers to (Machin, 2010, p.63- 67).

6. Typography

Typography is "the art and technique of arranging type to make language visible" (Serafini, 2012, p.4). Typography influences reader's reaction to advertising material. Moreover, typography expresses sufficient meanings beyond its language encoding function; it gives

meaning a semiotic code. That is to say that typography is multimodal; it is not only about letter forms, but also about other semiotic means like color, texture, and movement (van Leeuwen, 2006, p.144). Van Leeuwen (2006) outlines seven multimodal features to letterforms: Weight, Expansion, Slope, Curvature, Connectivity, Orientation, Regularity (van Leeuwen, 2006, p.149).

7. Analysis

The analysis is conducted in three fundamental phases. The first deals with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) three Meta-Functions: representational, interactional, and compositional. The second phase deals with how colours are functioned in the posters from a semiotic perspective. The final phase deals with typographic means according to van Leeuwen's (2006) conceptualization of semiotics of typography.



Fig 1: Production Information of *Monster in Law* and *Game Over*

Adapted from elcinma.com and from IMDb.com. Retrieved Dec 22, 2019 from <https://elcinema.com/en/work/2006333> & <https://elcinema.com/en/work/2005231/> and from https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0369735/?ref=fn_al_tt_1

7.1. Representational Meta-function

--Narrative process

The English poster consists of three RPs: two females and a male ([Charlie](#), Viola, and Kevin). The poster depicts **two actional processes** and **one reactional process**. The first action process is depicted by Viola, the mother, as she holds a shattered picture of the couple: Kevin and Charlie. In this



actional process Viola is the actor, and the young couple is the goal. The second action process is depicted by the young lady, Charlie, who holds the shoulder of Kevin by her hand to avoid Viola's struggle to break their love. Here, Charlie is the actor and her beloved Kevin is the goal; she struggles with his mother in order not to separate them. The reactional process is formed by Kevin; he directs his eye line towards his beloved Charlie although his mother tries to split up them.



Here, Kevin is the reactor, and Charlie is the phenomenon. This reactional process denotes his intention to marry his beloved Charlie despite his mother's rejection.

Concerning the Arabic poster, it also consists of three RPs: two females and a male (Nada, Liqa, and Amr). The three RPs portray **three non-transactional reactional processes**. Liqa and the couple stand near each other and their eye lines form vectors as they are looking at the viewers intently. Here, Liqa and the couple are the three reactors with no phenomena presented. The reactional process is made salient to disclose the relationship between the three RPs.



Circumstances

The English and the Arabic posters suggest **circumstances of accompaniment**; it is a relation between

mother-in-law, her son, and his future wife. In The English poster, the title informs allegorically that Viola is the mother of Kevin, and mother-in-law of Charlie. As it is apparent in the English poster, the mother tries to disperse the couple. In the Arabic poster, the son stands between his mother, Liqa, and his beloved Nada. The two female's severe look indicates that they carry deceitful feeling to each other. It seems that there is a type of challenge between them; who will win?

--Conceptual process



In English poster, a **classifictional process** is apparent through depicting the three RPs related to each other in terms of taxonomy; the mother, Viola, is the superordinate, and the couple is the subordinate. Viola appears on the top of the couple and holds a shattered photo of them. Against the white background, Kevin and Charlie are almost positioned at a symmetrical composition with equal distance from each other, thus the proposed equivalence between the subordinates is visually realized. Classifictional process provides abundant information about the couple; they are in love, but they face troubles to achieve their marriage.

The classifictional process in the Arabic poster portrays the three RPs in taxonomic posture; Liqa and Viola appear in the foreground putting their hands beside their waists and look sharply with intent eyes. On the other hand,

Amr stands confidently between them in the background with cheerful face. Here, Liqa and Nada are the superordinate, while Amr is the subordinate. They appear as a team in a game or chase with two poles: Liqa and Nada. Classifictional process denotes the confusion of Amr from the oppositions and tricks of his beloved Nada and his mother Liqa.

7.2. Interactional Meta-function

--Contact

In the English poster, the eye line of Charlie and Viola is directed to the viewers. This **direct address** entails a symbolic demand; it seems as if they drag the viewers to come closer to their world of conflict. They struggle with each other to achieve a specific target. Viola wants her son to marry an ideal girl from her own viewpoint; she appears with firm and rigid facial expression to expose her power ability to separate between the young couple. Her mouth is tightened, her eyebrow is raised, and her lids are tightened. On the other hand, the young lady, Charlie, seems careless and unsympathetic to her mother-in-law's plot. She seems happy; her face is warm and relaxed, the corners of her lips are drawn back, and her mouth is parted and her teeth are exposed. She smiles to the viewers with confidence to deliver the sense that she will win at the end and get married to her beloved. Besides, Kevin does not look to the viewers, rather he looks to Charlie. This **indirect address** denotes an act of offer which



provides information to the viewers that Kevin is in love with Charlie and that he does not care about his mother's opposition.

Regarding the Arabic poster, the three RPs look to the viewers directly; this **direct address** connotes a symbolic demand which establishes the relation of direct intercourse between Nada, Liqa, Amr, and the viewers. They ask the viewers to enter their game which shows the conflict between Nada and Liqa. The two females look to the viewers with sharp eyes; they appear with angry and disgusted facial features. Liqa seems irritated and wrath; her frown eyelids become narrowed, her lips are tight and in straight lines. It is the same with Nada who looks with challenging eye to the viewers. Conversely, Amr look to the viewers cheerfully with smiling face; his cheeks are raised, his mouth is parted, and the corners of lips are drawn back and up.



--Size Frame and Social Distance

In the English poster, the three RPs are depicted from a **close-up shot** which shows heads of Charlie and Viola, as well as the head plus shoulders of Kevin. This close shot up connotes a **close intimate personal distance** between the three RPs and denotes their close personal relationship; Viola is Kevin's mother and Charlie's mother-in-law. Charlie and Kevin appear beside each other; Charlie holds Kevin's shoulder to signify their intimate love relationship.

Unlike the English poster, the three RPs in the Arabic poster are depicted from a **long shot** which shows the whole body of them; they occupy nearly all the poster's height. The two females appear in a **close**



personal distance with Amr; they are stuck to his shoulders. Close personal distance denotes the intimate relationship between them. However, there is a **far personal distance** between the mother and the girl which connotes the struggle between them.

--Perspective

Horizontally, in the English poster Viola and Charlie appear from a **frontal angle** which connotes involvement with the viewers. The struggle between the mother and the young lady (the beloved of Kevin) is part of the viewers' world and is known to them (struggle between mother-in-law and son-in-law). However, Kevin appears from an **oblique angle** which denotes his detachment; he is out of the struggle between his mother and his beloved girl. Regarding the Arabic poster, all the RPs are depicted from a **frontal angle** to signify involvement with the viewers. Liqa, Nada, and Amr come face to face with the viewers to engage them in their world.

Vertically, in the English poster, the RPs are portrayed from **eye-level angle** in which the viewers confront them straight. This angle denotes that there is no power discrepancies between



them and the viewers. However, the power discrepancy between the three RPs highlights the fact that the young couple are under the domination of the mother; she holds their picture which seems shattered by her hand. Regarding Arabic poster, the three RPs are depicted from a **low angle** which shows power and superiority of Liqa, Nada, and Amr. Liqa tries to prevent the marriage of her son Amr from his beloved girl, and Nada struggles for victory and achieves her goal and gets married to her beloved despite the objection of his mother. Their power and confidence is portrayed through low angle and through their posture. Amr stands with open posture and puts his hand in his pocket to denote his friendliness, openness, and dominance. On the other hand, Liqa and Nada appear with close posture and put their hands beside their waists to denote hostility, unfriendliness, and [anxiety](#).

7.3. Compositional Meta-function

--Information value

In the English poster, the mother, Viola and the red word 'Monster' appears in the centre of the poster; this denotes that Viola is the nucleus of events as she acts as a



monster trying all the time to prevent the couple's marriage. Left-right value is used through depicting Kevin in the left side (Given) and Charlie in the right side (New). This connotes that there is something about Charlie not yet Known to the viewers. Finally, the name of the actress appears in the top (ideal) to give general information about the heroines of the movie. Finally, the title appears on the bottom to specify the movie's name.



Like Charlie, Nada in the Arabic poster appears in the right side as the (New) to denote that she is the problematic issue of the movie; she is Amr's beloved and Liqa's rival. Unlike the English poster, the mother Liqa appears in the left side (Given) as if her anger and hatred is clear to the viewers. Amr appears here in the centre of the poster; he stands between his mother and his beloved. Wearing white officer's suit; Amr represents the nucleus of events as he stands between the two poles.



--Salience

In the English poster, the sharpness of focus is on the fragmented image of the young beloved couples. Against the white background, the couples are foregrounded with green background to differentiate between them and the mother in the background. Moreover, the word '**MONSTER**' is the most prominent part of the title; unlike other linguistic elements of the title, it appears in red with a large size to attract the viewers' attention. Regarding the

Arabic poster, the two female characters, Liqa and Nada, are more prominent than Amr. They are foregrounded and intently depicted near to the viewers. Moreover, the word 'GAME' is also more prominent than other elements of the title as the orange colour appears merely in this word to catch the viewers' eye to the idea that it is a chase between the girl and her mother-in-law.

--Framing

In the English poster, Viola acts as a dividing line between the beloved couple. Viola holds the image of the couple but she cuts it into two shattered parts. This denotes Viola's desperate efforts to detach her son from marrying his beloved Charlie. However, to form a harmonious integrated visual composition and to highlight the strong relation between the two lovers, Kevin is depicted as looking to his beloved Viola with cheerfulness; he does not look to the viewers. Besides, although the top of the image seems carved, Viola depicts a sort of love scene through holding Kevin's shoulder to denote that the mother could not prevent them from getting married.



In the Arabic poster, Amr is the dividing line between the two quarrels: Liqa and Nada. Amr stands between the two poles of the game or the quarrel. His dividing line between them denotes that he does not like to lose his mother and his beloved, so he tries to approximate

their points of view. However, the divided two females are linked through depicting the same vector to the viewers.

7.4. Modality

In the English poster, modality makers are used with different degrees. Firstly, colour variation is used with a high degree through the use of different colours in the poster rather than monochrome. Secondly, the poster depicts reduced context through the absence of background behind Viola. However, zero background makes the image of the young couple more prominent. Thirdly, the poster is highly illuminated and bright; this supports the real situation of struggle and quarrel between the heroines. Fourthly, the poster portrays full representation of details through depicting the three RPs with different feelings which is apparent on their faces. Finally, no depth is shown.

Regarding the Arabic poster, modality makers are also used with dissimilar degrees. Firstly, the poster achieves colour variation through depicting diverse colours although the white colour occupies a large space of the poster. Secondly, like the English poster, the Arabic poster is specified by absence of background; abstract background is used to sharpen the focus on the heroines and movie title. Thirdly, the poster depicts a maximum representation of details. Fourthly, the poster does not show any representation of depth. Finally, the poster is highly illuminated through the use of white shades in almost all the poster.

7.5. Colour and Its Connotation

In the English poster, high colour value appears clearly through adding white shades to hues. The poster depicts fully saturated colours like green, blue, and red which add vitality to the poster. The poster achieves the maximum of purity and colour modulation through depicting for instance blonde hair and facial features. Colour differentiation plays a vital role in presenting the two poles of the movie; the mother who appears in a white background, and the young couple who appear in greenish background. The following diagram explains the connotations to poster's hue:

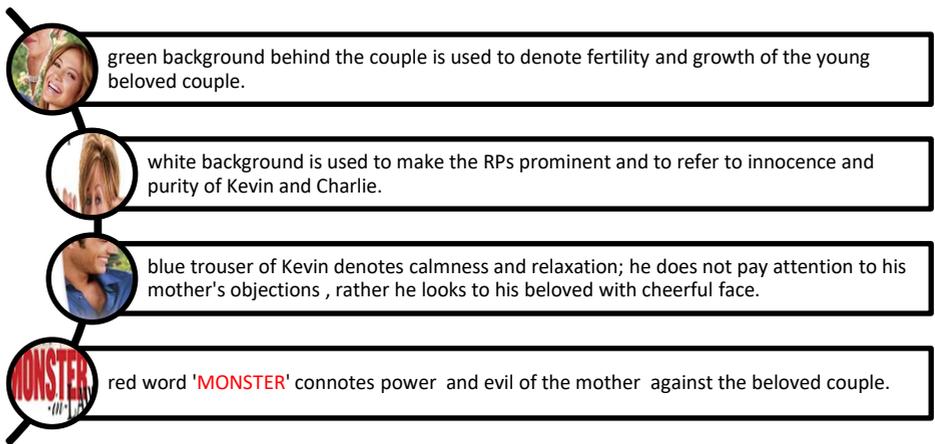


Fig 1: Colour Connotation in Monster in Law

Concerning the Arabic poster, high value colour is used through dominating white colour in almost all the poster. The background and Amr are coloured white to make the two heroines more prominent. The poster is characterized by lightness of colour; this denotes vitality and activity (struggle between the mother and beloved girl

for marrying the son). However, low colour saturation is apparent in the poster through using white and black in nearly half of the poster. Pink and orange are used in Nada's dress and orange appears in title to make these elements more salient to viewers. Colour differentiation is apparent through using more than one colour like white, black, pink and orange. Modulated colours are used to depict the heroines, their shapes, their hair, clothes, and their bodies.

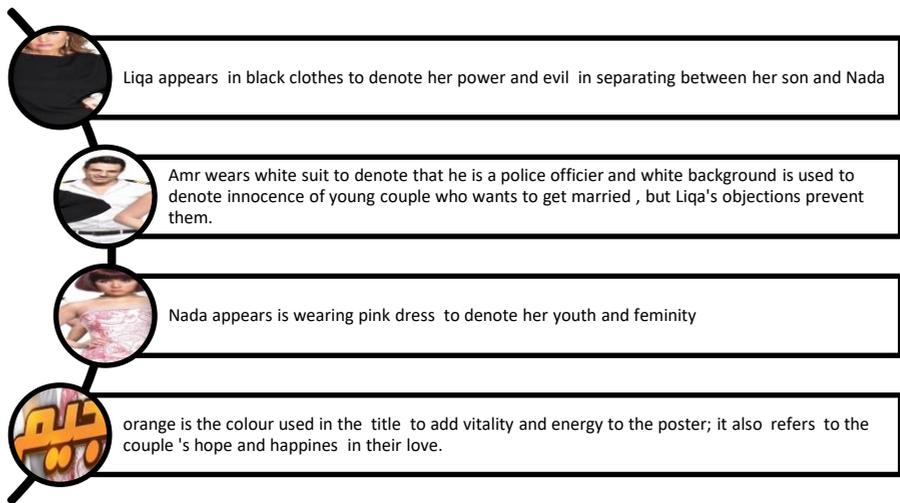


Fig 2: Color connotation in *Game Over*

7.6. Typography

Grammatically, the title of the English poster is composed of a noun phrase (monster-in-law). The word 'monster' replaces the word 'mother' (mother-in-law; the mother of one's husband or wife) to depict her evil acts to break up the lover's relationship. Typographically, the

word '**MONSTER**' is depicted in thick, bold, regular, and connected typeface; it negatively refers to the domineering mother. It is also noticeable that the word '**MONSTER**' is written in capital letters, red colours, and large size in order to attract the viewers attention to the real situation and the conflict in the movie; Viola is not a mother, rather she is a '**MONSTER**'. Red bold typeface is expressive to intensify importance of the word in reflecting the actions of the movie and to increase the word's salience to the viewers. The rest of the word (**in LAW**), in contrast, appears in smaller size and in different colour (black). The names of the two female stars are depicted in front of each other with thin, regular condensed font. The first name of each star is written smaller font than the second name which appear in black, capital, and loose typeface.

The title of the Arabic poster is composed of a noun (game) followed by an adverbial (Over); the phrase *game over* used to indicate that a game has ended because one of the players has lost. The title figuratively depicts the struggle between the mother and the girl over the marriage of the son as a game and denotes the fail of Liqa to separate the two lovers. One of the poles of the game must win at last; either the girl achieves her dream and gets married to her beloved or the mother corrupts the marriage. The title appears in three dimensional thick fonts which are assertive to the story of the movie; it is a game. The title also appears in soft, horizontal, regular and connected letterforms the first word (Game) appears in orange colour to be more

salient to the viewers and the word (over) appears in white font. The mixture of colours catch the eyes to the title.

8. Discussion

To establish parallelism between the two posters, it is noticeable that the English poster depicts the idea of the movie sharper than the Arabic poster. On one hand, the English poster depicts a middle-aged woman cutting a portrait of young couple and holds it with her hands to show her power to separate young couple. On the other hand, the Arabic poster depicts two foregrounded females and a male wearing white officer's suit standing between them. However, the two females deliver their challenge to the viewers through their sharp gazes and body posture. Furthermore, the title of the two movies delivers the movie's plot with different reflections.

The English poster uses the phrase *Monster-in-Law* to deliver to the viewers two important pieces of information. The first one is that Viola is the mother of Kevin and will be mother-in-law of Charlie. The second notion is that Viola acts as a monster in the movie; she resorts to evil tricks to fail the marriage. On the other hand, the title of the Arabic poster delivers the idea as being a game between the two females in the foreground and one of them will win at the end. The English and the Arabic posters are alike in using reactional processes, circumstances, classifictional process, frontal angle, dividing frames, white background, absence of depth, direct address, and in the number of the RPs.

However, the two posters are different in using vertical angle and camera shots. While RPs in the English poster appear from close shot and Eye level angle, RPs in Arabic poster appear from long shot and low angle. Unlike the Arabic poster, The English poster uses oblique angle and indirect address.

9. Conclusion

The makers of Egyptian movie posters try to design a creative new localized copy by adding new signals dissimilar to the English poster to deliver the inspired idea successfully and to avoid blind copying. In the Arabic poster *Game Over*, the son stands between his mother and his beloved girl; the posters informs that he is an officer. On the other hand, English poster *Monster in Law* delivers the idea through focusing on the mother cutting or abducting the young couple (she is a monster not a mother).

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