



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism***SDL Trados live cloud vs. traditional subtitling workflows: An empirical evaluation of performance**Ahmad S Haider¹ , Mohammed M. Obeidat², Yousef Hamdan¹, Hussein Abu-Rayyash³ & Omair AlZghoul¹¹Department of English Language and Translation, Applied Science Private University, Amman, Jordan²Translation Department, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan³Kent State University, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Modern and Classical Language Studies, Kent, Ohio, USA*Correspondence: a_haidar@asu.edu.jo**ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the impact of using SDL Trados live cloud on the performance of MA translation students, providing some pedagogical implications for translation programs that employ this technology. For this purpose, 60 MA candidates in Audiovisual and Mass Media Translation were recruited and divided into two groups, each made up of 30 students: Group A (the experimental group), and Group B (the control group). The experimental group received their training using the SDL Trados live cloud, where they used a large parallel corpus of English and Arabic movies, while the control group got their training using conventional methods of instruction. The two groups were trained by the same instructor to ensure consistency. A Pre-test and a post-test were administered to check the participants' improvement after receiving the training. The analysis showed that the translation skills of the members of the two groups improved, yet Group A (the experimental group) achieved more statistically significant progress than its counterpart (the control group). The improvement covered different areas that include style and flow, cohesion and coherence, use of specialised terminology, accuracy, consistency, synchronization, and naturalness. The study concludes that training with SDL Live Cloud has had a transformative impact on students' proficiency in audiovisual translation and that cloud translation environments should be integrated into translation education programs.

KEYWORDS: audiovisual translation, computer-assisted translation, cloud, SDL Trados, subtitling, translation memory, translation pedagogy, performance evaluation

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Introduction

Language has long been a focal point of academic inquiry, and many scholars have investigated issues related to its nature, functions, and impact on society (Ammari & Al-Ahmad, 2023; Fraihat, 2024; Ja'afreh, 2023; Meqdad, Al-Bayyari, & Al-Taher, 2023; Naib, 2025). Translation is defined as the transfer of meaning and style from one language or variety to another to ease communication between individuals and communities that speak different languages (Farghal, 2020; Farghal & Kalakh, 2019). Audiovisual Translation (AVT) is a growing, diversified, and contemporary type of translation that is gaining popularity due to the huge number of audiovisual products. AVT refers to translation modes that are utilized to render multimedia works (Gamal, 2007; Pedersen, 2010). AVT is a discipline that encompasses more than a linguistic transfer of audiovisual products, as nonverbal aspects are involved, making it a multi-semiotic translation.

AVT has piqued the interest of media companies and academic researchers due to the fertile environment it provides to keep pace with the technological revolutions of the twenty-first century (Haider & Shohaibar, 2024; Hassan & Haider, 2024; Saed et al., 2024a; Saed, Haider, & Tair, 2023; Saed et al., 2024b; Shuhaiber & Haider, 2023). AVT modes are the technical means by which the audiovisual material is transferred to the target language. Cabrera and Bartolomé (2005) listed seventeen modes of audiovisual translation, including dubbing, subtitling, voiceover, and free commentary, to mention a few.

Subtitling is the most extensively researched type of audiovisual translation, followed by dubbing (Al-Darabee & Farghal, 2025; Al-Qudah, 2022; Odeh & Farghal, 2024; Silwadi & Almahasees, 2022). Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014) classified subtitles based on the linguistic dimension into three types, namely, intralingual, interlingual, and bilingual. The focus of this study is on the second type, which entails translation from a source language to a target language. Subtitles could be interlingual, where the source text is translated into another language (Saed et al., 2025; Yassin, Jaradat, & Haider, 2025) or intralingual when the target language (TL) and the SL are the same (Al-Abbas, Haider, & Saideen, 2022; Ghassan & Haider, 2025; Haider & Hussein, 2022). This study aims to present a parallel corpus of English movie scripts and their Arabic subtitles.

This study contributes to the growing body of studies that have examined the translation of audiovisual material, such as movies, by presenting a large English-Arabic parallel corpus of movie subtitles. Since the emergence of AVT, several scholars have conducted different research on the challenges subtitlers face when translating English movies into Arabic and the translation strategies they use to overcome these challenges (Abdelaal, 2019; Al-Jabri, 2017; Haider, Saideen, & Hussein, 2023; Obeidat, 2023). However, most of these studies were carried out on a relatively small amount of data. Therefore, one of the research gaps this study intends to fill is providing scholars with a large cloud-based corpus of Arabic subtitles of English movies. Working on a large amount of data is worthwhile as it highlights the different strategies used in subtitling English movies into Arabic. This increases objectivity and protects researchers from cherry-picking the examples that suit their pre-existing hypotheses, as one strategy is overused or underused by a subtitler. The SDL language cloud of English-Arabic subtitles is likely to help translators and translation students achieve translation tasks in relatively shorter periods of time when compared with the traditional method (Al-Hammar, 2020).

Integrating bilingual corpora and cloud-based translation memory, SDL Live Cloud offers a potentially promising solution in subtitling practice. The immediate access to parallel texts in English and Arabic enhances the accuracy, consistency, and stylistic fluidity of their products. It also simulates professional translation settings and conditions that students are likely to experience outside the classroom. However, despite these benefits, such programs remain underexplored, with limited empirical evidence of their teaching effectiveness. Further research is needed to assess whether their impact justifies wider adoption. This study therefore seeks to address the following research question.

Does SDL Live Cloud–assisted training improve subtitle translation compared to conventional methods?

Parallel Corpora

A corpus is an extensive collection of authentic texts that can be read and manipulated by computers (McEnery & Wilson, 2001). The corpus of the current study can be described as specialized, as it contains movie subtitles, parallel, as it contains the same texts in two languages, English and Arabic, and monitor, as new movies can be added to it in the future. The process of compiling a large parallel corpus of subtitles is daunting and time-consuming, as the English source script and the Arabic target subtitles should be extracted and then aligned

(Abu-Rayyash, Haider, & Al-Adwan, 2023; Abu Rayyash & Haider, 2022). Nevertheless, recent years have witnessed a growing interest by academics, researchers, universities, and research institutes in creating several parallel corpora in different languages. However, only a few included Arabic texts.

AVT has aroused the interest of several scholars, being a fertile environment for those interested in examining how the linguistic and non-linguistic components of AV products are transmitted to the audience (Ahmad, Hammo, & Yagi, 2017; Al-Ajmi, 2004; Alotaibi, 2017; Haider, Alzghoul, & Hamadan, 2023). Combining corpus linguistics and AVT is not a common practice despite its potential benefits for research, and this is why different parallel corpora of AV materials should be compiled, taking into account the different modes of AVT. The corpus of the current study, namely SDL cloud of English-Arabic movie subtitles, is of great value because it is among the first corpora that include audiovisual materials in English and Arabic. It includes different movie genres. This allows researchers to compare the translation strategies used in different genres.

The data for this research was built on a corpus of subtitles extracted from Netflix. This corpus offers valuable datasets for AVT researchers and translator training. Kübler, Mestivier, and Pecman (2018) observed that parallel corpora increase the quality of translation. . Cheng (2023) pointed out that they are useful for enhancing accuracy, lexical choices, and grammar, while Cheng (2022) argued that corpus use may enhance the motivation of students and improve translation performance.

Methodology

Study Sample and Ethics Approval

The sample of the current research included sixty students attending an AVT master's program during the academic year 2024–2025. The sample was divided into an experimental group, A, and a control group, B, consisting of 30 students each with a similar gender distribution. Group A had been trained during this period using the SDL Live Cloud. This practical training involved accessing parallel English-Arabic corpora that presented translations relevant to the field of AVT. Control group subjects depended on traditional ways of translation practice, using offline texts and textbooks in translation classes, along with printed reference materials. They were allowed to refer to public electronic resources such as Binary dictionaries, available terminology, and audiovisual translation guidelines, but they were not able to take advantage of the SDL Live Cloud platform or cloud translation memory tools. Thus, the training of this group remained based on traditional dubbing and subtitling practices without any cloud support.

Both groups were taught by the same professor, who has over ten years of experience in translation and audiovisual translation pedagogy, ensuring consistency of teaching and evaluation. This study was conducted in full compliance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of The Applied Science Private University, Jordan (Approval No. FOAH 3/2024, dated 17/01/2024). All participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study and were assured that their responses would remain completely confidential and anonymized.

Study Design

This study set out to evaluate cloud-assisted subtitle corpus training as a pedagogical tool in translator training. This was pursued through the application of a pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design. This design allowed for the evaluation of the quality of the translations of the two groups as well as the measurement of their improvement. Through comparisons of quality and improvement levels, the study could determine the effectiveness of this method in relativity to conventional methods.

The pre-test gave insight into the initial level of the students' translation skills. After this test, the students received the training that aligned with their group. In other terms, Group A was trained with the SDL Live Cloud platform while Group B was trained with conventional methods, which allowed the use of printed materials, offline texts, and publicly available electronic resources.

To check the progress of the two groups, they took a post test that has similar composition to the pre-test, with a focus on 6 main areas, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1. Subtitling performance criteria

No.	Construct	Explanation
1	Accuracy of Translation	Fidelity to the source text; no mistranslation, omission, or distortion of meaning, including idioms and cultural references
2	Use of Specialized Terminology	Correct and consistent use of domain-specific terms; avoidance of literal or inappropriate term choices
3	Readability and Naturalness	Clarity, grammatical correctness, and idiomatic style; subtitles should be easy to read and understand quickly
4	Style and Flow	Preservation of tone and register; consistent stylistic choices; natural flow, matching dialogue rhythm and audiovisual context
5	Conciseness and Space Constraints	Respecting subtitle length conventions, such as characters per line, appropriate condensation, and ensuring subtitles fit on screen without loss of meaning
6	Cohesion and Consistency	Consistent terminology, names, and phrasing; logical progression and smooth flow across subtitles

Each construct was assessed using a five-point Likert scale (1 = very poor, 5 = excellent).

To ensure consistency in evaluation, four AVT experts independently assessed all student outputs. Interrater reliability was later analyzed using Cohen's Kappa to confirm the robustness of the assessment.

Data Analysis Approaches

This study relied on two basic comparisons in order to measure the impact of training. The first was a comparison of the results of the pre-test with the post-test within each group, in order to measure the amount of improvement in performance at the level of the same group over time. The second comparison was between the performance of the experimental group and the performance of the control group after the end of the intervention, with the aim of evaluating the effectiveness of training using the SDL Live Cloud platform compared to the traditional methods used in translation. Data were analyzed statistically through the t-test for correlated samples to measure the differences within the same group between the pre- and post-test tests, and the t-test for independent samples to measure the differences between the two groups.

Analysis and Findings

In this section, the findings of the study are presented in two subsections as the analysis was structured in two complementary directions. The first subsection focused on comparing the results of the pre-test and post-test in the two groups together in order to determine the level of improvement achieved after the intervention. The second subsection focused on analyzing the improvement in light of the six structures: Accuracy of Translation, Use of Specialized Terminology, Readability and Naturalness, Style and Flow, Conciseness and Space Constraints, and Cohesion and Consistency.

Pre-Test vs. Post-Test Comparison Analysis

In order to assess the impact of SDL Live Cloud-based training on students' performance, both the experimental group and the control group underwent a pre-intervention test and then a post-test after the training period. The t-test for correlated samples was used to measure the magnitude of improvement within each group, while the independent sample t-test was used to compare the results of the two groups after the training was completed, with the aim of detecting how effective the cloud environment was in developing translation skills compared to traditional methods.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and results of the paired-sample t-tests conducted to measure the improvement in subtitling performance within each group between the pre-test and post-test.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Paired Sample T-Test

Group	Test	M (SE)	SD	Mean Difference	T value
Control Group	Pre-Test	67.2 (.19)	1.02	-8.3 (.07)	-4.65**
	Post-Test	75.5 (.18)	0.99		
Experimental Group	Pre-Test	68.5 (.18)	0.98	-15.0 (.06)	-9.37***
	Post-Test	83.5 (.17)	0.97		

*SE = Standard Error**SD = Standard Deviation****p < 0.01*****p < 0.001*

Table 2 shows that there is a significant improvement in the subtitling performance of the two groups. The control group's mean rose from 67.2 (SE = 0.19, SD = 1.02) to 75.5 (SE = 0.18, SD = 0.99), an 8.3-point gain ($t = -4.65$, $p < 0.01$), indicating progress through traditional training and practice. The experimental group, trained with SDL Live Cloud, achieved far greater improvement—from 68.5 (SE = 0.18, SD = 0.98) to 83.5 (SE = 0.17, SD = 0.97)—a 15-point increase ($t = -9.37$, $p < 0.001$), nearly double that of the control group. These results underline the strong contribution of cloud-assisted training to enhancing accuracy, readability, and stylistic flow, leading to more precise and natural subtitles. An independent sample t-test further verified that post-test gains of the experimental group were significantly higher. This is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Independent Sample T-Test

Group	Mean (SE)	Mean Difference	T value
Control Group	75.5 (.13)	-8.0 (.22)	-3.39**
Experimental Group	83.5 (.12)		

**(SE = Standard Error, *p < 0.01)*

Descriptive statistics (experimental = M 83.5, SE 0.12; control = M 75.5, SE 0.13) indicate a significantly higher mean for the experimental group than the control group in the post-test with an 8-point difference ($t = -3.39$, $p < 0.01$), which evidences that students trained on the SDL Live Cloud platform outperformed those who used conventional subtitling methods.

Such difference points to the effectiveness of the Live Cloud in developing the targeted competencies of accuracy, terminology use, stylistic flow, and compliance with the audiovisual constraints. The results of the t-test show that these gains cannot be attributed to chance but to structured influence of the cloud-based approach. On the whole, findings present that the integration of CAT tools into audiovisual translation training has clear pedagogical benefits and enhances the professional subtitling skills of students.

Analysis of Construct Improvement in the Experimental Group

The subtitling performance of Group A is analyzed using a one-way ANOVA of the effectiveness of using the SDL live cloud on the six main areas outlined above. This analysis gives some indications of the areas that were improved substantially. The means of pre-test and post-test, F values and the construct rank by progress can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Results of One-Way ANOVA Test for the Experimental Group

Construct	Test	M (SE)	Construct Rank by Progress	F value
Accuracy of Translation	Pre-Test	4.05 (.17)	3	4.258*
	Post-Test	4.70 (.16)		
Use of Specialized Terminology	Pre-Test	3.90 (.18)	2	5.012**
	Post-Test	4.75 (.15)		
Readability & Naturalness	Pre-Test	4.12 (.17)	4	3.887*
	Post-Test	4.62 (.17)		

Style and Flow	Pre-Test	3.85 (.18)	1	5.238**
	Post-Test	4.65 (.16)		
Conciseness & Space Constraints	Pre-Test	4.00 (.17)	5	3.942*
	Post-Test	4.55 (.15)		
Cohesion & Consistency	Pre-Test	4.08 (.18)	6	3.664*
	Post-Test	4.50 (.16)		

*(SE = Standard Error, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$)

Results show that SDL Live Cloud training produced significant gains across all six constructs. The largest improvement was in Style and Flow ($F = 5.238$, $p < 0.01$), with mean scores rising from 3.85 to 4.65, indicating better preservation of tone, register, and audiovisual rhythm. Use of Specialized Terminology followed ($F = 5.012$, $p < 0.01$), improving from 3.90 to 4.75 as students selected more precise, context-appropriate terms. Accuracy of Translation also advanced ($F = 4.258$, $p < 0.05$), from 4.05 to 4.70, reflecting greater fidelity to source meaning. Readability and Naturalness improved ($F = 3.887$, $p < 0.05$) from 4.12 to 4.62, showing smoother phrasing. Technical areas—Conciseness and Space Constraints ($F = 3.942$, $p < 0.05$) and Cohesion and Consistency ($F = 3.664$, $p < 0.05$)—also rose, reaching 4.55 and 4.50, respectively. Overall, the ANOVA confirmed significant progress, especially in stylistic and terminological dimensions, underscoring the pedagogical value of cloud-based subtitling environments.

Such live cloud technology used in the training of subtitlers has been found beneficial and effective in the research samples. The examples show significant improvements regarding the technical, linguistic, and stylistic aspects of the texts, besides having a kind of translation flow. The subjects in the experimental group maintained style, rhythm, and tone appropriate for audio-visual material compared to their counterparts in the control group. This could be because the subjects of the current study were trained using materials originally produced by professional subtitlers.

Another area of improvement was related to brevity and the subtitlers' respect for spatial and temporal constraints. In other words, group A managed the counts of characters in each subtitle and followed the rules related to the distribution of lines in each subtitle; where the meaning is fully conveyed without loss. This reflects that they mirrored the professional style present in the compiled parallel corpora used in the live cloud.

The improvement in the use of specialized terminology ranked third, where the candidates in the experimental group showed more awareness to the context and utilized accurate words. They also avoided lexical errors pertaining to literal translation. Another area of improvement which is similar to the previous category is related to translation accuracy and conveying the meaning and cultural specificities in an accurate way.

In fifth place was coherence and consistency. Group A students showed higher capabilities in standardization, especially when repetition of words and phrases was involved. This improved the coherence of their renditions. Furthermore, despite the significance of cohesion and coherence to the readability of texts, many inexperienced translators underestimate their importance. This training was able to reduce this issue amongst the students.

Finally, clarity and naturalness came in sixth place in terms of the amount of improvement. Despite the relatively lower degree of improvement, Group A students still managed to provide renditions that outperformed those of Group B when it came to idiomaticity and clarity. This indicates that this area requires additional training to overcome issues of literalness and stylistic errors.

The results relating to these constructs confirm the effectivity of SDL Live Cloud training and even indicate that it can surpass the outcomes of traditional training methods. Group A students were able to produce renditions with higher quality when it came to accuracy, specialized terminology, readability and naturalness, style and flow, conciseness, and cohesion. Thus, the results make an argument for the integration of cloud translation in translator training.

Conclusion

The current research investigates the effectiveness of SDL Trados live cloud as a pedagogical tool for translator training. For this purpose, the performance of an experimental and control group of MA candidates in Audiovisual and Mass Media Translation who undertook different types of training was measured. Each group contained 30 students and was trained by the same instructor. The experimental group trained with the SDL Trados live cloud while the control group relied on traditional methods. To measure their improvement the two groups took a pre and post test assessing their level before and after the training period. The results showed that while both groups improved, the advancement in the measured constructs was greater in the experimental group. Areas of improvement included style and flow, cohesion and coherence, use of specialised terminology, accuracy, consistency, synchronization, and naturalness. This study affirmed that cloud technologies like SDL Live Cloud are effective tools in translator training. Through the comparison of the progress made by the students in the experiment group and control group based on their performance in the pre and post tests it became clear that cloud training methods surpass traditional methods. The students subjected to the cloud training were able to improve in all six examined areas to an extent beyond that of their peers. These improvements align with Kübler et al. (2018).

The conclusion of this research therefore confirms that cloud technologies should be included in the training of translators, and it urges educational institutions to keep abreast of available technologies in order to achieve optimal results. The possibility of employing the potential of modern technology in the field of translation helps not only the students but also contributes to the qualitative improvement of the final product that reaches the recipient, which clearly reflects the growing contribution of digital technologies to raising the level of translation and making it effective in conveying meaning and culture between languages.

In light of the findings of this study on the impact of the use of cloud technologies, especially the SDL Live Cloud platform, on improving the performance of translation students in the field of audiovisual translation, there is a need to provide a set of recommendations that will enhance the effectiveness of the educational process and keep pace with the requirements of the labor market.

First, it is essential that universities and colleges that study translation review their academic programs to include an integrated technical training component that is as important as theoretical and linguistic aspects. The results of the research have proven that the integration of computer-aided translation tools and cloud translation tools directly contributes to the development of students' skills in accuracy, consistency, and stylistic fluidity, as well as providing them with practical experiences that make them more willing to engage in a professional work environment. Second, it is recommended that practical training workshops be provided for students, in which real working conditions in translation institutions and media companies are simulated. Third, cloud translation tools should be combined with academic research to enhance the production of accurate and reliable translated texts.

Fourth, the study recommends that faculty members themselves should be trained to use the latest cloud translation technologies, so that they are able to guide students towards best practices. Technical development in the field of translation is rapid and continuous, and if teachers are not aware of these developments, they will fail to pass on their expertise to students, which weakens the efficiency of academic programs.

Finally, the study suggests that educational institutions collaborate with global translation companies or software platforms that specialize in cloud translation to provide educational versions or discounted student licenses of professional programs. Such cooperation allows students the opportunity to engage with the same tools they will use in the future in the job market, boosting their self-confidence and reducing the gap between academic education and practice.

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