



An-Najah National University
Faculty of Graduate Studies

**A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF ARABIC
SUBTITLES OF SEMANTICALLY CHANGED
EXPRESSIONS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN
ENGLISH: AFRICAN AMERICAN MOVIES
AS A CASE STUDY**

By
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**This Thesis is Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Applied Linguistics and Translation, Faculty of Graduate Studies,
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This Thesis was defended successfully on 18/12/2025 and approved by:

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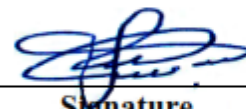
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Dedication

To every Black soul who rose, resisted and reached for freedom even when the world tried to chain their spirit.

To Malcolm X, Tupac and Muhammad Ali, whose fire still lights the path toward justice and dignity.

To every African American brother and sister who never got the chance, who lost their life trying to live, to hustle, to dream.

From one oppressed people to another, to every African American life that carries the weight and beauty of resilience, this work is dedicated with love, respect and unbreakable solidarity. You all Matter.

From a Palestinian woman who knows that endurance is its own form of faith.

Acknowledgements

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, whose mercy and guidance have been my light and strength throughout this journey. Without His blessings, none of this would have been possible.

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My heartfelt thanks go to my amazing parents, Qasem and Kefaya. Your love, prayers and sacrifices are the reason I have come this far. During these painful and uncertain times in Palestine, your strength and faith in me were the reason why I always carried on. You have shown me what it really means to stay strong, patient and hopeful no matter what the world throws my way.

To my brothers, Abdulqadir and Mohammad, thank you for always being there for me. Your support, laughter and encouragement have meant more than words can express. I could never ask for more.

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that I submitted the thesis entitled:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF ARABIC SUBTITLES OF SEMANTICALLY CHANGED EXPRESSIONS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH: AFRICAN AMERICAN MOVIES AS A CASE STUDY

I declare that the work provided in this thesis, unless otherwise referenced, is the researcher's own work, and has not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree or qualification.

Student's Name

Yara Qasem Ahmad Hassan

Signature:



Date:

18/12/2025

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Abstract

This evaluative and analytical study explores the semantic playfulness of African American English (AAE): how it is done, its purposes, and how it is mirrored through the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) subtitling of *Dope* (2015) and *All Day and a Night* (2020) on three platforms (Netflix, Shoof TV, and Apple TV). The application of semantic change and how African Americans apply it in its two forms, inversion and shifting, is examined, with instances classified and discussed according to the technique used in rendering them into MSA. The study investigates how these instances are subtitled, the extent to which the target text conveys the meaning embodied in the source text, and what can be done with mistranslated instances. Findings show that semantically changed instances are rendered through different techniques: rendering into a more neutral or less expressive expression (undertranslation), a stylistically elevated expression (overtranslation), a plain literal unintended meaning (misinterpretation), or complete omission. A fifth category demonstrates successful rendering through prioritizing the function and seeking a high-level equivalent. Undertranslation, stylistic elevation, and misinterpretation affect the source message on different levels, including markedness, accuracy, and informativity. In contrast, prioritizing function consistently achieves an appropriate degree of markedness and results in accurate and informative rendering. The study emphasizes that the most effective way to handle semantically changed instances is by addressing each individually, using one or a combination of translation techniques. Functionality should be prioritized and mirrored in MSA rather than the surface structure or semantic complexity of the source. Because standard languages are typically oriented toward explicitness and clarity, while non-standard spoken varieties rely on figurative, less straightforward language and semantic innovation, recreating semantic complexity is often unnecessary when a well-established lexicalized equivalent exists in MSA. In the interest of naturalness and clarity, sacrificing semantic complexity and selecting a direct

lexicalized equivalent frequently provides the most appropriate solution. Attention must be given to the technical dimension of audiovisual translation, including character count, synchronization, timing, and readability, alongside broader considerations such as levels of formality and markedness.

Key words: African American English, Semantic Change, Semantic Inversion, Semantic Shifting, Modern Standard Arabic, Audiovisual Translation, Functional Translation, Markedness.

Chapter One

Introduction and Literature Review

1.1 Background of Research

African American English (AAE) is a variety of English built on a real-life context through which a collective understanding of the identity of this specific society can be established (Diawara, 1993; Medina-Rivera & Bynum, 2025). In linguistics, a variety refers to any form of language use that deviates from the officially or unofficially recognized prestige language typically associated with written communication and formal speech contexts (Trotta, 2011; Walsh, 2021). Constructing an understanding of non-standard form of any language can open windows to knowing different nations and cultures through how they use language, for “language and culture are intertwined” (Smith, 2020, p. 18) and “language expresses the culture it is from” (p. 18). Moreover, addressing non-standard forms of languages represents a shift towards more inclusivity and accurate representations of diverse linguistic forms that are actively employed in everyday communication in distinct societies (Peersman et al. 2016). This need is also encouraged by the different functions and nature standard languages and varieties have. In a distinction made by Ochs (1991, in Cutler, 2014) between standard and non-standard forms of a language, it can be inferred that each one of them is individually significant and worthy of studying and understanding through the lens of its usages, as Ochs states:

“Standard language is associated with education, institutional affiliation, homogeneity, and conservatism; vernaculars, by contrast, are associated with an anti-institutional stance, local orientation, diversity of contact, and local innovation. Standard and vernacular language features manifest themselves in stylistic practice not simply as elements of ready-made ways of speaking but as resources for the construction of more complex styles. Particular linguistic features may on occasion directly index social categories, but more commonly they index particular stances (such as toughness or intellectual superiority) that are constitutive of those categories” (Cutler, 2014, p. 8).

African American English, being a variety and a non-standard form of English, does not adhere to textbook standards about how Modern Standard English should be spoken. African Americans established this distinct linguistic variety of their own through modifying Mainstream American English expressions and using the outcome as a form

of gatekeeping mechanism demarcating non-community members from the African American community (Washington, 2010). This is done, as Washington (2010) explains, through engaging in a strategic manipulation of Mainstream American English on different levels. This manipulation results in a distinct variety and non-standard form of English that has its own systematic grammar, vocabulary and phonology, which is, in this case, the African American English (Washington, 2010). According to the same source, this variety has been extensively examined as a linguistic phenomenon but is a relatively novel area of research within the Arab world.

This variety of English was once considered inferior or broken form of English before gradually turning into one held in high esteem (Rickford, 1999). It is largely embraced due to the growth in African American content popularity worldwide, which broadens AAE's reach beyond its native speakers and its geographical boundaries (Neilsen, 2024). Medina-Rivera & Bynum (2025) explain that the "current language attitudes toward AAE are generally positive due to more exposure to AAE in film, literature, media, and music." One factor and well-embraced content type pertinent to African Americans that spread beyond its native speakers is Hip Hop music (Alim et al., 2008). The global spread of Hip Hop is "the global spread of (African) American culture: 'Hip Hop is and always will be a culture of the African-American minority. But it has become an international language, a style that connects and defines the self-image of countless teenagers...'" (Alim et al. 2008, p. 28). AAE is considered "the prestigious linguistic variety amongst Hip Hop artists" and is often used in Hip Hop lyrics according to Chesley (2011). Hip Hop music thus, being pertinent to African Americans, allows a big degree of exposure to AAE through its lyrics. And given Hip Hop is becoming global, AAE will reach beyond its geographical boundaries benefiting from the widespread of Hip Hop.

African American English reflect "regional (geographical), ethnic (national and racial), and social (class, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and education) backgrounds of the speakers" (Dewi, 2020, p. 1). Semantic change is a significant component of this dialect that contributes to the production of lexemes that bear different connotations in AAE than their Mainstream American English (MAE) (Smitherman, 1997; Washington, 2010). Moreover, applying semantic change is found to be a "community-wide phenomenon" (Washington, 2010, p. V) in the African American community. The phenomenon of semantic change as a distinctive feature and a major generator of a wide range of AAE

lexemes will be studied in this research through the field of Arabic translation of movies and cinema. Owing to the differing geographical, ethnic and sociocultural contexts and backgrounds of Arabic speakers and African Americans, examining AAE by linking it to translation to Arabic is an interesting and important topic to study.

1.2 Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

1.2.1 African American English

Trask (1999, in Jalalpour & Tabrizi, 2017) defines colloquial language as a “variety of language commonly employed in conversation or other communication in informal situations” (p. 1012). It is a “category of language that speakers normally use when they are stress-free and not especially self-conscious” (Jalalpour & Tabrizi 2017, p. 1012). Originally, colloquial referred to spoken language as opposed to written language, but it now primarily denotes a level of informality rather than the mode of communication; therefore, some scholars prefer the term casualism (Jalalpour & Tabrizi, 2017). The term *vernacular* refers to a non-standard form of a certain language, low in prestige and with no official status (Rickford, 1999). In sociolinguistics, a vernacular language refers to a native language or dialect spoken by a specific population, often informally and typically not standardized (Rickford, 1999). This categorizes AAE as a vernacular since it is primarily used in casual, intra-group contexts and often contrasts with formal Standard American English.

African American English, also known as African American Vernacular English, is the systematic, rule-governed variety of English with distinct phonological, syntactic and lexical characteristics, commonly spoken by African Americans in the United States (Green, 2002). AAE, according to Labov (2006) is the form of English used mainly by the African American population who show a full participation in the vernacular culture of the street. This dialect functions as a powerful marker of ethnicity and African American identity, culture and heritage according to Rickford (2000). Other scholars have talked about the systematic nature of AAE and its unique phonology and its syntactical features. For instance, Labov (1972) has described it as a sociolinguistic variety that behaves in its own grammatical rules, and is different than Standard American English. Therefore, AAE is not simply slang or a substandard form of English, it is a distinct linguistic variety that has its own rules, structure and history, and expresses the culture and identity of its people, according to Labov (1972).

1.2.2 African American Movies

African American cinema and movies are defined as the movies inspired by the unique experiences and challenges caused by race and identity that African Americans go through in their communities (Smith, 2013). These movies give African Americans the platform for cultural and artistic expression, while also reflecting the unique experiences they live and their identity and history. Diawara (1993) describes African American cinema as a genre that captures the lived reality of African Americans, especially by linking it to social justice. In addition to being a genre, these movies represent the narratives of people's resilience and cultural pride, as well as other themes. These movies were used as a platform for authentic African American storytelling (Guerrero, 1993) by displaying their narrative, setting and cultural expression, using movie as a medium for entertainment and commenting on the society (Reid, 2005). The product is the visual narrative derived from the experiences of its own people, according to Cripps (1993).

Many African American movies portray how socioeconomic challenges, limited opportunities and systemic racism contribute to criminality in marginalized communities, which highlights the difficult and limited choices individuals have in their life (Guerrero, 1993). These narratives dive into the impact of crime on family and community life, the cycles of violence, poverty (Diawara, 1993) and what can arise as a result including redemption, resilience and the potential for change, using crime as a lens to question stereotypes and showcase deeper, humanized character portrayals (Bogle, 1994).

1.2.3 Semantic Change in AAE

Mattiello (2007) considers semantic change in non-standard forms of a language a type of lexical complexity that emerges when the dynamics between participants in an interaction and the social context push them towards a less natural and more distinctive (marked) choices of vocabulary. This complexity rises due to “marked non-diagrammatic relation between the linguistic sign and its signatum” (p. 2). Semantic change in African American English (AAE) is a creative linguistic phenomenon and a prominent feature that reflects the creativity, resistance and identity of African American communities (Smitherman, 1997). It is a process by which “words are given new senses, diverging from their mainstream uses” (Laing, 2021, p. 24). Expressions undergoing semantic change are often stripped of their standard meanings and re-deployed for in-group function according to Washington (2010).

The semantic change and the new definition of Standard American English lexemes are done according to African American cultural norms. According to Washington (2010), this conduct is a “community-wide phenomenon” (p. V) by which AAE speakers strategically use language “as a form of responsive discourse to differentiate themselves” (p. V) from mainstream culture and non-community members and a “mechanism of gate-keeping that bars non- community members from the Black community” (Washington, 2010, p. V).

This phenomenon of redefinition is not a random linguistic strategy, and it reflects a deep understanding of context, audience and social dynamics (Green, 2002; Washington, 2010).

According to Smitherman (1997), applying semantic change is a communicative practice of manipulation of the semantic structure of Mainstream American English. It is an act of linguistic empowerment African Americans practice by taking an alien tongue and making it their own for the purpose of reflecting the cultural identity of its users (Smitherman, 1997). When applying semantic change, the word *ashy* gains a new metaphorical meaning, which is “the whitish coloration of black skin due to exposure to the Hawk” (Bailey et al., 1991, p. 223), and *kitchen* will indicate “hair at neckline, generally the most African part of Black hair, the most kinky” (p. 223). This practice can be approached best through studies of language evolution by focusing on the transformation and change of meaning synchronically or diachronically (Traugott & Dasher, 2002).

Being a significant contributor to the expansion of African American English, semantic change has two main mechanisms: figuration and shifting (Widawski, 2015), and these two encompasses a wide range of AAE expressions derived from and rooted in Standard English and Mainstream American English. Figuration is achieving a new meaning through metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, meiosis, personification and objectification (Widawski, 2015).

Melioration and pejoration can be classified under the concept of semantic inversion (Washington, 2010). According to Washington (2010), melioration and pejoration are two qualitative semantic changes devices in AAE used in elevating the meaning of a word to a more positive one (melioration), or the other way around (pejoration). As stated by

Lippi-Green (1997, in Washington, 2010), melioration contributes to the production of “lexemes that bear positive connotations in AAE in contrast with their Mainstream American English (MAE)” (p. 4). This includes destigmatizing defamatory terms within mainstream culture and transforming them into carriers of positive meanings in AAE (Washington, 2010). It involves the redefinition of terms, often reversing negative or neutral connotations into positive ones (or vice versa), as illustrated by African American usage in which *bad(d-est)* and *mean* are used to convey meanings such as *good* or *excellent*:

1. “It’s gonna be a **mean** [excellent or admirable] bike, maybe the **baddest** we ever built” (Skateland, movie, 2010, in Widawski, 2015, p. 81).

Marginalized groups may reclaim and ameliorate oppressive language and adopt pejorative terms within their community and cause these terms to lose their negative denotations and become positive (Washington, 2010). Reclamation, as Kennedy (2002, in Popa-Wyatt, 2018) explains, in regards of the term “nigger” as an example, is “roping off cultural turf, yank[ing] nigger from white supremacists, subvert[ing] its ugliest denotation, and convert[ing] nigger from a negative into a positive appellation” (p. 7). In other words, the historically, deeply offensive racial slur “nigger” has been reclaimed by the people projected by it (African Americans), and is now used by them under a new spelling and pronunciation (nigga) as a term of in-group identification or solidarity. The N-word as a reclaimed term, and all reclaimed terms in general, are used to strengthen cultural ties and create a shared sense of in-group spirit and belonging (Rickford, 2000; Pavone, 2024).

There are different stages for this reclamation as explained by Galinsky et al. (2003). Reclamation can be an individual and personal act (e.g. self-labelling using a redefined word), a wider in-group act where “the target group self-labels as a group in order to secure group consciousness such that the label serves as a symbol to rally around” (Popa-Wyatt, 2018, p. 5), or a “successful reclamation in which out-groups members accept the positive revaluing” (p. 5).

Some other terms behave in a similar way with respect to who is allowed to use them and how their meanings are redefined. For instance, the term *thick*, which was originally used to critique larger body types, has undergone melioration and become a positive term in

African American English (AAE), where it is used to celebrate curvaceous bodies. Within the African American community, calling someone *thick* is considered a compliment. In the Hip Hop medium, the word *thick*, according to Eberhardt & Freeman (2015), “indicates a privileging of a female body type that does not conform to current mainstream standards of beauty and desirability” (p. 311).

1.2.4 Translating Colloquial Language Elements

Colloquial speech is an informal type of language “normally restricted to informal (especially spoken) English” (Burchfield, 2004, in Baber, 2024, p. 1). It is mainly what speakers say in everyday speech and is displayed in dictionaries under the abbreviation *colloq.* (APSU, n.d.). Colloquial speech and slang are different from each other. Slang, according to Zhou & Fan (2013), is a “highly informal and is often used in colloquial speech... it is a part of a language that is usually outside of conventional or standard usage and that may consist of both newly coined words and phrases and of new or extended meanings attached to established terms” (p. 260).

Translating colloquial speech is a delicate task that requires careful judgment and sensitivity on the part of the translator. The principle of dynamic equivalence focuses on producing a similar effect in the target language to that of the original text, trying to create a natural form that suits the target audience (Nida, 1964; Shan, 2024). Baker (2018) and Bekmurodova et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of understanding context, register, the importance of a pragmatic equivalence and the need to think about how meaning is shaped by social and cultural factors. Nida’s dynamic equivalence suggests translating informal language into an equally informal equivalent so that the target audience experiences the dialogue in a manner similar to that of the source audience. According to Nida, if the source text is formal, translators should not use casual expressions that mismatch the intended tone, and vice versa. Nida (1964) also identifies a common mistake by translators when dealing with slang or ambiguity in source texts: they render a straightforward message in an overly complex, legalistic style, which leads to losing “the grace and naturalness of the original” (p. 169).

Even when exact wording must be sacrificed, a translation should elicit the same response and sound equally natural in the target language. As (Nida, 1964) explains, the translator may alter the form “more radically than the content and still be substantially equivalent

in its effect upon the receptor” (p. 164). A translation that applies Nida’s approach will therefore replace informal idioms with corresponding colloquial expressions in the target language, with the aim of conveying the message in the same tone.

1.2.5 Equivalence and Translation

Catford (1965) follows an equivalence-based approach in which translation is viewed as a process of substituting a text in the source language by a text in target language. Approaches adopted by scholars like Catford (1965) emphasize the importance of ensuring equivalence in translation by preserving semantic and pragmatic meanings across different languages. They state that achieving equivalent function is a fundamental requirement for equivalence.

Nida & Taber (1982) outline two main types of equivalence in translation: Formal Correspondence and Dynamic Equivalence. According to Nida, formal equivalence is about producing a target text (TT) very similar in structure and content to the source text (ST). This approach results in a translation close to the original in form and meaning, sometimes at the expense of fluency or naturalness. On the other hand, dynamic equivalence focuses on making the translation natural to the target audience by reproducing the original message in a way that the target language’s linguistic and cultural norms prefer to produce it (Nida & Taber, 1982).

Nida & Taber’s (1982) Dynamic Equivalence emphasizes focusing on the overall meaning or thought in the original text when translating between languages that come from different grammar or culture backgrounds. It results in a translation that communicates the intended message without strictly sticking to the words or surface structure of the source text. Nida and Taber argue that Dynamic Equivalence might be more effective than Formal Correspondence in some cases, since it gives priority to meaning over literality and guarantees that the translation is pragmatically and semantically appropriate for the audience. This means that instead of simply substituting words by words, a translator using Dynamic Equivalence focuses on how the message should be reproduced and understood in the target culture, and how to make it more communicative and functional (Nida & Taber, 1982).

Baker (2018) categorizes equivalence at the word level into four sub-types. First is one-to-one equivalence, where a single expression in the source language (SL) corresponds to a single target-language (TL) expression. Second is one-to-part-of-one equivalence, where the TL version captures only a part of the SL term's meaning. Third is one-to-many equivalence, in which one SL term has multiple TL equivalents. Finally, nil equivalence, which occurs when a SL term has no direct TL equivalent.

1.2.6 Achieving Naturalness and High-Level Equivalence

Achieving naturalness and dynamic equivalence as Nida explains in his book *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964) comes through three stages: the analysis of grammatical and semantic relationships at the simplest most basic level, the transference of the analyzed material from the source language to the target language, and the restructuring of transferred material into a grammatically and semantically coherent message in the target language (Nida & Taber, 1982). Regarding idiomatic expressions, vernacular and slang, Nida's dynamic equivalence permits the translator to "alter idioms, vernaculars, slangs, colloquialism ... in accordance with the culture of the target language" (Kim, 2009, p. 62). The translator who seeks a dynamic equivalence when dealing with the mentioned needs "to pay attention to contemporary expressions because lexical expressions change as time passes" (Kim, 2009, p. 62).

Nida (1964) stresses that a good translation preserves and reproduces the meaning and spirit of the ST and at the same time still feels and sounds natural to the target audience in what Nida calls a dynamic-equivalence translation. This type of translation is based on the idea of translating by producing "the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message" (Nida, 1964, p. 166). This definition contains three key terms: closest (requiring the highest degree of approximation between source and target), natural (using idiomatic, normal expressions in the receptor language), and equivalent (fidelity to the source meaning).

In practice, achieving naturalness requires using the elements and techniques a native speaker would use to build and create their phrases and sentences that they find normal in that context. Nida (1964) stated that a true dynamic-equivalent translation is the one about which "a bilingual and bicultural person can justifiably say, "That is just the way we would say it" (p. 166). He adds that naturalness is avoiding any stylistic oddity that

would strike the receptor as out-of-place and maintaining the appropriate level of formality or informality to preserve the original effect. The best translation according to (Nida & Taber, 1982) “does not sound like a translation. ... [It] should not ... exhibit in its grammatical or stylistic forms any trace of awkwardness or strangeness” (p. 13).

In terms of the degree to which semantic features are respected and transferred to the target text, Li (2021) presents the concepts of low-level equivalence and high-level equivalence built on Nida’s Translation Theory of Functional Equivalence and its application. Li tests Nida’s translation theories, particularly the evolution from “dynamic equivalence” to “functional equivalence.” Li’s findings emphasize that achieving high-level equivalence often pushes translators to use techniques such as addition to convey the full meaning of the original expression in depth. Not producing a “high-level equivalence” in translation can result in semantic loss due to variations in vocabularies across different languages, which may cause all or certain parts of the meaning to be altered or omitted. Moreover, since “the relationship between words in two different languages does not correspond to one-to-one sets or even one-to-many sets; in addition, there are a lot of fuzziness, obscurity, and ambiguity in the boundaries between any two languages” (1994, in Islam, 2018, p. 21) there are big chances translators will face problems related to loss of meaning of the source language text in the target language text.

1.2.7 Audiovisual Translation and Dynamic Equivalence

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) is also known as “screen translation, film translation, multimodal translation and multimedia translation, among other nomenclatures” (Díaz-Cintas, 2019, p. 209). In this kind of translation, the translated material contains both audio and visual content, along with “a series of meaning-making codes (language, gestures, paralinguistics, cinematic syntax)” (Díaz-Cintas, 2019, p. 29). These combined present challenges on the technical level, according to Thawabteh (2017). He states that audiovisual translation and subtitling require “general translation (both interlingual and intercultural) skills as well as the ability to handle polysemantic channels and deal with several technical constraints” (Thawabteh, 2017, p. 33).

Nida’s concept of dynamic equivalence has played an important role in translation studies, but it does not fully account for the realities of audiovisual translation. The theory

assumes that translators can reshape language freely in order to create the same effect on the target audience as the original text. In audiovisual texts, however, meaning is not carried by words alone. Images, sound, music and extra linguistic cues all contribute to how dialogue is understood (Chaume et al., 2014). In addition, audiovisual translation, especially subtitling, has strict limits of time and space. These technical restrictions often force translators to make dialogues simpler rather than replace expressions with equivalent ones (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021).

Finally, institutional norms, censorship policies and guidelines, often play a decisive role in audiovisual translation, and shape how informal language, dialects, and slang are handled. This is particularly evident in Arabic audiovisual translation, where MSA is the only language approved for translation. Because MSA is not typically used for everyday informal conversations, translators might be required to tone down or neutralize colloquial expressions in order to meet such institutional standards (Al-Adwan, 2015; Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021). In short, Arabic audiovisual translation prefers formality, neutrality and pan-Arab accessibility through MSA.

1.2.8 Semantic Change and Lexical Complexity

Complexity is tightly related to markedness and difficulty of meaning perception (Merlini-Barbaresi, 2003). Based on Merlini-Barbaresi's (2003) observations, markedness in expression leads to complexity, and complexity leads to difficulty in processing meaning. Complex semantic structures are also the outcome of choosing less natural/more marked options, and those choices can in turn make understanding harder (Mattiello, 2007). Instances exhibiting semantic changes are lexical complexities that emerge when the dynamics between participants in interaction and the social context makes them prefer a less natural, and more distinctive (marked) choices of vocabulary (Mattiello, 2007). This can slow down or block the addressee's access to meaning or reference, and it can also mislead outside observers such as translators (and their audiences), creating room for misinterpretation. Lexical complicity is thus due to a "marked (Merlini-Barbaresi, 2003) non-diagrammatic (Dressler, 1987) relation between linguistic signs and its signatum" (Mattiello, 2007, p. 2). According to Mattiello (2007), one way of dealing with lexical complexity in translation is through recreating semantic ambiguity found in the target text by replacing semantically ambiguous and multifunctional instances with semantically ambiguous and multifunctional phrases or

words in the target language.

1.2.9 Semantic Change Resulting in Concepts Unlexicalized in Arabic

Languages map words to illustrate concepts within different lexical frameworks. Linguistic research on lexical mappings across languages, along with cognitive science studies, demonstrates that certain concepts expressed by a single word in one language may require multiple words to convey the same meaning in another language (Baker, 2013; Haspelmath, 2023; Li et al., 2024). The absence of a universal one-to-one correspondence of word meanings does not allow translation to occur as a simple word-for-word substitution process (Ameel et al., 2009). This is because some languages do not have a perfect single-word equivalent that can be agreed to cover all the semantic components of the source-language word, which results in a lexical non-equivalence.

1.2.10 Semantically Changed Items Used as Placeholders

AAE has many creative words that function as general placeholders and fulfill a pragmatic need for a nonspecific reference (Dylewski, 2021). Some expressions in AAE can undergo semantic bleaching to serve as pragmatic placeholders in colloquial AAE speech (Dylewski, 2021). According to Dylewski, speakers tend to use words like *thang*, *jawn*, or *shit* when the exact name of a person or object is unknown, unimportant, or understood from context. For instance, the vulgar word *shit* in AAE is usually semantically bleached and stripped of inappropriateness to serve as a casual equivalent to *stuff* or *something* (Dylewski, 2021).

1.2.11 Componential Analysis in Translation Assessment

Work on grammatical and lexical semantics has often revolved around componential analysis and semantic features according to Waugh & Lafford (2006). Newmark (1988) defines Componential Analysis (CA) as the process of deconstructing word's meaning into its individual components that make up its general meaning. He states that CA is used "to compare a source language (SL) word with a target language (TL) word which has a similar meaning, but not an obvious one-to-one equivalence, by demonstrating first their common and then their differing sense components" (p. 114). Nida (1979) has classified semantic features into three major classes. First, the common features, which represent all the components of meaning shared between the ST and the TT. Second, the diagnostic

features, which are used in distinguishing meaning differences. Third, the supplementary features, which include any additional elements the translator may incorporate to elaborate on aspects of the ST's meaning.

1.3 Literature Review

Many African American English expressions are tied to and recognized among African Americans because these people “experience some degree of participation in the life of the community” (Smitherman, 2000, in Green, 2002, p. 14), which creates an “in-group crossover lingo that is understood and shared by various social groups within the race” (Smitherman, 2000, in Green, 2002, p. 14).

While semantic change is a “community-wide phenomenon” (Washington, 2010, p. V), applying it, including the selection of an expression to be semantically changed, remains a personal selective choice. Not all African Americans agree on whether certain expression has undergone semantic change or not until this expression is very widely used among them (Washington, 2010). When examining recognition of semantically changed expressions among a sample of African Americans, Washington (2010) addressed this matter by distributing a questionnaire on African American participants and working out the proportion of successful answers in distinguishing whether a certain instance is changed or not. He concludes that within the speech community examined, there were different levels of familiarity with semantically changed expressions, with a significant portion of individuals grouping around 20 to 30 lexemes and recognizing them. This supports Eckert's (2004, in Fought, 2004) claim that even within the same population, speakers do not align uniformly in linguistic behavior. Knowing that African Americans face difficulties telling whether semantic change took place in some expressions, the African American society is thus a typical society where homogeneity of speech is absent according to Washington (2010).

However, despite the absence of homogeneity of speech between African Americans (Washington, 2010), works and dictionaries describing and analyzing this dialect were put together in generous amounts. One example of a work that studies semantically changed instances widely recognized within this speech community and provide their meanings is Widawski's (2015) in his work *African American Slang: A Linguistic Description*. It offers a comprehensive and detailed exploration of the lexicon, structure

and social functions of AAE by examining it from its historical roots until contemporary usage. The work studies AAE on various linguistic dimensions, including the semantic level. The work also explores how AAE intersects with and is shaped by identity, solidarity and cultural elements in African American communities from numerous examples taken from numerous contexts.

Another major work used to support data in his research is Green's Slang Dictionary, which focuses completely on slang expressions and provides historical documentation of their usage from early periods up to the present. It also provides all possible definitions and examples from real life contexts to nearly 100,000 headwords, many of which are identified and categorized by the dictionary as "Black" slang.

Salzmann (2025) examines the translation of AAE in Suzan-Lori Parks's *Topdog/Underdog*. The research focuses on how meaning is reshaped when the play is translated into French. The study emphasizes that AAE cannot be separated from its cultural, historical and social context, and therefore cannot be treated as a neutral linguistic code. Salzmann describes translation as both an interpretive and ethical act, because translating AAE means deciding how race, identity and power relations will be understood by readers in another culture. The research shows that translators must balance linguistic form with social meaning, because AAE carries identity and worldview. As a result, translating AAE becomes a process of meaning-making, and interpretive choices that directly affect how characters and their social positions are viewed by the audience.

Legge (2024) explores AAE as a systematic linguistic variety, and shows that its grammatical and lexical features carry meanings that often cannot be conveyed through straightforward translation. The research includes features such as habitual *be*, stressed *BIN* (been) and culturally-specific slang, and argues that these carry time and social meanings that are often hard to match in other languages. As a result, literal translation often leads to loss of some aspects and meaning. The research shows translation as a process of balancing cultural and pragmatic meaning, rather than simply transferring linguistic or surface form. Legge shows that translation strategies such as domestication or foreignization affect and shape how identity, tone and social aspects are represented and mirrored. The researcher adds that failing to handle these dimensions results in flattened or distorted meaning.

Hanes & Lopes (2024) explored how AAE is translated into Brazilian Portuguese. They focused on the strategies used to render non-standard language and the impact of these techniques on character identity and how meaning is conveyed. The researchers define translation as an act of meaning creation and construction, not direct transfer after understanding what strategies are employed and what effects these choices have on character identity. They explore how translators try to give voice to African American characters, and at the same time translate under linguistic and cultural constraints that limit their choices. The study shows that translation strategies reshape meaning, because the ways in which AAE features are approximated affect how identity, marginalization, and authenticity are perceived in the target context.

Green (2024) explores how AAE is rendered in Spanish dubbing through a multimodal analysis of *Luke Cage*, *Bamboozled*, and *Tropic Thunder*. The study shows that AAE meanings are not carried by language alone, but also through the interaction of speech, voice, visuals and performance. Identity, social positioning and authenticity of African American are reshaped when conveyed in Spanish dubbing to the Spanish audiences because AAE features are often neutralized. Green argues that translating AAE involves interpretive meaning-making, where semantic and pragmatic meanings are reshaped rather than directly transferred.

In another study carried out by Mattiello (2007), the author investigates translations of lexical complexities in English slang and how they are reflected in Italian. The author highlights that nonstandard varieties demonstrate a tendency for lexical innovation and complexity. According to her, this tendency is due to a non-diagrammatic relationship between linguistic signs and their intended meanings. Based on this observation, the author builds a valid argument on the need for a departure from translation strategies that involve omission or substitution towards a functional equivalent. She encourages the preservation of a similarly complex relationship between signifier and signified in the target language. The author also emphasizes the need to recreate lexical complexities and marked choices in the target language. The findings suggest that nonstandard varieties, including the in-group slang, as a vital element in movie scripts, should be preserved in translation to capture the essence, atmosphere and spirit of the original. One way for achieving this, according to Mattiello, is through recreating semantic ambiguity found in the original instance in the target text. This is done through replacing semantically

ambiguous instances (shifted and inverted) in the original with a semantically ambiguous word or group of words in the target. In the pair of languages the author studied, English and Italian, the author suggested the replacement of the expression *hit*, which is an in-group expression of slang that means a dose of drugs, with the expression *pera* in Italian that is equally ambiguous, multifunctional and has the same function as *hit*. Both expressions can have more than one associative meaning or referent: *pera* stands for “a large yellowish or brownish-green dessert fruit” and “an injection of a drug, esp. heroin” (Mattiello, 2007, p. 2), and *hit* can stand for several referents, one of which is a dose of drug. Mattiello (2007) argues that other expressions will not fulfil the whole function of *hit* because they are highly transparent and easily accessible, with almost no capacity to preserve and provide extra socio-pragmatic interpretations. Mattiello concludes that, when marked ambiguous and multifunctional instances appear, translators should favor ambiguous, multifunctional equivalents over direct, salient ones. Both languages have to offer similarly ambiguous expressions that can replace each other while preserving similar essence, atmosphere and spirit to those of the original.

Research on Arabic slang translation shows that meaning emerges from context, culture and speaker intention rather than from words alone. Shihab & Darweesh (2023) argue that slang, especially on social media, relies on implicit and culturally shared meanings that cannot be rendered through literal translation. Their study shows that translators mainly struggle with non-equivalence, since slang also reflects aspects more than referential meaning of expressions. Effective translations therefore prioritize preserving pragmatic effect over formal accuracy, and treating slang translation as a process of meaning-making that requires sensitivity to context and cultural connotations.

While some semantically changed items in AAE can be categorized as idiomatic expressions and thus require a functional pragmatic equivalent, the findings of a study by Aldahesh (2008) might well apply to the instances chosen for this study. The study clarified the challenges that make reaching a functional pragmatic equivalent difficult through exploring subtitles by professional Arab translators and students confronted with the translation of idiomatic English into Arabic. Aldahesh (2008) found that the inherent difficulty in achieving the functional pragmatic equivalent of expressions of idiomatic language is where the core of this issue lies. Challenges in attaining a functional pragmatic equivalent arise according to Aldahesh (2008) due to various factors, including relying

on literal translation, mistranslation, oversimplification, inappropriate conversational behavior and reliance on paraphrases.

In Arabic translation studies, the racial elements of AAE have been explored through studying individual instances under the bigger framework of slang and taboo studies. Mujaddadi's (2017) study focused mainly on translation strategies and sociocultural norms, and contained an analysis pertinent to the current study. Her analysis of racial slurs within her dataset emphasizes a notable distribution, particularly slurs targeting African Americans and semantically inverted ones commonly reclaimed among African Americans themselves. Mujaddadi (2017) concluded that the translation of racial slurs, some of which are semantically changed, exhibits a pattern of preference for transfer strategies in specific cases, and a reliance on reduction when easily accessible equivalents are lacking. Her study underscores cultural considerations and racial ideology in the Arab lingua-culture that control subtitlers and shape subtitled products for this audience.

Taking into consideration that semantic change in AAE can be found in elements of taboo language as well (Widawski, 2015), a study conducted by Al-Yasin & Rabab'ah (2019) highlights strategies used by translators to deal with cultural and linguistic challenges in audiovisual translation. This study examines the connotative equivalence of taboo words in American movies and their Arabic subtitles created by Arabic fansubs. The findings of Al-Yasin & Rabab'ah (2019) show that techniques like euphemism and omission were employed, primarily due to cultural constraints. Euphemism often preserved the connotative meaning, while omission led to misalignment according to Al-Yasin & Rabab'ah (2019).

In a study conducted by Hashish & Hussein (2022) on subtitling slang expressions, they found that movie translation involves subtitlers transferring language and style between cultures, and sometimes having to deal with dialogues heavily influenced by cultural elements. They compared professional subtitlers and fansubbers subtitlings for 30 slang expressions from *Goodfellas* and *Training Day*. Both groups faced challenges with cultural terms and unfamiliar slang. They used strategies like paraphrase, euphemism, omission and calque. The study also suggested expanding research on slang subtitling across more samples and different languages and cultures.

Regarding the findings of Hashish & Hussein (2022) and Al-Yasin & Rabab'ah (2019), it should be noted that euphemism-loaded utterances, according to Thawabteh (2012), present problem in Arabic-English subtitling. These problems “can be not only linguistic, cultural, but they can also be technical” (Thawabteh, 2012, p. 155). To avoid these problems, Thawabteh (2012) suggests paying attention to “technical dimension so that number of characters, synchronization, segmentation problems, among others, can be reduced to a minimum” (p. 155).

In his research, Johannsen (2017) looks at how Arabic Rap artists reshaped Hip Hop's original story to reflect their own experiences after the Arab Spring. The work suggests that Arabic Rap becomes authentic when rappers chose to express their local lived struggles rather than copying U.S. Hip Hop styles. Similar to African American Hip Hop in the 1970s, Arabic Hip Hop also emerges from experiences of exclusion, repression and frustration among young people after the Arab Spring. Rappers mostly use Hip Hop as expression tool against political systems and to build a collective identity. They also reshape it to reflect local lived conditions such as having authoritarian governments, being unemployed, and facing state violence, which is how Arabic artists reshape Hip Hop's stories to tell their own. Johannsen concludes that Hip Hop functions as a flexible cultural tradition and expression tool that allows Arabic Rap to be both globally connected and grounded in local context.

Talking about Arabic rap, Shehab & Daragmeh (2018) explore how Nizar Qabbani's poem *Qariat il-Finjan* is transformed into Omar Offendum's Rap song *Finjan*. The research illustrates how poetic language and themes in Nizar Qabbani's poem are reshaped to suit the culture of Rap. Their study shows that Qabbani's themes romantic love and women's liberation is reshaped into themes more related to Rap audiences, such as identity. This was done through selective adaptation, omission and cultural reworking. The authors conclude that this kind of translation has for aim the creation of a song that sounds natural and meaningful within Hip Hop culture rather than imitating the original poem in its theme and features. Generally, the study makes a link between translation, genre expectations, and social context, as they are related and affected by each other. It also clarifies that literary works are not simply transferred between cultures, but actively reimagined to speak to new audiences.

Recent works show that translating slang, especially in music, is a cultural and linguistic task. In a study by Batubara et al. (2023), they use lyrics by Eminem and Wiz Khalifa as case studies to examine the challenges of translating slang from 21st-century American Hip Hop and Rap songs into Arabic. The authors explain that a word-for-word translation is ineffective when trying to render Rap because the used slang is deeply tied to social identity, context and group membership, which makes. The work shows that translators often rely on flexible strategies such as paraphrasing, substitution and functional or social equivalents to make the meaning sound natural and relatable to Arabic audiences. The study finds paraphrasing to be the most successful approach, as it allows translators to capture the intended message and tone rather than the exact wording. Overall, the research shows that translating slang in music requires cultural knowledge, sensitivity to genre norms and an awareness of how meaning changes across languages and communities.

1.4 Problem Statement

At the macro level, translating between African American English (AAE) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is challenging for two reasons. The first reason is that MSA and AAE are different on the stylistic levels: African American English is an informal dialect, while MSA is a formal, written language. The second reason is that AAE is a socially marked dialect that carries meaning through unique grammatical and pragmatic structures, while MSA is a highly standard, formal language and does not reflect social variation. AAE operates according to its own grammatical system, (Labov, 1972; Washington, 2010), and it has a strong lexical creativity and a high semantic complexity (Mattiello, 2007), which distinguishes it from Standard American English. Much of this complexity emerges through semantic change: a process tied to the cultural experiences of African Americans in their communities (Smitherman, 1997; Washington, 2010).

At the level of translation, and because these meanings are often implicit, context-dependent, and culturally shared, they can be difficult for outsiders to interpret, which increases the likelihood of ambiguity or misunderstanding. Although descriptive studies document many semantically changed AAE expressions (Green, 2002; Widawski, 2015), understanding and transferring their meaning in translation remains a challenging task, especially for outsiders. This study shows that even semantically shifted items that have been known for too long now and are highly recognizable to English speakers continue to pose challenges for Arab translators to this day.

This difficulty becomes more pronounced in audiovisual translation, where translators work under both technical and institutional constraints. While some scholars argue that non-standard, dialectal forms with semantic complexity should be rendered into equally marked and complex dialectal forms in the target language, this approach often clashes with current subtitling policies. For example, Netflix requires the exclusive use of MSA and discourages the use of dialectal forms (Netflix, 2025), which limits subtitlers' ability to reproduce non-standard or dialectal forms. As a result, the product subtitles in MSA tend to become more formal and less expressive than the original. In addition to this, differences between the original dialectal text or speech and the target text in MSA occur on the level of markedness and naturalness. Cultural differences also shape the translation process, since many semantically changed AAE expressions are rooted in African American history, culture, identity and social experience, and are very different from those found in Arab cultures.

In Arabic linguistics, research on AAE is still relatively limited. Much of the existing work tends to focus on vocabulary, especially taboo language and slang, while more precise studies of other aspects are rare. Studies on Arabic translation of slang and taboo expressions show that translators rely on paraphrase, euphemism, or omission to cope with such challenging expressions (Aldahesh, 2008; Mujaddadi, 2017; Al-Yasin & Rabab'ah, 2019; Hashish & Hussein, 2022). While these translation strategies may not affect acceptability, they often reduce the pragmatic and social meaning power, especially if they were nonliteral. Moreover, this gap gets bigger when Arabic studies about AAE are compared with research on Arabic dialects and variations; Holes and Al-Wer note that Arabic sociolinguistics has often preferred describing forms and social meanings over structural analysis (Holes, 2004; Al-Wer et al., 2022), yet not enough attention is given to foreign dialects and varieties.

Taken together, all the mentioned point to a clear gap in existing research about AAE in relation to Arabic linguistic and translation studies. Although AAE has been widely studied from a linguistic perspective, and Arabic subtitling has been examined in relation to slang and taboo language, limited attention has been given to how semantically changed AAE expressions are translated into Arabic under real subtitling restrictions and an immense difference between the source language (dialect) and the target language (standard). In particular, little is known about how AAE elements' meaning, cultural

specificity, and markedness are negotiated and handled when MSA is imposed as the target language.

1.5 Research Questions

The main purpose behind this research is to understand how semantically changed expressions are handled through Modern Standard Arabic subtitles of two movies on three different platforms. Under this general purpose, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do African Americans apply semantic inversion and semantic shifting on specific expressions to make them convey meanings distinct from their original ones?
2. What techniques are used to subtitle these instances in Modern Standard Arabic?
3. In terms of linguistic authenticity, overall comprehension and cultural relevance, how do these techniques affect the target text?
4. For mistranslated instances, what alternative translations and techniques can be proposed?

1.6 Significance of Study

This study focuses on a non-standard variety of English predominantly spoken by African American communities in the United States and increasingly adopted by individuals from other racial groups. By examining AAE through the field of Arabic subtitles, the study seeks to contribute to the Arabic academic body of knowledge on the topic and bridge this linguistic phenomenon with applied linguistics. It aims to explore how the semantic playfulness of this variety is mirrored through the Modern Standard Arabic subtitling of movies.

The issue being addressed in this study emphasizes the importance of studying a dialect in two directions. First, by linking it to the standard language it stems from. This was done in this study through understanding lexical and semantic differences, meaning-creation processes, and how ideas are expressed in the dialect compared to the standard language it comes from. Second, by exploring how similar or different the dialect is compared to the language it will be translated to, what consequences arise from these differences, and how to bridge gaps between the two languages.

The focus of this study is limited to the analysis of expressions relatively straightforward or prominently found in many movies. The study can be considered a foundational step toward a broader, more comprehensive investigation across a wider range of contexts and linguistic aspects.

Future research can expand beyond the current limited focus on semantic aspects of AAE by conducting studies on real life talks that include other domains in which African American language and cultural expression thrive, which will offer more challenging and contextually rich examples. The same type of studies can be applied to varieties of Arabic to understand how semantic playfulness is dealt with through translation. Besides movies, future work could explore how AAE is used across multiple real-world contexts, such as police transcription, music and lyric, social media posts, courtroom transcripts, school disciplinary records, job interviews, reality-TV shows, podcasts, video-game dialogue, and more. Exploring these spaces and linking them to translation would make it possible to see how translators and institutions make choices about this variety of English and how those choices affect the way speakers are understood and treated. It would also highlight how such decisions shape the final product of translation itself, especially when working across more flexible and less constrained domains than subtitles. Future studies could further broaden the scope by comparing multiple target languages to examine how different linguistic and cultural communities deal with the same semantically changed expressions and interpret them, helping to identify whether there is a pattern in how translators handle these expressions and whether they tend to rely on similar strategies, such as simplifying, explaining, rendering them into more neutral or less expressive forms, replacing them with local slang, omitting them, or whether their decisions are shaped by research and planned techniques based on informed choices.

1.7 Research Limitations

This research focuses on the translation of semantically inverted and semantically shifted terms and phrases in African American movies. It aims to identify the translation techniques used in translating these expressions and measure their success in rendering the intended meaning. The analysis will be limited to expressions, words or phrases, that exhibit a semantic change.

The research is limited to two African American movies: *Dope* (2015) and *All Day and a Night* (2020), found exclusively on paid streaming platforms (Netflix, Shoof TV and Apple TV). The utterances chosen for analysis are uttered only by African American characters. Only written subtitles are assessed, not dubbed versions or audience reception.

Chapter Two

Methodology

2.1 Research Type

This research follows a qualitative, evaluative-analytical approach. Qualitative assessment judges translation quality according to established criteria rather than seeking numerical measurements. This approach is deemed appropriate for the central interest for this research, which demands close reading for every individual instance rather than statistical generalization. The research is at the same time evaluative and analytical and dives into why particular translational decisions were made and how they are evaluated when judged against the translation theory of equivalence.

2.2 Data Sources

Two contemporary movies (released in 2015 and 2020) were chosen; one streamed on Netflix, the other on Apple TV and Shoof TV. Both movies were set in California, and align perfectly with all the aspects discussed earlier on what makes up an African American movie. The research focuses on the official target-language subtitles, which are found on the platforms in MSA. Individual subtitle segments, or a line that corresponds to a single spoken utterance will constitute the sampling unit.

2.2.1 Finding Movies

Selecting African American movies is made easy thanks to their widespread and availability on streaming platforms. Movies were chosen based on the following characteristics: they showcase language authenticity where characters use raw inner-city African American English. Their setting: these movies are set in urban environments, often in socially and economically marginalized neighborhoods, prisons, etc. (Guerrero, 1993). Finally, their theme: these movies showcase aspects such as the struggles of hustling, music creation, crime, drugs, gang violence, efforts to break the cycle of violence, etc. (Diawara, 1993; Bogle, 1994). Characters are frequently affected by or affiliated with gangs, participating either partially or fully in the cycle of gang violence as oppressors or oppressed.

The movies selected for the study are the following:

1. Dope (2015):

A comedy-drama movie set in the neighborhood known as “The Bottoms” in Inglewood, California: an area marked by poverty, gang activity and vibrant urban culture. The movie’s main characters are Malcolm and his two friends Jib and Diggy, all are Hip Hop-obsessed, high-school, African American students. The movie is about how they became unintentionally involved with drugs, when they found themselves with a backpack full of drugs belonging to a local dealer. Not knowing what to do with this amount of drugs dragged them into a series of events involving selling drugs through the mail, and becoming involved in armed clashes.

Culturally, the movie showcases the influence of 1990s Hip Hop style, African American identity and language, social class, crime and hood life. The title of the movie is a semantically changed expression that is introduced as a multifunctional term in the first scene of the movie and continues to appear throughout the movie. Moreover, the dialogue showcases African American English, and the characters celebrate how this variety of English allows them to be creative with their expressions in numerous scenes.

2. All Day and a Night (2020):

An American crime-drama movie. The story is set in the city of Oakland, California, in a poor urban environment, full of gang activity. It revolves around the impact of violence in African American society its unbreakable circle. The main character is Jahkor: an aspiring rapper who tries to avoid crime life by focusing on his Rap career. He is dragged into a tragic crime causing him to serve a life sentence for murder. He was imprisoned in the same prison with his drug-dealing and criminal father “JD”. Alongside them are characters such as the gangster “Big Stunna,” and Jahkor’s childhood friend TQ. The narrative setting uses time shifts to move between the present (in prison) and flashbacks to Jahkor’s childhood and young adult life, to trace how his environment, father’s behavior, poverty and gang culture combined to shape his path. The language in the movies is Vernacular English showcasing street slang and the culture of Rap and gang.

2.2.2 Selecting Platforms

Free platforms or websites that do not declare ownership or legal entitlement to the movies they host were excluded in order to avoid any potential illegal use of copyrighted material.

Live TV streaming was also excluded, as it has been gradually losing popularity compared to on-demand platforms, which allow users to customize their viewing lists and select content independently rather than waiting for scheduled broadcasts. Viewers rely increasingly on platforms such as *Shoof TV*, *Netflix* and *Apple TV* to access movies with subtitles. Accordingly, the data for this study were collected from movies available on these three platforms.

The three platforms selected for the two movies analyzed were checked for the use of AI or automated captions and subtitles. None of these platforms relied on automated or AI-generated subtitles for the selected movies. Subtitles are provided as pre-prepared timed-text files (such as TTML/XML, SRT, or WebVTT) rather than being generated automatically during playback. These files contain subtitles arranged line by line, each with specific start and end timecodes, and are produced in advance by professional subtitlers or localization vendors. Netflix's own documentation describes these subtitle templates as carefully "edited, positioned, researched, annotated and checked" (Netflix, 2025, para. 1) files that are synchronized with the audio and visuals.

2.3 Data Extraction

Source language (SL) inspected utterances as well as their target language (TL) correspondents were collected on a spreadsheet along with records of time, and detailed notes to help in analyzing the instance, covering aspects such as the context of the conversation and general scene descriptions, with extra details about other relevant scenes. If necessary, observations on paralinguistic cues and nonverbal communication, speakers' attitudes, emotions, tone, were also included. A recording of scenes and their corresponding subtitles are documented for reference.

2.4 Data Filtering

This step is all about determining whether the selected terms and phrases have undergone any semantic change. Selected instances' meanings were unpacked by exploring the possible changes in meaning, their common dictionary definitions in Modern Standard English, and appropriating the two meanings with the context to decide on the existence of a semantic change and a new conventional sense. This was done through creating a link between selected instances, the notes taken, as well as established dictionaries and bodies of research that mainly study African American slang.

2.5 Data Supporting Sources

To support data selected from the two movies for this research, and to place data within a larger context, the author employed two main sources of support. First, colloquial and slang Dictionaries, especially Green's Dictionary that allows determine the colloquial meaning of every instance. Dictionaries delivered the definitions used to run semantic componential decomposition and extract the minimal semantic components of the expressions.

Second, Maciej Widawski's (2015) work on African American Slang that provides a thorough linguistic description of how meaning of semantically changed instances is obtained in African American English, as well as many insightful examples taken from African American speakers and a variety of contexts.

2.6 Analytical Frameworks

After identifying semantically changed expressions, the author employed the following analytical approaches, each where appropriate, to derive the findings presented and discussed in Chapter Three:

1. Componential analysis: when needed, semantically changed instances were decomposed into their minimal semantic features. Definitions of instances to be analyzed are obtained from different dictionaries that provide their African American English colloquial meaning.
2. Back-translation analysis: A faithful back translation of the target text into English was offered; matches and mismatches between the back translation and the original source language text were analyzed to evaluate the accuracy.

3. Syntactic decomposition: phrase structure trees were produced where necessary to trace meaning changes triggered by syntactic structure.

2.7 Structure of Research

This study is divided into the following chapters: Chapter One introduces the main problem, the significance and the limitations of this study, as well as its theoretical framework and background, the research questions. Additionally, it examines the existing literature and a theoretical framework that guides the study. Chapter Two presents the methodology for data collection and analysis in details. Chapter Three is a thorough exploration, discussion and categorization of data. Finally, Chapter Four contains the conclusion of the research and the recommendations along with recommendations and future prospects for extending this study to other contexts.

Chapter Three

Data Analysis and Discussion

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the subtitles of semantically changed expressions found in utterances produced by African American characters in two African American movies available on three selected paid streaming platforms. After analyzing the collected data and identifying recurring patterns and tendencies in how semantically changed expressions were handled in subtitles, the data were classified according to the translation techniques used to render these expressions. The accuracy and faithfulness of the resulting translations, and how each technique affects the target text and the meaning of each expression are examined and discussed. The analysis is grounded in equivalence theory and supported by a set of analytical procedures, including back translation, componential analysis, and syntactic decomposition. In addition, reference materials such as African American dictionaries were consulted to strengthen and enrich the discussion.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Core Meaning Rendered

This category discusses instances where the core meaning of the semantically shifted term is successfully conveyed, while some complementary semantic features or cultural aspects are lost. The instances classified under this category result from the use of a single translation technique: rendering the shifted expression through a more neutral or less expressive rendering. This technique is typically employed when the source expressions are either unlexicalized in Arabic and lack a direct one-to-one equivalent, or are bound to African American culture and are less present in Arab cultures.

The absence of a direct one-to-one equivalence, according to Baker (2018) occurs when “the target language has no direct equivalent for a word which occurs in the source text” (p. 19), or when the target language makes “more or fewer distinctions in meaning than the source language” (p. 20). Translating a word using a more neutral or less expressive expression is one strategy for dealing with non-equivalence at the word level discussed by Baker (2018) and Zhuang (2021). This technique involves neutralizing or toning down a meaning-loaded and highly expressive source-text expression when an equally

expressive equivalent is unavailable in the target language (Zhuang, 2021). For instance, the English word *starving* implies an intense degree of hunger and lacks a clear and lexicalized equivalent in Arabic. Translators often render the core meaning shared by both *starving* and *hungry*, which is hunger, regardless of intensity, by selecting the more neutral term جائع (“hungry”). This choice conveys the general meaning without any additional meaning-making aspects (Alnouri & Isweesi, 2019). Baker (2018) notes that this technique may lead to a loss of some expressive force present in the source term. She adds that the addition of modifiers or explanatory elements can, in some cases, help compensate for the reduced expressiveness. When applied on *starving*, it can be rendered into the verb phrase يتضور جوعًا (“suffering intensely from hunger”), which is a natural expression that express an intensified state of hunger in MSA.

This section discusses cases of semantically changed items that were rendered using a more neutral or less expressive expression. The source text (ST), the target text (TT), and a faithful back translation (BT) are used in the analysis where the effectiveness of the applied technique is evaluated, and a proposed translation (PT) is offered by the author.

Utterance (1) – Violence-Related Term

- ST: “Wanna **jump** one of they cousins? I know where they live at.”
- TT: "أتريد ضرب أحد أبناء عموماتهم؟ إذ أعرف مكان سكنهم".
- BT: Do you want to **hit/beat** one of their cousins? I know where they live.

Context

Utterance (1) is taken from the movie *All Day and a Night*, available with Arabic subtitles on Netflix. In this scene, a physically abused African American child suggests to his two friends *jumping* the cousin of his attackers as an act of revenge. The individuals to be jumped were not involved in the earlier confrontation, and therefore had no reason to be attacked or to anticipate being jumped.

Meaning Unpacking

After analyzing the utterance within its context, the scene provides clear evidence that the expression *jump* refers to physically attacking a person. This meaning does not

correspond to the original, non-shifted sense of the verb *jump*, which Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines as the physical act of “pushing yourself off the ground and into the air using your legs.” The contextual use in the scene therefore reflects a semantically shifted meaning that diverges from the verb’s literal definition.

At the syntactic level, the shifted *jump* does not behave in the same way as the non-shifted verb in terms of transitivity. Non-shifted form *to jump* is typically intransitive and is usually followed by an adverbial or prepositional phrase. However, the semantically shifted form is transitive and requires a direct object. The object pronoun *me* following *jumped* functions as a direct object, which makes the shifted verb transitive. The same transitivity pattern is observed in the target-text equivalent ضرب (*darb*, “to strike/beat/hit”), which is a verbal noun of the verb ضَرَبَ (*daraba*, “struck/beat/hit”), as well as in its back translation.

At the level of markedness, although the character could have expressed the event using unmarked verbs such as *attack* or *beat*, he instead opts for the marked form *jump*. This choice is not arbitrary in non-standard varieties; rather, it serves specific pragmatic and sociolinguistic functions (Mattiello, 2007).

In the following table, several definitions were consulted from source-language dictionaries that document the non-standard, shifted usage of the verb *jump*, with its minimal semantic features.

Table (1)

Unpacking shifted term ‘jump’

Dictionary	Definitions	Sense 1 attack	Sense 2 sudden	Sense 3 physical	Sense 4 ambush
American Heritage	To spring upon in sudden attack; assault or ambush.	+	+	+	+
Dictionary.com	To attack or pounce upon without warning, as from ambush.	+	+	+	+
Collins	To attack suddenly or unexpectedly. To attack suddenly as from hiding.	+	+	+	+

Based on the componential analysis and the collected information about the utterance under discussion, *jump* refers to a specific type of physical aggression that includes surprise and ambush from a concealed position in order to overpower the victim. The victim may be someone who did not provoke anybody and was not involved in any prior conflict that led to them being jumped, as inferred from the context of the utterance.

The Arabic action ضرب means *to hit* or *to strike* and involves physical contact. Its meaning is restricted to physical aggression and does not necessarily include an element of suddenness or ambush. Typically, ضرب is used to describe an act that occurs in a direct confrontation, often preceded by tension or cause. The term itself does not indicate whether the action was carried out from a hidden place, nor whether the victim was ambushed; such meanings can only be conveyed through additional modifiers that explicitly encode these features. In its core, ضرب denotes the delivery of one or more blows and focuses narrowly on the act of hitting rather than on the broader event of an assault. The distinction between *jump* and ضرب is clarified in Table (2).

Table (2)

Comparing the Semantic Components of the ST and TT

Term	Components			
	attack	physical	sudden	ambush/hidden
Jump	+	+	+	+
ضرب	+	+	±	-

Translation Assessment

The technique used to handle this expression aligns with what Baker (2018) describes as a “one-to-one correspondence between orthographic words and elements of meaning within or across” languages (p. 10). The semantically shifted verb *jump*, which carries multiple components of meaning, was rendered into a single-word, more neutral and less expressive expression; one that does not fully correspond to the original expression’s meaning. In other words, the meaning-loaded and highly expressive source term *jump* was neutralized, or toned down into a more general expression in the target text. The application of this technique ultimately led to what can be described as *one-to-part-of-*

one equivalence, defined as a case “when the (TL) expression renders only a part of the meaning of the (SL) expression” (Bajubair, 2023, p. 35). On the semantic level, a clear loss can be observed resulting in what (Li, 2021) describes as a “low-level equivalence” (p. 13), whereby only a surface-level correspondence in form and structure with the source language is achieved. Consequently, the resulting rendering is less effective in conveying the full implied meaning.

The semantically shifted term *jump* was reduced through a procedure that Djohan et al. (2021) define as “the procedure in which the translator is more likely to reduce the number of elements that make up the SL without eliminating important information in the translation” (p. 591). On the one hand, reduction as a translation technique successfully captured the core referential meaning embodied in the source text: to attack physically. On the other hand, it resulted in the loss of several other semantic elements in the target text. Although the rendering preserved the core meaning, or what Nida (1979) describes as *common features* that allow access to a part of the intended meaning, the less expressive term in the target text led to the loss of the source term’s other diagnostic semantic features, as well as its colloquial and informal tone.

Restoring the Integrity of the Original

Translating meaning-laden, semantically shifted expressions into more neutral or less expressive expressions may not be the most effective strategy for addressing non-equivalence at the word level. This technique typically results in a one-to-part-of-one equivalence and alters the overall meaning of the term by causing the loss of important semantic designative (diagnostic) features that help specify the implication of the expression. Although Baker (2018) presents this strategy as one possible way of dealing with word-level non-equivalence, she also acknowledges that it may lead to a loss of the source word’s expressive force. At the same time, she points to the possibility of compensating for this loss by introducing lexical entities that capture the lost parts of the intended meaning of source-language expression and preserves its connotations without affecting comprehension (Baker, 2018).

The following proposed translation (PT) illustrates how the utterance is rendered into MSA through the addition of further lexical material that compensates for the loss of meaning in the source expression and preserves its connotations. By modifying the verb

ضرب, the features of suddenness and ambush associated with a physical attack are effectively captured.

PT - MSA: أتريد أن **نفاجئ** أحد أبناء عمهم **ونضربه**؟ أعرف أين يسكن

BT: Do you want that we **surprise** one of their cousins and **beat** him? I know where he lives.

Utterance (2) – Cultural Reference (Gangs)

- ST: “You can’t decide to be a **Blood**, and get mad if the **Crips** try to kill you.”
- TT: "لا يمكنك أن تقرر دخول **عصابة**، ثم تغضب إن قررت **العصابة الأخرى** قتلك."
- BT: You cannot decide to join a **gang**, then get angry if **the other gang** decides to kill you.

Context

This utterance is taken from the movie *Dope*, which is available on Shoof TV. It is delivered by De’Andre during a heated discussion about U.S. drone strikes in the Middle East. In the scene, De’Andre plays drone footage on his phone while narrating what is happening in the video. For clarification, he frames an international political conflict in terms that are more familiar to himself and those around him like gangs. By doing so, he compares joining a terrorist organization to joining a gang, using the logic and terminology of gang-related conflict to justify U.S. foreign policy actions. Utterance (2) expresses the idea that if an individual chooses to align with a known enemy, such as Al-Qaeda, they should not be surprised when they become a target. The analogy implies that once someone takes sides in a violent conflict, they must be prepared to face the consequences of that choice.

Meaning Unpacking

As defined in the online Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.-b), *blood* is “the red liquid that is sent around the body by the heart, and carries oxygen and important substances to organs and tissues, and removes waste products,” while *crib* is defined as “a small bed for a baby or young child with high bars around the sides so that the child cannot fall out” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-c). When **Bloods** and **Crips** (originally *cribs*) are capitalized,

these terms function as proper nouns related to the African American street life. In this context, they acquire meanings different than their literal dictionary definitions; they refer to two well-known rival street gangs in the United States.

The Crips gang originated in South Central Los Angeles around 1969, and was founded by 15-year-old Raymond Washington, who was influenced by the Black Panther Party's ideas of community empowerment and self-defense (Densley, 2019). The group was called the *Baby Avenues* at the beginning, and later became known as the *Avenue Crips*. The term *Crips* may have referred either to the members' homes, or to the fact that many of them were very young "like babies in cribs" (Densley, 2019).

Over time, the name took a new spelling and became *Crips*. The group was originally formed to protect their neighborhoods. However, its focus gradually shifted toward violent conflicts, and its growth became driven more by rivalry than by solidarity (Densley, 2019). According to Densley, while the Crips initially sought self-defense, they eventually became involved in conflicts with rival groups and even internal fighting. By the early 1970s, multiple Crip sets had spread throughout Los Angeles.

The *Bloods* (with capital B) gang was formed as a direct response to the growing power and influence of the Crips. As the Crips began to dominate or attack other African American street gangs, groups that refused to join them started to unite for mutual protection. In 1972, several of these threatened gangs formed an alliance to resist the Crips, and this coalition became known as the *Bloods* (Barganier, 2011). The name *Bloods* likely derives from the slang term *blood* (lowercase), short for *blood brother*, which is used among African Americans to express solidarity, friendship, or brotherhood (Boston & Cohen, 2007). In this sense, it functions similarly to referring to someone as a brother or a close friend (Boston & Cohen, 2007). This term had acquired this meaning prior to the establishment of the gang and was therefore well suited to represent the collective identity of the new coalition formed in opposition to the Crips (Barganier, 2011).

Translation Assessment

Capitalized *Bloods* and *Crips* function as proper nouns and culture-specific expressions tied to the source culture. In the translation, the technique of generalization was applied,

whereby *Bloods* and *Crips* were rendered into the less expressive and more inclusive expressions عصابة (*iṣāba*, “a gang”) and العصابة الأخرى (*al- iṣāba al- 'ukhrā*, “the other gang”).

On the one hand, these renderings conveyed the general message of the utterance and kept the core referential meaning of the two names. The Arabic rendering remains natural and accessible especially for Arab viewers who may not be familiar with American gang culture or have prior knowledge of these specific groups. On the other hand, considering that the movie revolves heavily around gangs, rendering these culturally loaded proper nouns into the generic term عصابة entails a cultural loss. In movies of this genre, references to culture-specific elements such as gang names and terminology are expected. The use of generalization in this case neutralizes the context and deprives the audience of exposure to a historical and iconic reference to two of the most well-known African American street gangs in the United States.

The use of generalization in this translation dilutes the impact of the original utterance and is therefore less compatible with Nida’s concept of dynamic equivalence. By reducing culturally specific references, the translation results in a loss of cultural specification, as when hyponyms are replaced with their corresponding hypernyms. In other words, distinct entities are neutralized into generic categories: all gangs simply become *a gang*, all vehicles become *a car*, and all football players become *a player*. This technique fails to preserve both the expressive force and the referential precision of the source text. Moreover, it deprives the audience of exposure to two historically significant and culturally loaded references associated with some of the most well-known African American street gangs, thereby weakening the realism and cultural depth of the original utterance.

Restoring the Integrity of the Original

When examining the same scene on Apple TV, the translation was found to achieve a higher degree of cultural specificity and closer alignment with the tone of the original, as well as greater referential precision.

Translation on Apple TV

- ST: “You can’t decide to be a **Blood**, and get mad if the **Crips** try to kill you.”
- TT: "لا يمكنك أن تقرر أن تكون مع عصابة بلود وتغضب إن حاولت كريبز قتلك."
- BT: You cannot decide to be with the **Blood gang** and get mad if **Crips** tried to kill you.

Unlike the rendering بلود (Blood), which is modified by the word عصابة (“gang”), the loanword كريبز (Crips) in Arabic still carries some ambiguity regarding what it refers to, as it is not modified by an explanatory antecedent that clarifies its referent. Therefore, the original terms may be retained as loanwords through transliteration, accompanied by the explanatory antecedent modifier عصابة (“gang”) and, if necessary, a brief parenthetical explanation clarifying what these loanwords refer to, as follows:

- ST: “You can’t decide to be a **Blood**, and get mad if the **Crips** try to kill you.”
- PT: لا يمكنك أن تقرر أن تكون من عصابة البلدز، وتغضب إن حاولت عصابة الكريبز قتلك.
- BT: You cannot be from **the Bloods gang** and get mad if **the Crips gang** tried to kill you.

Nida’s theory of dynamic equivalence prioritizes preserving intended effect and cultural elements. The use of transliteration preceded by the modifier عصابة can achieve this goal. If necessary, a brief explanation clarifying the relationship between the two gangs may be added for additional context, such as: عصابتان عدوتان في أمريكا (“two rival gangs in America”).

These steps produce a precise translation and allow a high degree of accessibility to both the intended meaning and the source culture.. At the same time, the number of additional characters and words introduced does not negatively affect subtitle readability or synchronization with the spoken dialogue.

Conclusion

Translating semantically changed expressions into more neutral or less expressive expressions, or trying to find a one-to-part-of-one correspondence can successfully convey their core meaning with partial loss on other levels. In the case of utterance (1), there was a partial loss of the semantic components found in the source expression. To address this loss, the target text expression can be modified by lexical items that compensate for the lost, unrendered semantic features of the original expressions.

With regard to semantically shifted items functioning as proper nouns tied to African American culture, the application of generalization in utterance (2) led to the loss of cultural specificity associated with the terms *Bloods* and *Crips*, and deprived the viewer of a faithful cultural reference. In this case, trying to find a one-to-one lexical equivalence resulted in a loss referential precision. Greater accuracy can be attained by combining several techniques: keeping the original terms as loanwords through transliteration: (البلدز and الكريز), modifying them with the modifier عصابة (“gang”), and adding a brief parenthetical explanation to clarify them and provide more context when necessary. This shall be done with close attention characters number limit, readability and synchronization.

3.2.2 Stylistic Elevation in the Target Text

In this category, the target language rendering of semantically changed expressions are stylistically elevated and less frequent lexical choices. Indirect and sophisticated lexical choices were selected instead of the salient and direct equivalents that already exist in Arabic. This stylistic elevation occurs when the lexical complexity of the source text is mirrored through the selection of more marked, indirect expressions in the target language.

Utterance (1) - Everyday Expression

- ST: “Gotta **dip** downstairs real quick.”
- TT: "سأهبط إلى الطابق السفلي وأعود مباشرة."
- BT: I will **land** downstairs and come back immediately.

Context

This utterance is taken from the movie *All Day and a Night*, available with subtitles on Netflix. It is spoken by TQ to Jahkor to inform him that he will be leaving for a short period of time.

Meaning Unpacking

The verb *dip* is originally transitive and requires a direct object. However, in the present case, *dip* is used intransitively without a direct object. According to Green's *Dictionary of Slang*, *dip* is attested as a slang term used among African American teenagers in the United States to mean "to leave" (Green, n.d.-d), as in "I'm about to dip [leave]!" (Widawski, 2015, p. 114), and "hop in the whip, and we ready to dip!" (Widawski, 2015, p. 170).

When *dip* appears on its own, as in "I'm about to dip," the semantic shift is created through an application known as *conciseness of expression*. This effect is achieved by using the fewest possible words to convey meaning efficiently and forcefully. This conciseness of expression is a characteristic of African American slang; Major & Clarence (1994) describe it as a strategy to cut "through logic to arrive at a quick, efficient, interpretative solution to situations and things otherwise difficult to articulate" (p. xxviii). In the utterance, and in combination with the adverb of place *downstairs*, the shifted verb *dip* does not only convey the meaning "to leave," but also implies downward movement from high level to low level.

Translation Assessment

Lexically, the semantically shifted verb *dip*, when used to mean "to descend," has a salient and direct equivalent in MSA, which is أنزل (*anzil - nuzūl*, "to descend"). In the subtitles, the translation is أهبط (*ahbiṭ - hubūṭ*, "to land, fall or drop"), which also conveys movement downward but is typically used in more restricted contexts. These include airplanes landing (e.g., هبطت الطائرة), decreases in values or prices (e.g., هبطت أسعار النفط), or certain medical conditions (e.g., هبط ضغط دمه). Consequently, while أهبط can express *descending*, its conventional usage differs from the more general and everyday sense conveyed by *dip* in the source utterance. It is not the most straightforward way to express

descending in Arabic, and an Arabic speaker is likely to perceive it as unnatural in the target text, given the availability of more salient and natural lexical choices for conveying this meaning.

Using أهبط and أنزل interchangeably would not result in a significant difference in meaning in the rendering of the present utterance. However, with regard to naturalness of expression, the use of أهبط instead of أنزل is likely to sound unnatural to Arabic speakers. Therefore, it is recommended to use the more natural and contextually appropriate form أنزل in this case.

Utterance (2) – Everyday Expression

- ST: “I’m about to bounce back to the **crib**, nigga.”
- TT: "سأعود إلى الديار يا صاح."
- BT: I will go **home**, my friend.

Context

This utterance is taken from the movie *All Day and a Night*, available with subtitles on Netflix. It is spoken by TQ to Jahkor while they were following a white woman in her car, when the police suddenly appeared. The sight of the police caused them to abandon their plan of continuing to follow her.

Meaning Unpacking

The term *crib* was discussed in the previous category as a shifted form that evolved into the proper noun *Crips*, acquiring a new connotation distinct from its original denotative meaning “a small bed for a baby” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-c). A further semantic shift has also occurred with the lowercase form *crib*, which has developed an additional meaning different from both of the previously mentioned senses.

The term has acquired its new meaning through a figurative device known as *meiosis* (or *litotes*), which functions as an “ironic understatement that dismisses or belittles” (Widawski, 2015, p. 71). By reducing the perceived significance of a referent, meiosis operates as a figurative strategy of understatement. For example, through meiosis, the

Great Wall of China may be referred to as the *fence*, Mount Everest as *the hill*, or Detroit as *Motor City*. This device is frequently employed in African American slang and has contributed to the emergence of many semantically shifted expressions (Widawski, 2015).

In the present case, the lowercase term *crib* conveys a meaning that is widely recognized within African American speech communities. It functions as a marked, informal way of referring to one's home or place of residence, as illustrated in the following example: "We're having a party at G's **crib** [apartment or house]. You interested?" (Sopranos, 1999, in Widawski, 2015, p. 71).

Lower-case *crib* originated in African American slang, and like a number of expressions in African Americans slang, *crib* crossed over to general slang and became "assimilated into general American slang" (Widawski, 2015, p. 119-120).

Translation Assessment

On the lexical choices level, the semantically shifted lower-case *crib* that means "apartment or house" has direct salient equivalents in Arabic: منزل or بيت ("house"), or anything that implies a concrete place where someone lives like شقة ("apartment"). As for the subtitles, the plural equivalent الديار (*ad-diyaar*) implies the wider concept *homeland(s)* that is closer to an abstract or semi-abstract notion at the level of interpretation than a physical one. This word appears more in Arabic literary and poetic contexts than in every-day talks, and implies a sense of belonging, or collective homeland rather than a concrete building or house.

Regarding the context where the utterance appeared, it was a casual conversation between two friends who were not referring to the wider concept implied by the TT plural expression الديار (*ad-diyaar*). Rather, they were talking about their willingness to avoid any action that would cause them to go to prison instead of their house. In Arabic, going back to الديار and going back to one's house are two different concepts. The first might suggest some type of travel to another place, while the second simply suggests going to one's house. The difference between الديار (*ad-diyaar*) and المنزل (*al-manzil*, "the physical

house”) can be better observed when trying to use them interchangeably in Arabic. One can say منزلي يتكون من ثلاث غرف (my house (*manzil*) is composed of three rooms) but not ديارى تتكون من ثلاث غرف (my home (*diyaar*) is composed of three rooms). All this comes down to the following conclusion: the TT expression for *crib* in the is stylistically elevated, carries additional unintended minimal semantic features, and cannot be used interchangeably with the right equivalent المنزل.

Conclusion

Opting for less recognized lexical choice as equivalent to semantically shifted expressions might lead to a significant difference in style between the source and the target, markedness and less naturalness of expression in the target language. The use of a marked lexical choice can be the result of noticing the marked semantically shifted instance in the original utterance, and attempting to recreate a similar one in the target language. This resulted in a stylistically elevated TT where a less appropriate expression was used instead of the unmarked salient direct equivalent that exists. Naturalness in expression has to be realized through opting to equivalents that have wider recognition in the context where the shifted instance appears.

Opting to more marked choice when searching for equivalents not only results in a stylistic elevation, but also risks introducing semantic features that diverge from and absent in the ones the source text’s intended meaning. This could be observed in the subtitles of utterance (2), where not only a stylistic shift was detected, but also new semantic elements that were not implied by the source utterance were introduced in the TT’s expression. In other cases, like in utterance (1), a marked lexical choice might not lead to a significant difference in the message, but will sound unnatural and out-of-place.

3.2.3 Misinterpreted Instances

This category discusses instances in which the renderings fail to convey all parts of the meaning of the semantically changed expressions. This mistranslation occurs when reversion to the most salient, conventional meaning of the expression is done whereby the expressions are rendered into their original, pre-change meanings. The data included in this category consists of mistranslated expressions and the target texts’ expressions that

do not communicate the intended meaning of the semantically changed expressions, and undermine both the naturalness and the communicative effectiveness of the original message.

Utterance (1) – Drugs Related Term

- ST: “That’s a lot of weight. It’s like 20, 30 **keys**.”
- TT: "إنها ثقيلة، إنها ثقل 20 أو 30 مفتاحًا"
- BT: It is heavy. It is as heavy as 20 or 30 **keys**.

Context

This utterance is taken from the movie *Dope*, which is available with Arabic subtitles on Apple TV. It is delivered by Diggy after she and her friends discovered that one of their school backpacks is completely filled with stacks of drugs. She estimated the quantity to be around 20 to 30 *keys*, as the three African American teenagers reacted with amazement at the large amount and expressed uncertainty about how to get rid of it without getting into trouble.

Meaning Unpacking

In this utterance, the term *key* clearly does not refer to its standard dictionary meaning as a small piece of metal used to open doors. Instead, *keys* seems to replace or function as a Metric weight measurement unit. This interpretation is supported by the context, since 20 to 30 literal keys could not account for the large quantity of drugs filling the backpack. The expression therefore represents a semantically shifted use in which *key* replaces a conventional unit of measurement to indicate quantity.

Although the term may not overtly signal its shifted reference when used in this context, it is nonetheless a well-established expression in drug-related slang among African American speakers. After checking Green’s Slang Dictionary, *Key* with all its spellings (kee, keye, ki) is used in drug-trafficking contexts to denote “one kilo of marijuana, hashish, or another drug” (Green, n.d.-h). This usage results from a process known as clipping, a highly productive lexical mechanism through which one or more syllables of a word are removed to create a shorter form (Widawski, 2015). In this case, African American speakers apply back-clipping to the word *kilogram*, reducing it to *ki*. The

abbreviated form *ki* is homophonous with *key*, though it serves a distinct semantic function. Consider the following examples from Green’s Dictionary of Slang:

1. “Sellin fifty dollar slabs as I’m slangin them **ki’s**.” UGK, 1992, in Green’s Dictionary of Slang, n.d.
2. “But I got one foot in the street / And every week I flip a **ki**.” UGK, *Hi Life* (1996), in Green’s Dictionary of Slang, n.d.

To further confirm this usage, an interrogation conducted by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of California involving a man arrested for drug smuggling was examined. During the interrogation, the suspect was singing the line “got keys [a slang term for kilograms] coming from overseas,” which the Attorney’s Office described as a “line from a popular Hip Hop song discussing drug trafficking” (U.S. Attorney’s Office, 2023, para. 4).

On a macro level, drug-related terminology is widely known to be highly coded and characterized by a high degree of linguistic creativity. References to drugs, in particular, continually evolve and expand, resulting in an ever-growing set of expressions. Table (4) illustrates some of the terms used to refer to well-known types of drugs in American society, as documented in a report released by Drug Enforcement Administration.

Table (3)

Some of the names used to reference famous drugs and an estimated number names per drug, as found in Drug Enforcement Administration’s report

Drug	Examples of its Names	Count
Marijuana	Khalifa; diesel; airplane; big pillows; buddha; shrimp.	352 +
Cocaine	food; dust; flake; line; rock; sneeze; sniff; snow.	324 +
Heroin	boy; brown sugar; thunder; dragon; horse; mud.	260 +

It is worth noting that the meanings of such expressions are highly context-dependent and rely heavily on the speaker’s intended referent. For example, although *brown sugar* is listed in Table (4) as a term for heroin, the same expression can also be used to refer to African American women, as illustrated in the following example:

“You don’t bring no **brown sugar** [African American woman, especially if sexually attractive].” (Jungle Fever, movie, 1991, in Widawski, 2015, p. 74).

Translation Assessment

In the current utterance, a failure in rendering the new connotative intended meaning behind the utterance was detected. This failure in properly translating the instance came from the inability to access the expression *key* and understand its relationship with the overall context of the scene: drugs. This failure came as a result to the limited knowledge of the existence of an extended set of terms used in drugs medium that can reference the same referent.

Some semantically changed expressions look irrelevant to the utterance where they appear when understood literally; their literal meaning does not have a logical connection to the overall meaning of the utterance. Instances like *key* should prompt the translator to ask: What function might a seemingly contextually irrelevant word like *key* be fulfilling? Given that African Americans are known for using tricky, highly coded language, the translator should question every seemingly irrelevant term or phrase that show up in the utterances of African Americans. Consider the following examples where seemingly irrelevant terms appear:

1. “Say, daddy-o, what **ax** do you play?” (Ray, movie, 2004, 1999, in Widawski, 2013, p. 95).
2. “Younger guys get together to smoke some **tea** instead of swilling Scotch” (Metro News, 2008, in Widawski, 2013, p. 88).
3. “So is drinking and snorting **cake**, but people still do it!” (Subfighter, 2009, in Widawski, 2013, p. 88).

In these examples, the translator must recognize the apparent irrelevance of terms such as *ax*, *tea* and *cake* in their literal meaning to the context. After all, *tea* is not typically something that is smoked, an *ax* is not originally a musical instrument, and *cake* is something eaten rather than snorted. However, further investigation through African American slang dictionaries reveals that *tea* is used as a term for marijuana, *ax* refers to a musical instrument, and *cake* is a slang term for cocaine. These examples illustrate the importance of questioning seemingly irrelevant or illogical lexical choices in African American speech, as such terms often carry culturally specific, non-literal meanings that can go unnoticed.

Restoring the Integrity of the Original

In Arabic, the long name of unit كيلوغرام (*kīlūghrām*, “kilogram”) is abbreviated to become كغم (*kā-gham*). This abbreviation is only applicable in writing, not in speaking. In African American English however, the process is not abbreviation; it is clipping, and is applied in spoken language. To correct the mistranslation, the clipping through which *kilogram* become *ki* or *key* can be dismissed to return to the original extended form *kilogram*, which translates into كيلوغرام (*kīlūghrām*, “kilogram”), as in PT1. Another applicable way is through abbreviation; the term كيلوغرام can be abbreviated to become كغم, as in PT2:

- ST: “That’s a lot of weight. It’s like 20, 30 **keys**.”
- PT1: إنها ثقيلة، إنها تزن 20 أو 30 كيلوغرامًا.
- BT: It is heavy. It weighs 20 or 30 **kilograms**.
- PT2: إنها ثقيلة، إنها تزن 20 أو 30 كغم.
- BT: It is heavy. It weighs 20 or 30 **KG**.

Utterance (2) – Racial Slur as a Place Holder

- ST: “I was watching Justin Bieber... He is a very pretty **nigga**.”
- TT: "كنت أشاهد جاستن بيبير... إنه زنجي جميل للغاية."
- BT: I was watching Justin Bieber... he is a very beautiful **nigger**.

Context

Utterance (2) is taken from the movie *Dope* found subtitled on Shoof TV. The utterance took place within a conversation between three African American school friends who share the same background and live in the same part of the city. It was said by Diggy to her two friends about the famous Canadian pop star Justin Bieber: a white man.

Meaning Unpacking

The term *nigger* is widely prohibited as a label in contemporary African American society. However, its variant *nigga* has gained “continued acceptance among some

members of the African American community for intragroup self-reference” (Rahman, 2012, p. 137). The variant *nigga* emerged through the reappropriation of the formerly offensive term *nigger* by members of the community it had historically targeted before undergoing reclamation. Through this process of reclamation, the term developed into a discourse marker used within African American communities. The reappropriated form *nigga*, typically ending with a schwa, originated in early African American speech and has come to carry a distinct social meaning that is “foundational to the identity of many African Americans” (Rahman, 2012, p. 137). In African American movies, the expression *nigga* is used more frequently than almost any other word, especially among terms used for labeling. This makes it a prominent discourse marker among these people. What is especially interesting is how the expression *nigga* has evolved beyond its racially specific meaning to cover a wider area of meanings. Over time, this variant broadened its range of usage to cover a wide spectrum of meanings, from highly specific referents to more general ones.

The term *nigga* can be used as a general race-unspecified term of labelling. This was examined by Jones & Hall (2015) where they analyzed 10,000 tweets as their data. They found examples where the expression *nigga* can be modified by adjectives like *white* and *Asian*. These modifiers contradict the racial part of meaning of *nigga* (usually an African American person) as in “there’s this White/Asian nigga in my class” (Jones & Hall, 2015, p. 2). They stated that *nigga* can be modified by adjectives like *Black* and *African*. This suggests that the expression *nigga* alone is no longer a sharp indicator of the racial identity of its receiver, since speakers can modify it using adjectives like *Black*, *White*, *African*, or *Asian* to specify its referent.

Generally speaking, Arabic does not typically employ one single word to refer broadly to many different animate entities (friend, enemy, neighbor, self, people, etc.). Arabic also lacks a single colloquial word as dynamic and widely used and recognized among all Arabic speakers as *niggas* is among African Americans. There is no solid reason for finding and using a unified, widely recognized generic term of reference and labeling in Arabic. Moreover, there is no foundational background or established context for why such term should exist.

At the level of reclaiming a color-based slur, this phenomenon is also absent in Arabic. Several factors may help explain this gap. One reason is that Arabic-speaking societies did not share the same historical experience of racialized slavery that, in other contexts, led to the intra-group reclamation of such slurs. Instead, many Arabic societies tend to frame collective historical memory around wars, resistance and struggles for freedom than around slavery. Another reason is the lack of a widespread linguistic tradition in Arabic of reappropriating slurs and using them positively across a broad range of referents, from very specific referents to more general ones.

The markedness of *nigga* rises and falls depending on the setting and the participant in the conversation where the word appears. According to Jacobs (2002), the term *nigga* is predominantly used within African American communities rather than with outsiders. This expression has low markedness when used among all-African American spaces and in-group youth hearers, because it functions like every-day language term. However, if used in an interracial casual context, the expression becomes more noticeable for listeners and its markedness rises. In more restricted contexts like a courtroom, around children, around elderly African Americans who did not accept the expression's new reclamation, and when used by outsiders, the expression becomes highly marked. Its use in these restricted contexts will risk being judged unprofessional and inappropriate. Given all this, the expression's interpretation is highly dependent on the context of the emergence and the participants in the conversation, as well as those being labelled or addressed using this expression.

The current utterance comes from a conversation among three in-group youth members in which they were talking about the Canadian White pop artist Justin Bieber. In this context, the expression *nigga* slips in unremarkably and does not rise judgments because it emerged in an all-African American space. It was understood to perform the same labeling function as terms like *guy*, *dude*, or *man*. Therefore, the word immediately lost its markedness in the context where it emerged.

Translation Assessment

In the current utterance, a failure in rendering the inverted term of labeling *nigga* was detected. This failure can be attributed to several reasons. First, the lack of background knowledge of culturally specific items of African Americans. Throughout the movie

Dope on Shoof TV, the subtitlers rendered *nigga* into زنجي (nigger) multiple times, almost all of which were not referencing the ethnicity or race of the person being labelled or addressed in the first place.

This issue arises due to how this term being underrepresented within Arabic linguistics. Even though the term has a considerably different representation in the two languages, yet it was not examined equally in the two languages. The racial weight of *nigger/nigga* in American and Western discourse has been heavily examined, but Arabic scholarship seldom examines anti-Black racial insults, زنجي (*zinji*, “nigger”) as an epitome (Curtis, 2012; Abulhawa, 2013). This gap exists because the Arab experience is distinct and frequently characterized by different crises than those African Americans face, such as war and occupation; however, racism and slavery are more deeply entrenched within Western contexts and were lived by African Americans.

Another reason for this failure in rendering the term *nigga* is not tracking the historical context of the term. If the historical context and significance behind this racial slur are considered unimportant, this can unintentionally revive the original racial inferiority that the slur initially represented. In other words, dismissing the diachronic evolution of the term has undergone, or not knowing about it in the first place, can unintendedly recreate the racism and divisions it originally used to uphold before undergoing shifting and reclamation.

As for the Arab viewer, the expression زنجي (*zinji*, “nigger”) is a marked way of labelling people and is rarely, if ever, used naturally to refer to people in contemporary Arab societies. No exaggeration would be made by saying that the only contexts through which Arabs are exposed to this expression in modern time is through the subtitles of African American movies where *nigga* or *nigger* appear. The expression زنجي (*zinji*, “nigger”) in most of the case is thus artificially revived because of the failure to unpack the meaning of *nigga* and understand its diachronic evolution and its contextual flexibility.

Restoring the Integrity of the Original

Regardless of the way the expression *nigga* is being used and what meaning it has; the expression زنجي (*zinji*, “nigger”) is inaccurate as a rendering in the majority of cases. The subtitlers must foster their understanding of the reclaimed expression’s semantic development, context and the function it fulfils. In the case of the expression *nigga*, only a dynamic functional equivalent is going to give an adequate translation where the function is prioritized over anything else. Consider the following rendering:

- ST: “I was watching Justin Bieber... He is a very pretty **nigga**.”
- PT: كنت أشاهد جاستن بيبير... إنه فتى جميل للغاية.
- BT: I was watching Justin Bieber... he is a very beautiful **guy**.

Utterance (3) – Money-Related Expression

- ST: “**nigga, bands is bands, nigga**. You got way too many standards.”
- TT: “الفرق الموسيقية لا تتغير يا صاح، لكنك تبني الكثير من المعايير.”
- BT: **Musical bands do not change**, man, but you are setting a lot of standards.

Context

Utterance (3) is taken from the movie *All Day and a Night*, available on Netflix. This utterance is spoken by TQ in response to Jahkor’s refusal to sell “dope” to make money and his commitment to earning income through music instead. TQ believes that Jahkor has too many standards and finds his refusal unjustified. His argument is summed up in the expression “bands is bands,” meaning that money is still money regardless of whether it comes from selling drugs or from making music.

Meaning Unpacking

The term *band* can be interpreted within the context of music as “a group of musicians who play modern music together” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-a). This interpretation might initially seem appropriate to the context of utterance (3), given that the two men were discussing one of them aspiring to earn money through the music he makes. However, after studying the entire movie, there was no clear indication that Jahkor

intended to create or join a musical band to achieve this goal. He was a solo rapper who had already recorded several songs independently.

In Green's Dictionary of Slang, in the second definition of *band*, it is identified as a Black English term that refers to "\$1,000 in cash" (Green, n.d.-a), a usage that has become prevalent in Hip Hop and street vernacular, as in this example from a Rap song:

"I get 10 **bands** for a bar — I know I'm finally rich." Chief Keef, *Finally Rich* (2012), in Green's Dictionary of Slang.

There are two figurative devices used to give *band* its new meaning. The first is *synecdoche*: a figure of speech where the part refers to the whole, or vice versa. Synecdoche, realized in the use of *band* to denote a *whole stack of money*, functions through a part-whole mapping in which the reference of the rubber band used to hold cash together is broadened to stand for the stack as a whole. African American English contains numerous metonymic expressions for money that are commonly derived through synecdoche, for example *dead presidents*, which refers to the images of deceased U.S. presidents depicted on banknotes. The second figurative device is *meiosis* (or *litotes*): an "ironic understatement that dismisses or belittles" (Widawski, 2015, p. 71). Meiosis, realized in the use of *band* to denote "\$1,000 in cash" (Green, n.d.-a), functions as a rhetorical and semantic strategy that downplays the reference to a relatively large sum of money by using a more casual and indirect expression.

Translation Assessment

At first, the context of the conversation between Jahkor and TQ appears to be music. However, after understanding the semantic shift and the figurative meaning behind the expression "bands is bands" and its link to setting personal standards and the broader issue of earning a living through fair means, it becomes clear that music was not the focus of the discussion.

As a result of the difficulty in accessing this interpretation, the translation resorts to a literal rendering in which the semantic shift and the figurative meaning of the expression "bands is bands" are overlooked. Consequently, the resulting version conveys only the conventional and most salient sense of the expression rather than its functional meaning. The synecdoche is not reproduced, nor the tautological structure (X is X) present in the

original utterance.

Restoring the Integrity of the Original

The accurate rendering can be created through replacing الفرق الموسيقية (“musical bands”) by the true intended meaning of *bands*, which is *stacks of money*, with *money* being the core of the meaning. Some might suggest trying to recreate the tautological structure (X is X) and the synecdoche found in the original in the Arabic rendering. The following is an attempt to recreate the tautological structure as well as the synecdoche:

- الحزم حزم يا صاح، لكنك تبني الكثير من المعايير.

- BT: **Stacks are stacks**, friend, but you are setting a lot of standards.

A reproduction of the figurative devices applied to *band* in MSA will result in an unnatural and ambiguous translation to native speakers. There is a clear ambiguity surrounding the word حزم (*hizm*, “stacks”), since this word typically requires a modifier to specify the type, as in حزمة من العصي (“a bundle of sticks”). The absence of such modifier results in significant lack of clarity, making the product both unnatural and uninformative. The following is therefore an attempt to add the modifier مال (*māl*, “money”) to حزم (*hizm*, “stacks”) or الحزمة (*al-hizma* “the stack”):

- الحزم من المال حزم من المال يا صاح، لكنك تبني الكثير من المعايير.

- BT: **The stacks of money are stacks of money**, friend, but you are setting a lot of standards.

The last rendering is more specific and informative. However, in MSA, the expression الحزم من المال حزم من المال (“the stacks of money are stacks of money”) is not natural among Arabic speakers, as they do not usually produce it. This recreation of synecdoche and keeping the specification of reference led to wordiness, redundancy and loss of naturalness of expression. On the other hand, the recreation of the tautological structure (X is X) in Arabic is similar to a conduct known in Arabic as the *lexical emphasis*: a deliberate lexical repetition done for the purpose of emphasizing meaning.

To successfully render the utterance, and for the sake of clarity and naturalness, the core of the connotative meaning of the expression “bands is bands” must be captured and rendered. In this utterance, the core of the connotative meaning is clearly *money*. Furthermore, the synecdoche has to shift from the part (bands) to the whole (money) to eliminate wordiness, redundancy and unnaturalness of expression. The tautological structure does not present a problem, as it can be maintained and recreated in Arabic. The fragment بصرف النظر عن مصدره (“regardless of its source”) was introduced to convey the full notion implied by the original: money is money, regardless of its source. Consider the following proposed translation:

- PT: المال مال بصرف النظر عن مصدره يا صاح، لكنك تبني الكثير من المعايير.
- BT: **Money is money**, regardless of its source, my friend, but you are setting a lot of standards.

Through this layered process of decoding, inverting the metonymic device (synecdoche), keeping the lexical emphasis, and amplifying using the functional fragments inferred and implied by the source instance, a high-level, informative, natural equivalent was produced in the translation proposed by the author.

Utterance (4) – Affirmation Expression

- ST: Speaker (1): “All I want to do is a zoom, zoom, zoom and the boom, boom.”
Speakers (2) & (3): “**Word.**”
- TT1 – Apple TV: Speakers (1): “كل ما أريد فعله هو مضاجعتها.”
Speakers (2) & (3): “كلمات.”
- BT – TT1: Speakers (1): All I want to do is to have sex with her.
Speakers (2) & (3): **words.**
- TT2 – Shoof TV: Speakers (1): “كل ما أريد فعله هو زوم زوم زوم ويوم ويوم.”
Speakers (2) & (3): “حِكْم.”
- BT – TT2: Speakers (1): All I want to do is zoom, zoom, zoom and boom, boom.
Speakers (2) & (3): **Pieces of wisdom.**

Context

Utterance (4) is taken from the movie *Dope* available on Apple TV and Shoof TV. Speaker (1), Jib, with his two friends, Diggy and Malcolm (Speakers 2 and 3), are observing a woman whose attire is revealing and drawing attention. Jib expresses his sexual attraction towards her, to which his friends respond by saying: “word.” All three friends expressed their attraction to this woman at various points throughout the movie, including Diggy, who identifies as a lesbian.

Meaning Unpacking

The African American oral tradition puts so much emphasis on the language being a holder of great power. Central to this is the African notion of “Nommo,” which regards the spoken word as a vital, life-giving force (Bailey et al., 1991). In their culture, once something is articulated aloud, it becomes binding. This is reflected in the well-known expression they use frequently: yo [your] word is yo bond. In Hip Hop culture, this has evolved into popular responses like “word, word up and word to the mother” (Bailey et al., 1991, p. 208) that serve as positive affirmations or acknowledgments in conversation. The expression *word* is also used to instruct others to pay attention as in:

1. “**Word up** [listen or pay attention], look out for the cops!” (Wu-Tang Clan, CREAM, song, 1993, in Widawski, 2015, p. 104).

The standalone expression *word* is identified as Black slang in Green’s Dictionary of Slang and is used to convey “approval, admiration, or agreement,” to function as “an expression of greeting or farewell,” or to signal “one is having the final say in an argument” (Green, n.d.-k). In the present utterance, the speakers use the standalone expression *word* to show agreement with or acknowledgment of what they have just heard. Additionally, their body language in the scene suggests a tendency to engage with and participate in the thing being discussed.

Translation Assessment

Translating the African American English expression *word* into Arabic as كلمات was done through literal translation, as the expression was directly rendered into its standard plural Arabic equivalent meaning كلمات (*kalimāt*, “words”). This resulted in a formal direct unintended rendering. Using literal translation here is ineffective in conveying the

original idiomatic function of *word* in African American English, where it serves as an affirmation, acknowledgment, or expression of agreement in conversation. In Arabic, كلمات simply means *words*: the plural of a *word* (the basic unit of language), and lacks any connotation of affirmation or agreement. Therefore, the rendering fails to reflect the intended pragmatic meaning.

As for the subtitles on Shoof TV, the expression *word* was rendered as حِكْم (hikam, “pieces of wisdom”). This rendering captures only part of the intended meaning, namely that speaker (1) has said something with which speakers (2) and (3) agree. Describing the utterance as حِكْم (pieces of wisdom) implies that it contains truth or insight that the other speakers recognize and agree with. However, the expression *word* does not necessarily imply that what is being agreed upon is wise, insightful, or morally valuable. Rather, it functions as a marker of agreement or acknowledgment. Therefore, حِكْم (pieces of wisdom) cannot be considered an equivalent of *word*, as it introduces an evaluative meaning that is not present in the original expression.

Restoring the Integrity of the Original

After studying the whole movie, and learning that all three friends were attracted to the lady, and that they expressed this attraction at several points during the movie, the renderings TT1 and TT2 are found to be inaccurate. To properly render the expression *word* in this context, the subtitlers must depart from the formal direct equivalent towards a rendering that not only conveys approval, admiration and agreement, but also the conversational effect and the speakers’ attitude. A functional equivalent would convey the mentioned notions by rendering *word* into صحيح (ṣaḥīḥ, “true”), or أتفق (’attaḥiq, “I agree”). These renderings capture the intended meaning, but leave out the contribution of the paralinguistic cues and speakers’ attitudes to the meaning. Therefore, rendering *word* into صحيح (true), or أتفق (I agree) will convey only a part of the meaning, and not all of it.

A successful rendering of the term *word* in this very utterance must accurately convey the speaker’s stance, as reflected not only in their lexical choices but also in their paralinguistic cues. That is, the translation should underlyingly reproduce the

illocutionary force of approval, admiration and agreement, and communicate the speakers' willingness to actively participate in the activity being approved or admired or agreed upon. Consider the following attempt:

- ST: Speaker (1): "All I want to do is a zoom, zoom, zoom and the boom, boom."

Speakers (2) & (3): "Word."

- PT: Speakers (1): "كل ما أريد فعله هو مضاجعتها."

Speakers (2) & (3): ونحن أيضًا.

The suggested equivalents for *word* translate literally to نحن أيضًا (*nahnu 'aydan*, "we too"). The notions of approval, admiration and agreement are not conveyed through lexemes, but rather implied through a surface structure that entails not only approval, admiration and agreement, but also the willingness to take part in what is happening. At this point, Li's (2021) high-level equivalence was perfectly achieved.

Conclusion

Built on the findings in this category, translating semantically changed instances using literal translation resulted in a reversion towards the original, most salient, unintended conventional meaning the instance had before undergoing semantic change.

Regarding utterance (1), a word-level semantic shift was mishandled through an overly literal translation, resulting from a failure to unpack the meaning of the expression. The core issue lies in not recognizing the contextual irrelevance of certain shifted instances in the surface form. This oversight leads to neglecting the investigation of the intended meaning behind what appears to be an irrelevant expression in an utterance. Consequently, the translation is literal, neither accurate nor informative, and fails to convey the intended meaning clearly.

As for utterance (2), the term *nigga* has been reclaimed and given a new spelling to function as a term of labelling associated with African Americans, and used exclusively within this group. Over time, the term has had a range of uses, and carried multiple neutral or positive meanings; Its reference became no longer tied to race or ethnicity. This semantic flexibility makes the term difficult to translate because the expression's interpretation

becomes more dependent on the surrounding context, the position it occupies within the utterance and the function it serves in an interaction.

In utterance (3), the expression “bands is bands” has gained a new meaning through a layered process of meaning building. The result was this idiomatic expression whose meaning can be simplified into *money is money*. Understanding the figurative sense and the use of synecdoche helps selecting an adequate rendering for the expression. Rendering the expression would require reversing the synecdochic and adding supportive functional elements that help clarifying the intended meaning and eliminating ambiguity.

Regarding utterance (4), the standalone expression *word* was used verbally to express approval, admiration and agreement. On one platform, it was rendered literally to its formal direct plural equivalent كلمات (“words” - plural of word). It was rendered also as حِكْم (“pieces of wisdom”) on the other platform. Both translations resulted in a complete loss of the connotative meaning and the conversational function of the expression *word*. To overcome this, the new meaning has to be implicitly conveyed through a functional equivalent and an appropriate surface structure. The new rendering has to reflect approval, admiration, agreement and also the willingness to take part in the action, for these aspects are implied by the expression and inferred from the paralinguistic cues.

3.2.4 Omitted Instances

Nida (1964) classifies omission under the label subtraction: one of his three techniques of adjustment (addition, subtraction, alteration). He listed the typical cases where omission is considered justified: repetition, specification of reference, conjunctions, transitionals, categories, vocatives and formulae (Nida, 1964). This category covers instances not classified under any of the established classifications for which omission is justified, but have been omitted in the target texts. These instances to which no equivalents were provided in the target texts were analyzed in order to address the loss in translation. Alternative translations are proposed with the proper justification.

Utterance (1) – Violence-Related Term

- ST: “Ridin’ around **smokin’** niggas.”
- TT: "أجول وأنا غاضب يا قوم."
- BT: I roam while I am angry, O people.

Context

Utterance (1) is taken from the movie *All Day and a Night* available on Netflix. It was said by an African American man named Jahkor Lincoln while rapping a song he wrote and recorded. This line came up as he and his girlfriend were singing along to the song in the car. Upon hearing it, she shaped her hand in a way mimicking a pistol. This line is relatable to the line Jahkor sang earlier in the movie: “We ain’t the same if we ridin’ around killin’ niggas.”

Meaning Unpacking

On the semantic level, in the ordinary sense found in Cambridge Dictionary, *smoking* is defined as “the action of smoking a cigarette, pipe, etc., or the activity of doing this regularly” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-d). However, in the current utterance, the term *smokin’* stands for a totally different meaning.

In the article “Latino High School Students’ perceptions of Gangs and Crews” (Lopez et al., 2006), the authors viewed gang-related slang, including *to smoke*. They asked one former gang member, David, to narrate the danger he faced after deciding to quit a gang, and he said: “if they saw me, they would smoke me where I stand” (p. 313). The editors define the expression *to smoke* in an endnote: “to smoke someone means to shoot him” (p. 316).

The expression’s definition was also found in Green’s Dictionary of Slang for the purpose of further exploration of its semantic components. *To smoke* someone in Green’s Dictionary is “to kill, to murder, to shoot at (with a firearm)” (Green, n.d.-j). This is illustrated in the scene through a clear extra linguistic cue: Jahkor’s girlfriend shaping her hand in a way mimicking a pistol as she was singing with the lyrics. Therefore, the action implied by *smokin’* is shooting someone dead with a firearm.

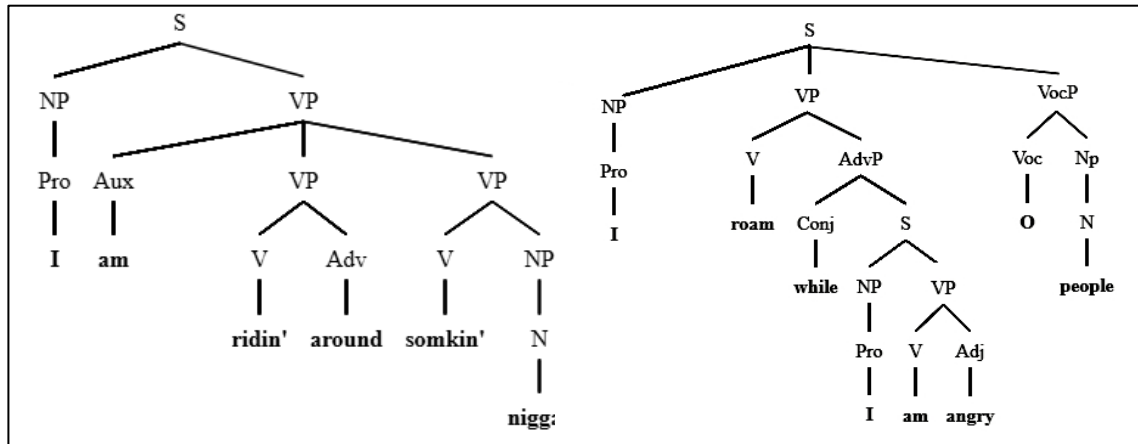
After having analyzed the utterance on the syntactical level, the verb *smokin’* is a transitive verb to which there was a direct object. However, its direct object was not a smokeable substance [-animate, -human]; the direct object was *niggas*, which is a human, animate noun [+animate, +human]. This syntactically aligns with David’s testimony “they would smoke me” where the object pronoun *me* [+animate, +human] operated as a direct object to the action *smoke*.

Translation Assessment

The expression *smokin'* is a carrier of semantic weight that contributes to the overall meaning of the utterance, and is observed to exhibit a semantic shift when it occurs with an animate direct object. The resulting semantic loss stems from the absence of lexical items conveying the shifted meaning associated with *smokin'*. No equivalent was provided in the target text, as none of the lexical items in either the TT or the BT substitute for the semantic implications of *smokin'*. To further clarify, both the ST and the BT are syntactically analyzed and decomposed into their minimal syntactic components and constituent categories.

Figure (1)

A Syntactic Decomposition of the ST and the BT



At the syntactic level, the TT and the BT included the adverbial phrase (AdvP) وأنا غاضب (“while I am angry”) modifying the main verb *roam* by clarifying the circumstance under which the action happens. In Arabic, this adverbial phrase (AdvP) is known as a جملة حالية (circumstantial clause), which typically follows the main clause and serves to clarify the circumstances under which an action takes place. In the current utterance, it specifies that the roaming occurs while the speaker is in a state of anger. However, when comparing the constituent categories of the ST with those of the BT; this adverbial phrase وأنا غاضب (“while I am angry”) is not attested in the original utterance, as it contains no minimal syntactic components or constituent categories that fulfill the function of indicating the circumstances under which the main action “ridin’ around” occurs.

Another constituent category introduced in the TT is the vocative phrase (VocP) يا قوم (“O people”). Unlike a standard verb phrase, a vocative does not perform a predicate function; rather, it serves exclusively to address a person or group directly. Moreover, vocatives are not integrated into the clause’s argument structure, which typically consists of a verb, an agent and a direct object. In short, at the syntactic level, the target text introduces a constituent category that is absent from the original utterance. This newly introduced constituent, the vocative, fails to fulfill the function carried by the original utterance’s constituent categories, namely the transitive verb and its direct object.

On the semantic level, neither the core meaning implied by *smokin’* (killing) nor its complementary semantic features (the use of a firearm) are rendered. As a result, the verb phrase *smokin’ niggas*, which consists of a semantically shifted transitive action and its direct object, is left without an equivalent in the TT.

Restoring the Integrity of the Original

The first step towards an accurate subtitling is to lose the vocative يا قوم (“O people”) introduced in the rendering. Then, an adequate functional equivalent must be proposed for the shifted verb *smokin’* to convey its semantic features. In this regard, *smokin’* can be rendered using words that imply the notion of killing using a firearm. This can be realized in Arabic through the following rendering:

- ST: “Ridin’ around **smokin’ niggas**.”
- PT: أتجول هنا وهناك وأردي الناس قتلى بالرصاص
- BT: I roam here and there, and **kill people with bullets**.

The verb أردي (*ur-dee*) was introduced to substitute for and convey the notion of causing someone to perish, fall, or die, which is implied in the verb *smokin’*, without specifying the method (using a firearm). The added verb أردي on its own is semantically broad and requires modification to narrow its meaning in this context. For this reason, it is combined with the adjective قتلى (*qatlā*, “killed”), which functions as a circumstantial adjunct. These adjunct answers the implicit question: *in what state did the action (smokin’) leave its*

animate direct object (niggas)? The answer to this question is *in a killed or dead state*, expressed by the circumstantial adjunct قتلَى (“killed”). Unlike *smokin’*, however, the phrase أردى قتلَى does not specify the method by which the action is carried out. Therefore, in order to convey this complementary semantic feature, the phrase بالرصاص (“with bullets”) may be added to أردى قتلَى to explicitly indicate the means used to perform the action.

The syntactic structure involving a verb and its direct object (transitivity) found in *smokin’ niggas* can be effectively recreated by inserting the direct object الناس (“the people”) between أردى and قتلَى in the expression أردى الناس قتلَى بالرصاص. Applying this layered process helps achieve a functional equivalent that captures the notion implied by *smokin’* more successfully, as it preserves both the action-object relationship and the intended semantic implications of the original expression.

Utterance (2) – Music-Related Term

- ST: "So what, you make them beats, or you **spit** them lyrics?"
- TT: "ماذا تفعل؟ هل تؤلف الموسيقى أم الكلمات؟"
- BT: What do you do? Do you compose the music or the lyrics?

Context

Utterance (2) is taken from the movie *All Day and a Night*, available with Arabic captions on Netflix. In this scene, Big Stunna, a local drug dealer, asks Jahkor about his work. Jahkor replies that he makes music, prompting Big Stunna to ask whether he makes beats or “spits” lyrics.

Meaning Unpacking

The word *spit* functions as a verb, and its literal meaning is “to force out the contents of the mouth, especially saliva” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-e). In Hip Hop music context, the word undergoes a semantic shift and extension to broaden the interpretive and referential scope of meaning. Semantic extension involves “applying a word to something

that falls outside of the word's linguistically specified denotation, on the basis of a principled relationship between the literal and the extended denotation" (Bowerman & Smith, 2022, p. 1). According to Bowerman & Smith (2022), one motivation for semantic extension is "the existence of a metonymic connection between the literal and extended denotations" (p. 1). These connections are built based on closeness between the original meaning of a word and its new meaning (Bowerman & Smith, 2022). For example, the noun *chicken* exhibits semantic extension as its meaning shifts from denoting an animal to denoting its meat, motivated by the conceptual association whereby meat is identified by the source animal. Some terms lose their semantic extensions due to the temporary limited use, while others remain in use until they become highly frequent and familiar, which eventually results in the "extended meaning becoming encoded as an additional conventional sense of the word" (Bowerman & Smith, 2022, p. 1). One word that successfully maintained its semantic extension is *spit*, thanks to its wide use in music industry among African Americans, given that this culture is the birth giver of Hip Hop and Rap.

In Green's Dictionary of Slang, *spit* is identified as Black English expression meaning "to write and perform Hip Hop or Rap lyrics"(Green, n.d.-j), and a *spitter* refers to a Rap artist. This usage represents an instance of semantic extension, whereby the word's meaning shifts from the literal act of ejecting saliva to the production of vocal rapping. The extension is motivated by a metonymic relationship, since both saliva and speech originate from the mouth, allowing the physical act to extend to imply the communicative performance of speech and Rap delivery.

Through this semantic extension, the word *spit* has also undergone a qualitative semantic change known as melioration. According to Washington (2010), melioration is a process by which the connotation of a linguistic form is altered, and its meaning becomes more positive and "characterized by an increase in its quality" (p. 18). In short, *spit* has been semantically extended and meliorated, and is adopted in Hip Hop discourse as a term referring to the performance of Rap.

Translation Assessment

The TT fails to offer an equivalent to the second part of the ST utterance where the semantically extended and meliorated action *spit* appears. The original utterance had two

coordinated clauses, each structured around a transitive verb followed by a direct object. The first coordinated clause is *make beats*; the second is *spit lyrics*. The two clauses encode different types of actions: beats production and lyrics performance. The Arabic translation, however, employs a single verb, *تؤلف* (“compose”), for both actions. This choice narrows the scope of Jahkor’s role to composing beats and writing lyrics, but not performing Rap songs. By dropping the verb *spit*, a cultural reference to one of the most respected elements of African American culture, Rap music, is also lost. The distinction between music production and lyrics performance through Rap is also lost.

Restoring the Integrity of the Original

To restore the lost elements on the semantic and cultural level, the translation has to convey the interiority of the utterance as following:

- ST: “So what, you make them beats, or you **spit** them lyrics?”
- PT: إذا، أتؤلف الموسيقى أم تغني الراب؟

The proposed translation provides a non-literal equivalent to the semantically extended verb *spit*. The expression *تغني* (*tughannī*, “you sing”) on its own does not reflect the specific type of music implied by *spit*. As stated earlier, to *spit* means “to write and perform Hip Hop or Rap lyrics” (Green, n.d.-j). The Rap-related component of this meaning is therefore not conveyed by the expression *تغني* on its own. To compensate for this loss at the semantic and cultural level, the word *الراب* (“Rap”) can be added to *تغني* (“sing”). This addition also compensates for the omission of the phrase *them lyrics* in the original utterance.

Utterance (3) – Vulgar Expression

- ST: “I’m **deadass** serious, nigga”
- TT: "أنا جاد يا رجل."
- BT: I am serious, man.

Context

Utterance (3) is taken from *Dope* available on Shoof TV and Apple TV. It was said by Malcolm to his friend to try to convince him to help creating a website store to sell drugs.

Meaning Unpacking

The expression *deadass* is composed of an adjective and a noun, and the combination creates an adverbial intensifier. This intensifier modifies the adjective *serious* in the same manner *very*, *truly*, or *absolutely* would. Generally, in slang, this expression appears as *dead serious*, for the word *dead* has been used as an intensifier in non-standard English for so long (e.g. *dead wrong*, *dead certain*). Whereas the morpheme *ass* itself is not a carrier of any semantic content in this way of usage, it carries the function of increasing the emphasis degree found in the adjective *serious*; It is added to *dead* to put extra emphasis and on the point made.

Translation Assessment

In the target text, no equivalent was provided for the compound adverb *deadass*, which functions as an intensifier modifying the adjective *serious*. The expression consists of two parts, *dead* and *ass*. The first bears the intensifying function, while the latter contributes no semantic content in this usage; the semantic load of the expression is entirely found in the word *dead*. The omission of the whole expression *deadass* led to the loss of the intensifier and resulted in a less emphatic TT. The omitted intensifier may not contribute a significant semantic content, but it is still a component of the original utterance and a carrier of the emphatic effect. Moreover, it does not appear under any of the cases where Nida deems omission warranted: repetition, specification of reference, conjunctions, transitionals, categories, vocatives and formulae. Therefore, omitting the intensifier *deadass* was unjustified.

Restoring the Integrity of the Original

To address the unjustified omission of the intensifier, the adverbial phrase *للمغاية* was introduced to modify the adjective *serious*. It fulfils the function of an intensifier. It is not the only choice for an intensifier in Arabic, as there can also be other intensifiers used in Arabic to fulfil the same function, like *جداً*.

- ST: “I’m **deadass** serious, nigga”
- PT: أنا جاد للغاية يا رجل.
- BT: I am **so** serious, man.

Instance (4) – Multifunctional Term

- ST: The movie’s title: Dope
- TT1 – Apple TV: ∅

Context

Instance (5) is how the movie’s title *Dope* is subtitled on Apple TV: no subtitling was offered. The movie’s first scene was a black screen where the term *dope* was defined by three different definitions. Directly after this screen of definitions, the title appeared with no subtitles.

Meaning Unpacking

The term *dope* is multifunctional and a carrier of different meanings depending on how it is used and in which context. In the first scene of the movie, before the appearance of the title, a black screen appears and three definitions of the word *dope* are displayed. It is defined as “noun: a drug taken illegally for recreational purposes” and “noun: a stupid person” and “slang: excellent. Used as a generalized term of approval” (Dope, 2015). The term was used ten times in the movie, nine of which referred to drugs, while one functioned as an evaluative adjective. The term *dope* also extends to carry other implications. For instance, when used as an adjective, *dope* is identified as Black slang and defined as “very good, excellent” (Green, n.d.-e).

Translation Assessment

Choosing a single interpretation as the sole translation for the title was associated with several challenges. The movie’s title, *Dope*, appears at the beginning of the movie immediately after the scene in which three definitions of *dope* are displayed on a black screen. At this point, selecting only one of the three definitions would contradict the communicative purpose of the definitions screen, which is to highlight the term’s polysemy and multifunctionality.

Moreover, unlike the three definitions, the word *dope* in the title is not classified under any part of speech that would help determine its intended meaning. The word *dope* is also used as an evaluative adjective meaning *very good* or *excellent* by a character in the first few minutes of the movie, before the movie later shifts to using *dope* primarily to imply drugs. Finally, listing all possible meanings as subtitles for the title would make it resemble a glossary rather than a movie title, which would negatively affect readability and potentially confuse the audience. All of these factors make it impossible to select a single interpretation as the sole translation of the title.

Regarding how the title was handled on Shoof TV, the technique used was not omission. Rather, the title was rendered through transliteration, achieved by grapheme-to-grapheme mapping of the English pronounceable letters to their orthographic counterparts in Arabic (دوب). This method preserves the term's ambiguity and helps the subtitlers avoid all the previously mentioned challenges.

- ST: The movie's title: Dope
- TT2 – Shoof TV: "دوب."

Utterance (5) - Everyday Expression

- ST: "That reminds me, I've been **kickin' it** with this rapper nigga."
- TT: "هذا يذكرني بمغني راب أعرفه."
- BT: This reminds me of a rapper I know.

Context

Utterance (3) is taken from *All Day and a Night* found on Netflix. It was said by TQ to Jahkor as a reference to a rapper he has been spending time with lately.

Meaning Unpacking

The expression *kickin' it* originated as an African American slang, and is defined by Woodman State Jail & Security Threat Group Office (2004) in their glossary as "spending time with someone in the group" (p. 78). The same expression is explained by Dictionary.com, as "if someone is kickin' it, they essentially mean they're hanging out

with no planned activities” (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

Translation Assessment

TQ’s utterance can be broken down into two parts: the first is “that reminds me,” and the second is “I’ve been kickin’ it with this rapper nigga.” The colloquial expression *kickin’ it* denotes spending time with friends without planned activities.

The entire utterance was undertranslated into Arabic, as can be seen in the back translation: “this reminds me of a rapper I know.” If the second part of the utterance was paraphrased, it would read “I have been hanging out with this rapper.” The expression *kickin’ it* in the second part of the source text was not rendered in the target text; the back translation confirms that no equivalent was provided, and the utterance is therefore undertranslated.

This omission downgrades the ongoing social relationship between TQ and the rapper he has been spending time with in the present. Moreover, it results in a shift in meaning: TQ was not recalling a random rapper he happens to know, as the target text suggests, but rather referring to a rapper he has recently been spending time with and who can potentially help Jahkor publish his music. This omission is therefore unjustified, especially because the concept implied by *kickin’ it* has a salient lexicalized equivalent in Arabic.

Restoring the Integrity of the Original

Restoring the original meaning can be done by retaining the first part هذا يذكرني (“this reminds me”) and translating “I’ve been kickin’ it with” as منذ مدة وأنا أتسكع مع (“I have been hanging out with ... for a while”) in order to capture the present perfect progressive sense of ongoing interaction. The expression *kickin’ it* can thus be rendered through its lexicalized Arabic equivalent أتسكع (*atasakkau*, “I hang out”), which provides a natural and idiomatic way of expressing this concept in Arabic.

The deixis and specificity of “this rapper” can be omitted in the rendering. This omission is justified for two reasons. First, it constitutes an unnecessary specification of reference, which, according to Nida (1964) may be subject to omission. Second, if rendered literally,

the post-nominal demonstrative “this” in the source utterance would correspond to the deictic pronoun هذا (“this”) in Arabic, which would appear at the end of the sentence.

The deictic pronoun هذا does not normally occur sentence-finally in Arabic unless the referent is visually or contextually obvious. In the present case, the referent is neither visible nor previously known to the addressee. After applying all the aforementioned adjustments, the final translation will be as follows:

- ST: “That reminds me, I’ve been **kickin’ it** with this rapper nigga.”
- PT: لقد تذكرت؛ منذ مدة وأنا أتسكع مع مغني راب.
- BT: I remembered; I’ve been **hanging out** with a rapper for a while.

Conclusion

In this category, omission was used as a technique to handle instances involving semantic change. Some of the omitted elements had lexicalized equivalents in Arabic, whereas others did not. Likewise, certain omissions resulted in a noticeable semantic loss or change in the meaning of the utterance, while others had an impact on other levels. In one case, omission was considered preferable to offering a rendering.

Regarding the first utterance, a substantial semantic loss resulted from omitting a meaning-loaded term that had undergone semantic shift. The term *smokin’* is unlexicalized in Arabic and not readily accessible to an outsider audience without background knowledge of its use in AAE. Instead of offering an appropriate rendering, the term was omitted and an unjustified vocative was introduced, reflecting a misinterpretation at the syntactic level. To avoid such issues, subtitle creators must understand the utterance’s syntactic structure, particularly that the transitivity of *smokin’* requires an animate human direct object. The integrity of the original was restored by reinstating the omitted term and explicitly rendering its semantic features.

The second utterance suffered semantic and cultural loss in the Arabic rendering as a result of omission. Omitting the ameliorated and semantically extended term *spit* led to the loss of a salient component of African American culture as well as a central theme of the movie: the verbal performance of Rap music. The integrity of the original utterance could be restored by reversing the omission of the semantically extended term *spit* and

providing an explicit non-literal equivalent that directly references the delivery of Rap lyrics.

In the third utterance, the omitted element was the intensifier *deadass*, which does not contribute semantic content but instead serves an emphatic function. Its omission resulted in the loss of the emphatic force present in the original utterance. Given that Arabic offers multiple emphatic intensifiers, omitting *deadass* is therefore unjustified. To restore the integrity of the original, the omitted intensifier's function should be rendered in the most appropriate way in the TT using a functionally equivalent intensifier.

Regarding the fourth utterance, on one platform, omission was deemed an appropriate solution to avoid several potential issues arising from the polysemous and multifunctional nature of the term *dope*. On another platform, the same instance was addressed through transliteration.

3.2.5 Function Preserved

This category discusses and analyzes subtitles in which inverted or shifted instances were rendered into successful, functional equivalents. In some cases, these equivalents went beyond merely conveying function and were highly communicative renderings.

Utterances (1) & (2) - Reclaimed Racial Slur as a General Term of Reference

Utterance (1)

- ST: "We ain't the same if we ridin' around killin' **niggas**."
- TT: "لن نعود كما كنا إن رحنا نقتل الناس."
- BT: We will not return as we were if we go killing **people**.

Utterance (2)

- ST: "Some **nigga** really need to invent an app like Waze."
- TT1 – Apple TV: "يجب أن يخترع أحدهم تطبيقا مثل وايز."
- BT: **Somebody** must invent an app like Waze.
- TT2 – Shoof TV: "على أحدهم اختراع تطبيق مثل وايز."
- BT: **Somebody** has to invent an app like Waze.

Context

Utterance (1) is taken from the movie *All Day and a Night*, which is available on Netflix. It is spoken by Jahkor while he was rapping a song he wrote prior to committing a double homicide in which he killed two African American parents, a crime for which he was later imprisoned. Throughout the movie, Jahkor also engaged in acts of violence and robbery against other African American men. In total, he killed three individuals: the two parents who were a drug dealer and his wife, and later a man named TQ. All three victims were African Americans.

Utterance (2) is taken from *Dope* available on Apple TV. It was said by Jib to his friends Malcolm and Diggy as they were trying to avoid street gangs while going back to their houses.

Meaning Unpacking

As discussed earlier in this study, the expression *nigger* was reclaimed under a new spelling and pronunciation and became a widely used intragroup term of reference (Rahman, 2012). While the expression *nigga* carries a “social meaning that is foundational in the identity of many African Americans” (Rahman, 2012, p. 137), its usage has expanded and evolved beyond strictly racial boundaries. Today, it can encompass a broad range of meanings, spanning from highly specific referents to more general or context-dependent ones (Rahman, 2012).

In the present case, the semantically inverted term *nigger* has undergone semantic bleaching and became the reclaimed *nigga* with its new spelling. The semantic bleaching resulted in the term *nigger*, in its reclaimed form *nigga*, losing its racial and negative connotations. The term’s referential scope has broadened, and it has come to function as a generic, race-unspecified labelling term. In this role, it fulfills functions similar to a range of unmarked, or less marked, terms of labelling such as *man*, *guy*, *dude*, *friend* and *people*. The meaning-making mechanism underlying this change is a productive process in African American English known as *generalization*, whereby the denotative meaning of a word is widened to make it more inclusive (Widawski, 2015).

Translation Assessment

At the word level, the term *nigga* functions as a casual, generic, race-unspecified term referring to a group of people. The MSA renderings الناس (*an-nās*, “the people”) and أحدهم (*aḥaduhum*, “somebody”) perform a similar referential function. The key difference between *nigga* and these two equivalents lies in the pragmatic and sociolinguistic constraints. The term *nigga* can only be articulated by African Americans, and its use inherently strips discourse of formality. As such, articulating this expression is inappropriate in neutral or formal contexts, regardless of its referent. By contrast, the Arabic terms الناس and أحدهم are neutral and universally accepted ways of referring to groups of people. They are appropriate in both formal and informal settings, carry no offensive or informal connotations, and can be used comfortably across a wide range of communicative contexts, from casual conversations to formal speeches without any risk.

The TT successfully captures the core denotative meaning conveyed by *niggas* and fulfills the pragmatic requirement of providing a nonspecific reference. The term *nigga* is culturally bound, with a distinct sociocultural background and an evolution through history. On the other side, no MSA expression that carries a similar sociocultural and historical background exists or has a reason to exist. Given this mismatch between the source and target cultures, and if there is any loss on the cultural level, this loss is not substantial, as the communicative function of the original term is preserved in the translation.

Utterance (3) – Highlighting Race & Self-Othering

- ST: “You want three **niggas** to take a bag full of dope and a gun to the fucking police station?”
- TT1 – Shoof TV: "تريد من ثلاثة زوج أخذ حقيبة مملوءة بالمخدرات وسلاح إلى مركز الشرطة؟"
- BT: You want three **niggers** to take a bag full of drugs and a gun to the police station?
- TT2 – Apple TV: "تريد أن يأخذ ثلاثة مراهقين سود حقيبة مليئة بالمخدرات وبمسدس إلى مركز الشرطة؟"
- BT: You want three **Black teenagers** to take a bag full of drugs and a gun to the police station?

Context

Utterance (3) is taken from the movie *Dope* available on Apple TV and Shoof TV. It is spoken by Malcolm to his two friends immediately after he discovered that someone placed drugs and a firearm in his backpack, in response to one friend's suggestion that they take the backpack to the police station.

Meaning Unpacking

Highlighting difference and othering are commonly done by indexing stigma onto individuals who deviate from group norms, particularly when such differences are socially undesirable. In the present utterance, the speaker employs a practice akin to self-othering, shaped by an emic-etic contrast, by describing himself and his three friends from an outsider's perspective. Malcolm's reference to the three of them as "niggas" in this context is closely linked to long-standing histories of systemic racism against African Americans and the persistent association of Blackness with drugs and criminal behavior. The implication is that, from their own perspective, they are simply three people in possession of drugs, whereas from the outsider's viewpoint, they are three African Americans with drugs, a distinction that effectively compounds the severity of the situation.

This idea is supported by a substantial body of research on race and racism. For instance, the American Civil Liberties Union's (2013) report demonstrates that drug enforcement practices have disproportionately targeted African American communities, despite comparable rates of drug use across other racial groups. The ACLU summarized: "on average, a Black person is 3.73 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than a white person" (ACLU, 2013, p. 4). In light of this information, many African Americans may be extra reluctant to engage with police in sensitive situations such as drug-related incidents due to the heightened risk of judgment, stigmatization, arrest, or broader criminalization based on race.

As previously explained, the term *nigga* exhibits a shift not only at the semantic level, but also on the level of markedness. Its interpretation is highly context-dependent, relying on the circumstances of its use, the participants in the interaction, and the individuals being labeled or addressed. Depending on the context and the speakers involved, the term may pass unnoticed or, alternatively, provoke a strong reaction. When used among African

American speakers in informal, in-group settings, it can signal closeness, shared identity, or solidarity and may therefore go unnoticed. However, when the same term is used by outsiders, or in situations marked by unequal power relations, it often becomes highly charged and can be perceived as offensive or hostile.

In the current utterance, the term was used by an African American speaker, among a group of three African American people, in an all-African American spaces and in-group youth hearers. However, the term in this case restores its racial implication due to the context that ties African Americans to drugs and police and the overall context of long-standing conflicts and systematic racism against African American people.

Translation Assessment

The subtitles restored the racial dimension associated with *nigger* by translating *nigga* into زنج (zunūj, “niggers”) and سود (sūd, “Black”). Both renderings carry explicit racial meanings that are central to *nigger* but are not typically foregrounded in the ordinary in-group use of *nigga*. However, reintroducing these racial aspects was necessary to fulfill a communicative function in the target text. This shift toward the original, non-ameliorated meaning is crucial, as it reflects a change from self-labeling from the speaker’s own perspective to self-labeling as perceived from the viewpoint of outsiders, most notably non-African Americans.

This contrast applied by the speaker instantly caused the term to become marked and a carrier of racial implications and considerations. It is meant to highlight how outsiders would always judge African American people and presume they are involved with drugs. This is perfectly reflected in the target texts through the racial terms زنج and سود.

Utterances (4) & (5) – Vulgar Expressions

Utterances (4)

- ST: “**Your ass** should be back hitting corners in no time nigga.”
- TT: "عليك أن تعود الى التسكع مع أصدقائك قريبا جدا يا صاح."
- BT: **You** have to go back to hanging out with your friends very soon, friend.

Utterance (5)

- ST: "I told **your motherf*ckin' ass** I don't f*ck with dope."
- TT: "أخبرتكَ أنني لا أتعامل مع المخدرات."
- BT: I told **you** I do not deal with drugs.

Context

Utterance (4) is from the movie *All Day and a Night* available on Netflix. Jahkor says it to his friend who had been badly wounded in the war in an attempt to cheer him up. Utterance (5) is from the same movie; Jahkor addresses it to TQ in response to TQ's proposal that they sell drugs together. In an earlier scene, Jahkor turned down the same proposal made by TQ by saying: "nigga, you know I don't f*ck with that dope money."

Meaning Unpacking

In this utterance, the originally vulgar term *ass* has undergone an inversion (melioration) to become a neutral term carrier of a different connotation. The figurative device used here is synecdoche: a figure of speech whereby a part represents the whole or vice versa. The previously negative word replaces personal pronouns, possessive pronouns and reflexive pronoun, as in "you can either sell dope or get your ass [yourself] a job" (Ice Cube, 1990, in Widawski, 2015, p. 173).

Translation Assessment

The expression *your ass* metonymically implies the second-person pronoun *you*, and was correctly rendered and captured through the prepositional phrases عليك ("you should") and أخبرتكَ ("I told you"). Since multiple orthographic words in the source text (*your ass should* and *I told your motherf*ckin' ass*) were represented by a single word in the target language (عليك and أخبرتكَ), and due to the difference in how languages map ideas morphologically, the equivalent of *your ass* is the second-person singular enclitic pronoun (ك) that appears within the mentioned prepositional phrases.

In utterance (5), the expression *motherf*ckin'* appears as an inserted element within the expression *your ass*. This expression *motherf*ckin'* has undergone melioration to become

semantically neutral with no semantic weight or content. However, it carries the function of a strong expletive intensifier. Consequently, the full form *your motherf*ckin' ass* signals an escalation in stance and serves to reaffirm the speaker's previously stated position.

This interpretation is supported by the movie's context. TQ offers Jahkor at least two opportunities to sell drugs with him, but Jahkor remains firm in his refusal. The first time he declines, he states, "nigga, you know I don't f*ck with that dope money." The second time, he intensifies both his stance and emphasis: "I told your motherf*ckin' ass I don't f*ck with dope." Here, the expletive intensifier *motherf*ckin'* functions to heighten forcefulness and assertiveness. This intensifying effect can be rendered in Arabic as follows:

- ST: "I told your **mother*ckin'** ass I don't f*ck with dope."
- PT1: أخبرتك مرارًا وتكرارًا أنني لا أتعامل مع المخدرات
- BT: I told you **over and over** that I do not deal with drugs.
- PT2: أخبرتك مئة مرة أنني لا أتعامل مع المخدرات
- BT: I told you **a hundred times** that I do not deal with drugs.

Expressions such as مرارًا وتكرارًا ("over and over") and مئة مرة ("a hundred times") serve the same function as the meliorated expletive expression *motherf*ckin'*, namely that of a strong intensifier. Likewise, PT1 and PT2 reflect an escalation in stance and a reaffirmation of the speaker's previously expressed position, while remaining natural and pragmatically appropriate in Arabic.

Utterance (6) – Music-Related Expression

- ST: "You know that I **rhyme**."
- TT: "تعرف أنني أغني الراب."
- BT: You know that I **sing rap**.

Context

This utterance is taken from *All Day and a Night* streaming on Netflix. It was said by a woman aspiring to become a rapper and wishing to find a producer to help her join a song.

Meaning Unpacking

In standard English, *rhyme* refers to the repetition of similar sounds in poems or songs. According to the Al Maany English-Arabic Dictionary, the conventional sense of the verb “to put words together to form a rhyme” (Almaany Dictionary, n.d) has direct lexicalized equivalents in Arabic, such as *يسجّع* or *يقفّي*. However, within the context of African American music, the expression *rhyme* extends beyond its general meaning to denote the act of composing Rap lyrics and songs specifically, as illustrated by the following example:

1. “I know that the way I kick a **rhyme** [create Rap lyrics and rhymes] some will call me a poet.” (Us3, 1993, Widawski, 2015, p. 37)

In utterance (6), the verb *rhyme* has a new connotative meaning emerging through synecdoche, whereby a part of the general concept (rhymes in the lines of a Rap song) is used to refer to the whole action of writing and performing Rap.

Translation Assessment

At the word level, the concept conveyed by the verb *rhyme* in its Rap-related sense has no direct lexicalized equivalent in Arabic, particularly since Rap is not a traditional genre in Arabic music or poetry. While this extended, specialized meaning of *rhyme* can still be conveyed, it requires a more explicit rendering. In the TT, the expression *أغني الراب* (“I sing Rap”) functions as an explicit equivalent in terms of lexical expansion and semantic clarity.

Utterance (7) – Drugs-Related Expression

- ST: “Shooting up a lot of **corners** right now.”
- TT: "يقتل الكثير من موزعي المخدرات الآن."
- BT: Many **drugs distributors** are being killed now.

Context

Utterance (7) is taken from the movie *All Day and a Night*, available on Netflix. It is spoken by the drug dealer TQ to Jahkor during the funeral of another drug dealer who had been killed. The utterance is a comment on the recent spate of drug dealers being killed off guard.

Meaning Unpacking

The expression *corner* is an African American English term that evolved semantically over time. In 40s and 50s, a *corner* was the “intersection where young black men gather on the sidewalk to socialize and to make “business” transactions” (Major & Clarence, 1994, p. 115). When placed within the context of drugs, a *corner* or a *corner boy* are expressions used to reference a person “who works on a drug ‘corner’ as a salesman” (Green, n.d.-b). The new meaning arises through metonymy, whereby a place name is also used to reference the people associated with it.

Translation Assessment

Rendering *corners* into "موزعي المخدرات" (“drugs distributors”) captured the implicit meaning correctly and made it explicit through explicitation. The translation makes it clear that the reference is drugs dealers themselves through the place where they stand, which also aligns with the context of the scene.

Utterances (8) – Money-Related Expression

- ST: “I’m hearing they got hella **paper** on your head.”
- TT: "سمعت أنهم وضعوا مكافأة مقابل النيل منك."
- BT: I heard that they put a **reward** for getting you.

Context

Utterance (8) is taken from *All Day and a Night*, and was said by Stunna’s brother to Jahkor in the prison yard as they were looking at the rival gang members.

Meaning Unpacking

The expression *paper* is used among African Americans to refer to paper money, as in “that’s a lot of paper [money, not just any paper], dawg” (Crossover, 2006, in Widawski, 2015, p. 77). It is very popular among English speakers and is not limited to African Americans anymore. The expression *paper* has taken on this new connotation through the use of synecdoche, where *paper*, a physical component of *money*, stands in for *money* as a whole. The new definition was also due to meiosis application, which deliberately downplays the seriousness of *money* by referring to it as something as ordinary as *paper*. Through these two devices combined, the term *paper* referencing material from which money is made was extended to reference money itself.

Translation Assessment

In the ST, the word *hella* functions as an intensifier, indicating the large amount of money involved. It does not add new meaning, but strengthens the statement by suggesting seriousness of the situation. Consequently, *hella paper* simply means “a lot of money.” The word *paper* was not understood as *money* only, as this interpretation reduces it to a purely literal sense and ignores what it implies in context. In this case, *paper* refers to something given in return for an action or effort, rather than simply cash.

For this reason, translating *paper* as مكافأة (*mukāfa’a*, “reward”) better captures the intended meaning and reflects the idea of compensation or recognition for doing something, which is what the original term implies. Making the implied meaning explicit allowed the translation to move past literal money and clearly convey the intended message.

Utterances (9) & (10) – Drugs-Related Expression

Utterances (9)

- ST: “You want three niggas to take a bag full of **dope** and a gun to the f*cking police station?”
- TT1 – Shoof TV: "تريد من ثلاثة زنوج أخذ حقيبة مملوءة بالمخدرات وسلاح إلى مركز الشرطة؟"
- BT: Do you want three niggers to take a bag full of **drugs** and a gun to the police station?

- TT2 – Apple TV: "تريد أن يأخذ ثلاثة مراهقين سود حقيبة مليئة بالمخدرات وبمسدس إلى مركز الشرطة؟"
- BT: Do you want three Black teenagers to take a bag full of **drugs** and a gun to the police station?

Utterances (10)

- ST: "nigga, you know I don't f*ck with that **dope** money."
- TT: "تعرف أنني لا أقبل أموال المخدرات."
- BT: You know that I do not accept **drugs** money.

Context

Utterance (9) is taken from the movie *Dope* available on Shoof TV and Apple TV. It is spoken by Malcolm to his two friends immediately after he discovered that someone placed drugs and a firearm in his backpack, in response to one friend's suggestion that they take the backpack to the police station.

Utterance (10) is taken from *All Day and a Night* available on Netflix. It is spoken by Jahkor to his friend TQ, who is attempting to persuade Jahkor to sell drugs to generate income.

Meaning Unpacking

In modern usage, *dope* is used in AAE to refer to illegal drugs, especially marijuana (Aronson, 2024; Green, n.d.). The term is considered a polysemous, multifunctional and a pragmatically marked way to reference drugs.

Translation Assessment

The new meaning of *dope* has gained high recognizability as part of drug-related language. Nevertheless, using the expression *dope* is not the most direct way to refer to drugs; rather, it is a marked expression. The semantic shift was appropriately handled by rendering *dope* into its explicit meaning. In the Arabic subtitles, the term was translated using the neutral and widely understood equivalent المخدرات (*al-mukhaddirāt*, "drugs"). This rendering prioritizes clarity, accuracy and naturalness for the target audience.

Although drugs exist in the Arab world, the problem is not as severe as it is in America, and within African American communities. Arabic may still contain drug-related terms or expressions in which semantic shift is applied for the purpose of concealing communication. However, given this difference between the two societies, Arabic does not have as extensive range of drug-related terms or expressions as those found in African American English, as there is less social and cultural necessity for the development of such rich and specialized drug-related lexicon. Moreover, when such terms do exist, they are not widely recognized across the broader speech community in the same way *dope* is in American society. Therefore, rendering *dope* into its most salient, direct hypernymic equivalent المخدرات (“drugs”) is the most appropriate rendering.

Utterances (11) & (12) - Evaluative Adjective

Utterances (11)

- ST: “He **dope**. You need to meet that nigga. He **dope**. You’re **dope**.”
- TT: "إنه رائع. وعليك أن تلتقي به. إنه رائع. وأنت رائع."
- BT: He is **great**. And you have to meet him. He is **great**. And you are **great**.

Utterances (12)

- ST: “So, one day we’re gonna buy things with numbers from a math equation? **Dope**, right?”
- TT1 – Shoof TV: "إذا يوما ما سنشتري الأشياء بأرقام من معادلة رياضية؟ رائع، أليس كذلك؟"
- BT: So one day we will buy things by numbers from a mathematical equation. Wonderful, is it not?
- TT2 – Apple TV: "سنشتري في يوم من الايام حاجياتنا عبر أرقام من معادلة رياضية. أليس رائعاً؟"
- BT: One day we’ll buy our necessities using numbers from a mathematical equation. Is it not that **great**?

Context

Utterance (11) is taken from *All Day and a Night* streaming on Netflix. It was spoken by TQ as he was describing a rapper and Jahkor. Utterance (12) is taken from *Dope*. It was

spoken by Malcolm to his mom as he was trying to explain how world will shift to using digital currencies.

Meaning Unpacking

The multifunctional term *dope*, as previously explained, carries different meanings depending on its usage and context. When used as an adjective describing a person, it conveys one of two contrasting interpretations. In general English slang, *dope* refers to someone who is “foolish” or “stupid” (Green, n.d.-e) In African American slang, however, the meaning is reversed and used as a term of praise, signifying qualities such as “very good” or “excellent” (Green, n.d.-d) In this context, *dope* has undergone a process of semantic inversion, whereby a term with a traditionally negative meaning acquires a positive connotation, contrary to its interpretation in general English slang.

Translation Assessment

The term *dope* is considered polysemous and multifunctional expression serving as a pragmatically marked means of referencing drugs (as a noun) or describing people and objects (as an adjective). In utterances (11) and (12), the term functions as an evaluative adjective conveying positive qualities.

In both utterances, the term *dope* is rendered into MSA using its most salient lexicalized equivalent within this context: an evaluative adjective expressing positive qualities. Unlike *dope* in African American English, the adjective رائع (*rā'ī'*, “great”) does not exhibit polysemy or multifunctionality in Arabic. By selecting رائع as the translation, communicative clarity and functional equivalence were prioritized, which eliminates of the source term’s semantic complexity, and produces a communicative and successful translation.

Conclusion

In this category, instances successfully rendered to MSA through functional equivalents were discussed. The renderings were highly effective and natural, with some coming close to achieving a fully communicative equivalent and high-level equivalence. Overall, these renderings prioritized function and clarity over recreating the structural and semantic complexity of the original text.

The stand-in labeling term *nigga* in utterances (1) and (2) was used as a generic, race-unspecific term of reference. Accordingly, it was rendered using race-neutral equivalents الناس (*an-nās*, “the people”) and أحدهم (*aḥaduhum*, “somebody”) that fulfilled the function of a general labeling term. The same term appears in utterance (3), but with a significantly different function. In this utterance, the speaker uses *nigga* to refer to himself and his friends from the perspective of an outsider: the police. Although the speaker employs the reclaimed form ending with a schwa (*nigga*), the implied meaning aligns with that of the original, non-inverted racist term *nigger*. Therefore, in this utterance, the expression *nigga* functions as a marked expression and was successfully rendered into two marked equivalents in Arabic: زنوج (*zunūj*, “niggers”) and سود (*sūd*, “Black”). These renderings preserved the racial implications of the source term, and foregrounded the emic-etic distinction and highlighted the long-standing tensions between the police and African American communities, as well as the systemic racism directed against them.

The expression *ass* is ameliorated through synecdoche in utterances (4) and (5), where it functions as a reference to the whole through mentioning one part. It acquired a further function by taking the place of personal, possessive and reflexive pronouns and becoming equivalent to the second-person singular enclitic pronoun (ك) in عليك (“you should”) and أخبرتك (“I told you”). As a result, the expression was not considered subject to omission and was instead rendered in a way that avoided cultural sensitivity or inappropriateness in the target language.

It was observed that when the two vulgar expressions *motherf*ckin’* and *ass* occur consecutively, the first expression is omitted along with its pragmatic function, while only the function of the second is rendered. Although *motherf*ckin’* carries little semantic weight, it serves a pragmatic role as an intensifier in the utterance, a function that should be conveyed in the most appropriate way in the target text. To compensate for the loss of this intensifier, the author suggested rendering *motherf*ckin’* into expressions such as مرارًا وتكرارًا (“over and over”) and مئة مرة (“a hundred times”), both of which serve the same function as the strong intensifier *motherf*ckin’*.

The speaker in utterance (6) used a word that typically appears in poetic contexts to refer to a form of music central to her culture: Rap music. When used by African Americans in casual speech, the term *rhyme* is most commonly associated with Rap and Hip Hop. This reflects a semantic shift resulting from specification: the meaning of the term has been specified and extended to denote the creation of a particular musical genre within African American culture. The term was rendered correctly into "أغني الراب" ("I sing Rap"), which is an explicit successful equivalent. Similarly, the term *corners* in utterance (7) has undergone a metonymic shift, whereby a place name is generalized to refer to the people associated with it and was rendered into "موزعي المخدرات" ("drugs distributors"). In both cases, there is no lexicalized equivalent in MSA that carries the same cultural and semantic aspects. As a result, the translation relies on explicitation through words that convey the semantic components of the original expressions, making the rendering more explicit.

Regarding utterance (8), the subtitles went beyond simply rendering *paper* into its lexicalized Arabic equivalent meaning *money*. Instead, a highly communicative translation was produced through specifying the function of this money: مكافأة (*mukāfa'a*, "reward"), a reward for an action. This choice makes the implied meaning of compensation or recognition for doing something explicit. Making the implied meaning explicit allowed the translation to move past literal money and clearly convey the intended message.

With respect to prioritizing function, utterances (9), (10), (11) and (12) clearly demonstrate how preserving the function and conveying it effectively through direct substitution is feasible through using a lexicalized, more salient and less specific equivalent. In these cases, the multifunctional term *dope* is consistently replaced with its most salient MSA lexical equivalent in each context: المخدرات (*al-mukhaddirāt*, "drugs") when it functions as a noun and رائع (*rā'i*, "great") when it functions as an adjective. This technique eliminates the semantic complexity of the source term and prioritizes function, clarity and communicative effectiveness.

Chapter Four

Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

African American English is rich in linguistics applications that manipulate the Mainstream American English on the semantic level (Smitherman, 1997). Examples of these linguistic applications can be found in the everyday speech of African Americans, where they serve multiple sociolinguistic functions. This includes shaping the group identity, expressing in-group solidarity, and gatekeeping against outsiders (Washington, 2010). Semantic change is done by departing from the conventional, denotative meaning of a word or expression towards a connotative, pragmatic or figurative one (Smitherman, 1997). It is done either through inverting the meaning of certain expressions, or imposing totally new meanings related or unrelated to the conventional denotative meaning a certain word or expression would usually imply (Smitherman, 1997).

This study identifies and analyzes several linguistic processes that create semantic change in the selected movies and their MSA subtitles. The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which African American speakers employ semantic inversion and semantic shifting to make expressions carry meanings different from their original ones. In addition, the study investigates the subtitling techniques used to render these semantically changed expressions into MSA, with particular attention to the strategies adopted by translators. Furthermore, it evaluates the impact of these techniques on the target text in terms of linguistic authenticity, overall comprehension and cultural relevance. Finally, the study addresses instances of mistranslation by proposing alternative translations and techniques that preserve the intended meaning more effectively.

The analysis of the source texts, lines and utterances collected from the movies, indicates that these linguistic applications by African Americans give rise to increased lexical complexity, high semantic opacity, greater markedness and a corresponding reduction in naturalness and semantic transparency. They lead to the expressions acquiring new meanings and functions distinct from the original ones, as well as changes on the level of transitivity and shifts in a word's grammatical category (part of speech) in some cases. In other cases, these applications caused expressions to lose their original semantic components entirely and acquire new ones and encode concepts totally unrelated to those

implied by their original conventional meanings, as in the expressions *jump*, *dip*, *Blood*, *bands*, *word*, *corners*, *kickin' it* and *smokin'*. There were cases where the scope of reference is widened, and the reference is generalized and extended, as in the expressions *corner*, *paper*, *spit*, *rhyme*, *ass*, *crib* and *niggas*. In some of these examples, applications like synecdoche (a figure of speech where the part refers to the whole, or vice versa), and meiosis (figurative strategy of understatement) were employed by the speaker and resulted in a semantic change, as in *corner*, *paper*, *crib* and *bands*. Clipping, as one such application, has produced forms that are homophonic with existing MSE words, such as *keys* ("kilograms"), also spelled *kee*, *keye*, or *ki*. Although phonologically identical to the word *key*: the item used to open a door, the two forms carry distinct meanings and may cause confusion because of their low recognizability, particularly among outsiders and non-African Americans.

As for accessibility, expressions coming as a result for semantic manipulations are not equally accessible to all listeners within the same community (Washington, 2010). As for non-community members, Arab subtitles creators in this case, even expressions that have been around for long so far are still not perfectly accessible. This was particularly evident in cases where expressions such as *keys*, *bands*, *smokin'*, *spit* and *kickin' it* were either inaccurately interpreted, or left entirely unrendered.

Regarding the types of linguistic applications that resulted in semantic-level manipulation, the techniques used to handle them in subtitles in MSA, and the accuracy of the target text, the present study discussed them by taking each instance individually and contextualizing it. First, the Modern Standard English (MSE) conventional meanings of expressions undergoing semantic change when used by African Americans in the context of appearance were collected from dictionaries such as the *Cambridge Dictionary*. Second, after confirming that the conventional meaning found in the dictionary was not the intended one by the speaker, a deeper analysis to find the new connotative, pragmatic, meaning was conducted. Through this process, a thorough explanation of the type of linguistic applications that resulted in semantic-level change in the instance was provided. To further contextualize these findings, an analysis of the Arabic subtitles and the source text was conducted across multiple linguistic levels. These included markedness and naturalness; lexicalization and the availability of lexicalized equivalents; lexical choice; the correspondence of minimal semantic features (common,

diagnostic and supplementary) between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT); transitivity and grammatical category; stylistic variation between the ST and TT; and the degree of equivalence achieved (high-level, low-level, or no equivalence).

The findings were classified into five main categories. The first included instances where core meaning was captured successfully, while the complementary semantic features and cultural aspect were ignored, and some expressive force present in the source term was lost. Instances in this category were mainly the result of a single translation technique: rendering the semantically changed expressions to more neutral or less expressive expressions, or neutralizing and toning down a meaning-loaded and highly expressive source-text item (Zhuang, 2021). This technique was adopted for rendering expression that lack direct one-to-one equivalents and are unlexicalized in Arabic, like *jump*, or when the expressions are culturally bound to African American culture, like *Bloods* and *Crips*. While The source text and the target text aligned in terms of core meaning, meaning was lost at the level of designative (diagnostic) semantic features, as illustrated by rendering *jump* into نضرب (“to beat” or “to hit” leaving out the ambush-related part of the meaning).

As for *Bloods* and *Crips*, which were rendered into the generic expression عصابة (“a gang”) and العصابة الأخرى (“the other gang”), the loss was on the cultural level, not just on the semantic one.

The second category addressed semantically changed expressions that were rendered into stylistically elevated expressions in the target text. Stylistic elevation happens when language choices become more formal, literary or marked. Given the source language is informal, everyday speech, the use of stylistically elevated expressions in the target texts resulted in a register shift that made the target text less aligned with the tone of the source text, and less natural for the Arab listener. In the cases examined, the author notes that stylistic elevation resulted from subtitlers recognizing the semantically changed marked expressions in the source text and attempting to reproduce this markedness in the target text through their lexical choices. They did so by rendering semantically changed marked expressions into marked, less common expressions in the target language, as in as in *crib* (“house”) being rendered into الديار (“homeland(s)”), and *dip* (“to go downstairs”) being rendered into أهبط (“to land”). This is particularly problematic given the target

expressions either introduced unintended additional meanings or reduced the overall naturalness of the text. Moreover, more accurate and straightforward MSA equivalents are available for these specific semantically changed expressions: منزل (“house”) for *crib*, and أنزل (“to descend”) for *dip*. Consequently, the lexical choices in the target text were deemed less appropriate for their respective contexts.

The third category addressed mistranslations involving semantically changed expressions. These inaccuracies primarily resulted from a reversion towards the original, most salient, unintended conventional meaning the expression had before undergoing semantic change. All cases of mistranslations arose from overly literal translations that failed to take into account the semantic change the expression has undergone, failed to unpack the meaning of the expressions, and therefore produced translations that were neither accurate nor informative. The author attributes this failure to a lack of recognition of the contextual irrelevance of semantically changed expressions to the overall meaning of the utterance when they are interpreted literally. In other words, when taken in their literal sense, semantically changed expressions do not coherently fit within the overall meaning of the utterance as a whole. Moreover, there was a clear absence of relevant background knowledge, a solid understanding of the pragmatic functions fulfilled by the semantically changed expressions within the utterance and a systematic analysis of contextual cues, all of which are essential for moving beyond literal interpretation. Therefore, the target texts where semantically changed expressions were interpreted literally were inconsistent, unclear and uninformative.

The fourth category addressed semantically changed expressions that were not rendered in the target language, since no equivalents were provided in the target texts for these expressions. Omission as a technique to deal with these expressions led to the complete loss of their semantic weight and their contribution to the overall meaning, and the function they fulfilled in the utterance. The degree of loss in the overall meaning of the utterances resulting from the use of omission as a strategy varied. In some cases there was a complete loss of semantic weight and function, especially when the omitted expression held the place of the main action verb as in *smokin’*, *spit* and *kickin’ it*. In other cases of omission, the loss was partial or non-significant, particularly illustrated in taking down vulgar expressions that serve a functional role but are not necessarily carrier of semantic

weight, as in the semantically ameliorated intensifier *deadass*. In one case, omission proved to be a suitable technique for dealing with a semantically changed expression due to its multifunctionality and polysemy. The expression in question was the movie's title, *Dope*, which appeared on screen after a brief glossary defining the term and explaining its use as a noun and an adjective. Omitting the title, or simply transliterating it, as done by the other platform, helped avoid the need to select and impose one implication as the intended meaning, especially at the beginning of the movie, where context to help making the decision had yet been provided.

The fifth and last category addressed instances to which an adequate rendering that preserved the function of the original was offered. The equivalents of semantically changed instances in this category were highly successful, with some coming close to achieving a high-level communicative equivalent. The defining characteristics of this category was prioritizing function and clarity over recreating the structural and semantic complexity of the original text. This was evident in the subtitlers' handling of polysemous and multifunctional expressions, compound expressions, poetic expressions, generalized expressions and expressions whose degree of markedness shifts depending on the context in which they appear. In some cases, making the meaning explicit through direct substitution using less specific, generic, salient and straightforward expressions in MSA was deemed most appropriate to render semantically changed instances. This strategy eliminates the semantic complexity of the source term and prioritizes function, clarity and communicative effectiveness over preserving the complex features found in the source text. One of these cases was the term *dope* when used as a noun to refer to drugs. Rendering it as المخدرات (*al-mukhaddirāt*, "drugs"), rather than attempting to recreate its semantic complexity, results in a high degree of clarity and naturalness for the target audience. Generally speaking, recreating a similar semantic complexity in the target text as that in the source text was not always easy, possible or necessary due to different factor. The mentioned example was one of these cases where the recreation of semantically complex expressions was unnecessary, particularly given that drug-related reference terms are far more numerous in AAE than in Arabic, as drugs constitute a salient social issue in the former but not in the latter.

On the level of how marked an expression is, there were some cases where the context made it necessary to produce a rendering more or less marked in MSA than the semantically changed instance in the original language, as in the term *nigga* being rendered into الناس (*an-nās*, “the people”) and أحدهم (*aḥaduhum*, “somebody”). Both expressions are unmarked, neutral expressions in MSA and fulfill functions similar to those of *nigga* when used as a generic term of reference. The same expression was handled correctly in the context where the speaker employs it in a practice akin to self-othering by describing himself and his three friends as *niggas* from an outsider’s perspective, the police in this case. In this very specific case, the semantic bleaching and amelioration done to *niggas* had to be dismissed; in its new implications and usages, the term does not carry aspects of self-othering or emic-etic viewing. The original racial interpretation that *niggas* had gradually lost was reintroduced in the target text through the marked expressions زنوج (*zunūj*, “niggers”) and سود (*sūd*, “Black”).

Focusing on the function of semantically changed expressions rather than their literal meaning or original semantic components was particularly important in handling semantically bleached and neutralized vulgar expressions like *motherf*ckin’* and *ass*. The expression *ass* appeared in two different contexts and acquired two distinct functions through the process of semantic bleaching. However, in both places of appearance, the expression carried little to no semantic weight. Rather, it served a pragmatic role by intensifying and emphasizing a point in one utterance, and, when modified by the other semantically bleached expression *motherf*ckin’*, the expression *ass* functioned as a replacement for an object pronoun, while *motherf*ckin’* became the intensifier. Similar expressions are better approached when focus is placed on the function they fulfill in an utterance rather than their literal meaning.

Reproducing the semantic complexity of the source text in the target text was not always feasible, necessary, or methodologically justified due to several factors. Foremost among these factors is the shift from a non-standard spoken variety AAE, to the formal MSA. This shift not only constrains the translator’s capacity to preserve the semantic characteristics of spoken discourse, but also highlights fundamental differences between the two linguistic systems, particularly in the ways speakers of each language express social identity and culture through their discourse. Moreover, standard languages are

typically oriented toward explicitness and clarity, while non-standard spoken varieties rely extensively on figurative less straight-forward language, semantic innovation and creative meaning making processes.

Another complicating factor is the high degree of lexical and semantic variation within AAE, where multiple semantically changed forms may be used to refer to a single referent. This variation is motivated by a range of social and pragmatic motivations, as in by the extensive list of names associated with drugs. In MSA, however, that same referent might be represented by a single recognized lexical item, with no social and pragmatic motivation for creating indirect or semantically complicated expressions in MSA to refer to the same referent.

Some instances of semantic change result from word-formation processes such as clipping as in *keys* (also *kee*, *keye*, or *ki*), and acronymization as in *C.R.E.A.M*; these are word-formation processes far less common in MSA than they are in AAE. After successfully noticing the semantic change and avoiding literal translation, attempting to create parallel expressions in Arabic through these processes may affect naturalness and comprehensibility. Moreover, recreating a similar level of semantic complexity in MSA, whether using the same procedure used in the source text or by using alternative word-formation strategies, is not always feasible or necessary, especially when a well-established, lexicalized equivalent already exists. Consequently, in the interest of naturalness and clarity, the semantic complexity of the original expression may need to be sacrificed, and selecting the direct lexicalized equivalent in MSA is often the most appropriate solution.

Overall, there was no single unified approach to dealing with semantic change in the two movies and their three subtitled versions. Translation strategies ranged from strictly literal renderings to highly functional ones. Literal translation resulted in the complete loss of the new meaning introduced by the semantic change. Omission, in most cases, led to change in the overall message and to the loss of important semantic components of the utterance, with the exception of one case: the movie's title *Dope*, which was presented and treated as a multifunctional polysemous expression, and therefore not rendered into a specific interpretation of its possible interpretations. A stylistically elevated rendering may cause misinterpretation or produce a less natural translation. Finally, rendering

semantically changed instances from AAE into MSA is most effectively done by prioritizing function over form, rather than trying to replicate semantic playfulness or lexical complexity. Treating each case individually can help successfully deciding the best technique of translation for each instance.

4.2 Recommendations

Building on the findings and analysis of this research, the most effective way to handle semantically changed instances is by providing a functional equivalent through an appropriate technique, or a combination of techniques. Analyzing each case individually is the best way to successfully decide the best technique of translation. Particular emphasis must be placed on naturalness, contextual appropriateness and degree of markedness, while considering the technical constraints of audiovisual translation, including character limits, reading speed, timing and synchronization with image and sound, which directly shape translational choices and sometimes require compression, reformulation, or selective explicitation.

Before translating, subtitlers need to stay alert to words or expressions that seem out of place or irrelevant in the context of appearance when interpreted literally. When a word in its literal meaning sounds out of place and does not align with the overall message of the utterance, this is often a sign that the expression carries a shifted or specialized meaning, that is, it has undergone semantic change. Instead of assuming the literal meaning, the translator should pause and ask practical questions: *What role is this word actually playing in the interaction? Is it expressing attitude, irony, emphasis, solidarity, humor, or social identity?*

Once these expressions are identified, they must be analyzed within their complete movie context to identify those who engage in the conversation in which the expression appears, the setting, and the relevant emotional and cultural aspects. In these instances, meaning is not shaped only by the semantically changed expression itself, but also by the way it functions within the broader scene and the surrounding utterance. A sarcastic insult, for example, may function as an expression of affection, as in “Your ass should be back hitting corners in no time nigga” in which two expressions, *your ass* and *nigga*, were used with positive connotations, while a seemingly positive expression might convey criticism in some cases.

Subtitlers need more than their ability to notice expressions that seem out of place or irrelevant in the context of appearance. They need to consult African American dictionaries and body of research on semantic change and African American English to help clarify where these expressions come from and how they are used. With this deeper understanding, subtitlers see what lies under the surface and literal wording of the expression and will be able to provide an appropriate target-language equivalent; one that recreates the function of the original rather than merely mirroring its literal form.

Semantic playfulness similar to that found in the source text can be reproduced through colloquial dialects of Arabic, as these varieties offer rich expressive resources and flexible semantic choices. However, translating only these semantically changed expressions, or the lines that contain them, into colloquial forms while keeping the rest of the film in MSA would create stylistic inconsistency and weaken the overall coherence of the subtitles. At the same time, moving back and forth between colloquial Arabic and MSA within the same subtitle track may reduce the clarity of the subtitles and the viewer's ability to easily understand the information. Moreover, if subtitles were entirely produced in colloquial Arabic, each country or region would need a separate version with its own dialect. This means more translators have to be included and more versions of how semantic change is rendered in Arabic will be available. This would increase production costs and conflict with streaming services' policies. Therefore, and to avoid all the challenges, MSA is selected as the target language acceptable in subtitles, as it ensures clarity and the widest possible pan-Arab reach.

Trying to create a one-to-one equivalence between a semantically changed, charged with meaning expression in AAE and close, but less expressive and precise lexicalized form in MSA affects both faithfulness and functionality. To avoid this, neutral/less expressive renderings have to be avoided and replaced with multi-words equivalents through addition. This finding aligns with Baker's (2018) observation that this technique may result in some loss of the expressive force present in the source term, but an addition of modifiers can, in certain cases, help compensate for the loss. Addition is adding the appropriate number of lexical items, each covering one minimal semantic component of the meaning of the original, as in the term *jump* being rendered into "تفاجئ ... ونضرب" (to surprise and beat) which is explicit and precise as the original term, but with more words.

In certain cases, such as semantically changed instances that function as proper nouns, an additional step may be necessary. The original term can be kept as a loanword through transliteration, followed by additional words to clarify its semantic content or a brief parenthetical explanation. Li's (2021) findings based on testing Nida's translation theories, particularly the movement from dynamic equivalence to functional equivalence, suggest that achieving high-level equivalence often pushes translators to use techniques such as addition to convey the full meaning of the original expression in depth. The author also argues that semantically changed expressions in this category have to be rendered by concise addition to preserve readability and to respect the constraints of audiovisual translation. This is consistent with Thawabteh's (2012) emphasis on respecting the technical dimension of audiovisual translation to avoid potential problems.

Stylistic elevation should also be avoided in order to preserve faithfulness and naturalness in translation. Stylistic oddity, like rendering an everyday expression into poetic or expressions typically used in other contexts, would strike the receptor as out-of-place and produce less natural translation. This also was the case when semantically changed expressions were rendered into stylistically elevated expressions in MSA. Although semantic change often produces marked forms of expression, reproducing such markedness in the target text through marked forms may compromise the natural flow of the translation. In many cases, marked expressions in the source text were the result of contextual, social or pragmatic factors. If these contextual, social and pragmatic factors are absent in the target language and culture, and are not necessary for conveying the intended message, marked expressions should not be rendered into more stylistically elevated forms. Instead, they should be translated into natural, unmarked forms that reflect the communicative function of the source text rather than its surface-level stylistic markedness, particularly when spoken language is being rendered into a standardized written form. Stylistic elevation also risks introducing semantic features that are not present in the source text's intended message, which weakens both naturalness and communicative effectiveness. Therefore, mechanically mirroring markedness can lead to unintended stylistic distortion.

Plain literal translation should be avoided when translating semantically changed expressions, as it often signals a failure to recognize semantic change or to properly investigate the lexical item or expression in question. Plain literal translation when

expressions have undergone change in meaning can lead to contextual incongruity or pragmatic distortion. These issues typically arise when the subtitlers fail to notice how a surface, literal meaning may be irrelevant within that specific communicative context where it appears. To avoid these problems, subtitlers need to do more than rely on surface meanings: they need to stay alert to context, detect and research suspicious expressions and build enough cultural and situational understanding to judge each expression accurately.

Omission should be limited to cases where it is genuinely appropriate and justifiable. According to Nida, omission may be warranted in seven specific situations, typically when retaining a particular element would not contribute meaningfully to the target text. For instance, repetitions used only for emphasis, filler words such as *well, you know, like*, hesitation markers, false starts, or culture-specific references that do not change the main meaning. In these situations, leaving them out makes subtitles clearer and more natural without losing important information. However, semantically shifted or inverted expressions often carry an important function, a particular semantic weight, or sometimes both. Despite this, it has been observed that some of these expressions were omitted even when they played a central role in the utterance meaning, had clear lexicalized equivalents in Arabic and did not fall under any of Nida's seven justified cases of omission. Removing them in these situations changed the overall message, weakened it and affected both the faithfulness and accuracy of the translation.

The most effective way to handle semantically changed expressions is to treat each one as a distinct case and assess it individually. This begins with recognizing semantic change, then conducting enough research to understand the communicative function, and finally selecting the most appropriate way to render the expression. No single strategy can be applied on all cases because such instances vary in form and function. A particular case may need one specific technique or a combination of techniques in order to achieve the most accurate and natural rendering. In all situations, priority should be given to preserving the function and intended effect of the original instance, rather than only reproducing its surface form. At the same time, subtitlers must pay attention to the technical dimensions of audiovisual translation, such as character limits, synchronization, timing and readability. Adding to these the broader linguistic and stylistic considerations, such as levels of formality, markedness and register.

Future research can expand to include other domains in which African American language and cultural expression thrive, which will offer more challenging and contextually rich examples. Besides movies, future work could explore how AAE is used across multiple real-world contexts, such as police transcription, music and lyric, social media posts, courtroom transcripts, school disciplinary records, job interviews, reality-TV shows, podcasts, video-game dialogue, and more. Exploring these spaces and linking them to translation would make it possible to see how translators and institutions make choices about this variety of English, and how those choices affect the way speakers are understood and treated. It would also highlight how such decisions shape the final product of translation itself, especially when working across more flexible and less constrained domains than subtitles.

Future studies could further broaden the scope by comparing multiple target languages to examine how different linguistic and cultural communities deal with the same semantically changed expressions and interpret them, helping to identify whether there is a pattern in how a specific language mirrors AAE, how translators handle its expressions, and whether they tend to rely on similar strategies, such as simplifying, explaining, rendering into more neutral or less expressive forms, replacing with local slang, omitting, or whether their decisions are shaped by research and planned techniques based on informed choices.

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Meaning
AAE	African American English
MAE	Mainstream American English
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
MSE	Modern Standard English
CA	Componential Analysis
SL	Source Language
TL	Target Language
ST	Source Text
TT	Target Text
TT1	Target Text 1
TT2	Target Text 2
BT	Back Translation
PT1	Proposed Translation 1
PT2	Proposed Translation 2

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Appendices

Appendix (A)

Movies used in collecting data

No.	Movies Names	platform	Year	Type	Setting	Theme
1	Dope	Apple TV	2015	Movie	Inglewood, CA	Drugs, violence
		Shoof TV				
2	All Day and a Night	Netflix	2020	Movie	Oakland, CA	Crime, gang violence

Appendix (B)

Core Meaning Rendered

Instance	Subtitles	Technique	Type	Process	Movie	Platform	
1	<p>“Wanna jump one of they cousins? I know where they live at.”</p>	<p>“أتريد ضرب أحد أبناء عمومتهم؟ إذ أعرف مكان سكنهم”</p>	<p>More neutral/less expressive equivalent</p>	<p>Violence Related Expression</p>	<p>Shifting</p>	<p>All Day and a Night (2020)</p>	<p>Netflix</p>
2	<p>“You can’t decide to be a Blood, and get mad if the Crips try to kill you.”</p>	<p>“لا يمكنك أن تقرر دخول عصابة، ثم تغضب إن قررت العصابة الأخرى قتلك.”</p>	<p>More neutral/less expressive equivalent</p>	<p>Cultural Reference (Gangs)</p>	<p>Shifting</p>	<p>Dope (2015)</p>	<p>Shoof TV</p>
		<p>“لا يمكنك أن تقرر أن تكون مع عصابة بلود وتغضب إن حاولت كريبز قتلك.”</p>					<p>Apple TV</p>

Appendix (C)

Stylistically Elevated Equivalents

	Instance	Subtitles	Technique	Type	Process	Movie	Platform
1	"Gotta dip downstairs real quick."	"سأهبط إلى الطابق السفلي وأعود مباشرة."	Translation with a stylistic elevation	Everyday Expression	Shifting	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix
2	"I'm about to bounce back to the crib , nigga."	"سأعود إلى الديار يا صاح."	Translation with a stylistic elevation	Everyday Expression	Shifting through meiosis	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix

Appendix (D)

Mistranslated Instances

Mistranslated Instances						
Instance	Subtitles	Technique	Type	Process	Movie	Platform
“That’s a lot of weight. It’s like 20, 30 keys.”	"إنها ثقيلة، إنها ثقل 20 أو 30 مفتاحًا"	Literal Translation	Drugs Expression	Shifting through clipping	Dope (2015)	Apple TV
“I was watching Justin Bieber... He is a very pretty nigga.”	"كنت أشاهد جاستن بيبير... إنه زنجي جميل للغاية."	Literal Translation	Reclaimed Racial Slur	Inversion Through melioration	Dope (2015)	Shoof TV
“nigga, bands is bands, nigga. You got way too many standards.”	"الفرق الموسيقية لا تتغير يا صاح، لكنك تبني الكثير من المعايير."	Literal Translation	Idiomatic Expression	Shifting through synecdoche	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix
Speaker (1): “All I want to do is a zoom, zoom, zoom and the boom, boom.” Speakers (2) & (3): “Word.”	"كل ما أريد فعله هو مضاجعتها." كلمات."	Literal Translation	Affirmation Expression	Shifting through conciseness of expression	Dope (2015)	Apple TV
Omitted Instances						
“Ridin’ around smokin’ niggas.”	"أجول وأنا غاضب يا قوم."	Omission - No Equivalent	Violence Expression	Shifting	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix
“So what, you make them beats, or you spit them lyrics?”	"ماذا تفعل؟ هل تؤلف الموسيقى أم الكلمات؟"	Omission - No Equivalent	Music Expression	Melioration and semantic extension	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix
ST: “I’m deadass serious, nigga”	"أنا جاد يا رجل."	Omission - No Equivalent	Vulgar Expression	Melioration	Dope (2015)	Apple TV and Shoof TV
Dope	∅	Omission - No Equivalent	-	-	Dope (2015)	Apple TV
“That reminds me, I’ve been kickin’ it with this Rapper nigga.”	"هذا يذكرني بمعني راب أعرفه."	Omission - No Equivalent	Everyday Expression	Shifting	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix

Appendix (E)

Meaning Preserved Through Functional Translation

Instance	Subtitles	Technique	Type	Process	Movie	Platform	
1	“We ain’t the same if we riddin’ around killin’ niggas.”	“لن نعود كما كنا إن رحنا نقلت الناس.”	Functional Equivalent	Reclaimed Racial Slur	Inversion through melioration and generalization	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix
2	“Shooting up a lot of corners right now.”	“يقتل الكثير من موزعي المخدرات الآن.”	Functional Equivalent	Drugs Expression	Shifting through metonymy	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix
3	“You want three niggas to take a bag full of dope and a gun to the fucking police station?”	“تريد من ثلاثة زنوج أخذ حقيبة مملوءة بالمخدرات وسلاح إلى مركز الشرطة؟”	Functional Equivalent	Highlighting Race & Othering	Cancellation of inversion	Dope (2015)	Shoof TV
		“تريد أن يأخذ ثلاثة مراهقين سود حقيبة مليئة بالمخدرات وبمسدس إلى مركز الشرطة؟”	Functional Equivalent				Apple TV
4	“Your ass should be back hitting corners in no time nigga.”	“عليك أن تعود الى التسكع مع أصدقائك قريبا جدا يا صاح.”	Functional Equivalent	Vulgar Expression as Expletive Intensifier	Inversion through melioration and synecdoche	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix
5	“I told your motherf*ckin’ ass I don’t f*ck with dope.”	“أخبرتكَ أنني لا أتعامل مع المخدرات.”	Functional Equivalent	Vulgar Expression as Expletive Intensifier	Shifting	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix

6	“You know that I rhyme .”	“تعرف أنني أغني الراب.”	Functional Equivalent	Music Expression	Shifting through specification and semantic extension	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix
7	“Shooting up a lot of corners right now.”	“يقتل الكثير من موزعي المخدرات الآن.”	Functional Equivalent	Drugs Expression	Shifting	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix
8	“I’m hearing they got hella paper on your head.”	“سمعت أنهم وضعوا مكافأة مقابل النيل منك.”	Functional Equivalent	Money Expression	Shifting through synecdoche and meiosis	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix
9	“You want three niggas to take a bag full of dope and a gun to the fucking police station?”	“تريد من ثلاثة زنوج أخذ حقيبة مملوءة بالمخدرات وسلاح إلى مركز الشرطة؟”	Functional Equivalent	Drugs Expression	Shifting	Dope (2015)	Shoof TV
		“تريد أن يأخذ ثلاثة مراهقين سود حقيبة مليئة بالمخدرات وبمسدس إلى مركز الشرطة؟”	Functional Equivalent				Apple TV
10	“nigga, you know I don’t f*ck with that dope money.”	“تعرف أنني لا أقبل أموال المخدرات.”	Functional Equivalent	Drugs Expression	Shifting	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix
11	“He dope . You need to meet that nigga. He dope . You’re dope .”	“إنه رائع. وعليك أن تلتقي به. إنه رائع. وأنت رائع.”	Functional Equivalent	Evaluative Adjective	Inversion through melioration	All Day and a Night (2020)	Netflix
12	“So, one day we’re gonna buy things	“إذا يوما ما سنشتري الأشياء	Functional Equivalent	Evaluative Adjective		Dope (2015)	Shoof TV

	<p>with numbers from a math equation? Dope, right?"</p>	<p>بأرقام من معادلة رياضية؟ رائع، أليس كذلك؟"</p>				
		<p>"سنشتري في يوم من الأيام حاجياتنا عبر أرقام من معادلة رياضية. أليس رائعاً؟"</p>	<p>Functional Equivalent</p>			<p>Apple TV</p>



جامعة النجاح الوطنية
كلية الدراسات العليا

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الأمريكية الإفريقية: دراسة حالة من الأفلام الأمريكية الإفريقية

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قدمت هذه الرسالة استكمالاً لمتطلبات الحصول على درجة الماجستير في اللغويات التطبيقية والترجمة
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الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة التقييمية التحليلية ظاهرة التغير الدلالي في الإنجليزية الإفريقية الأمريكية من حيث آلياتها ووظائفها، وكيفية انعكاسها في الترجمة النصية إلى العربية الفصحى المعاصرة لفيلمي *All Day and a Night* (2020) و *Dope* (2015) وتبحث الدراسة في تطبيقات التغير الدلالي وكيف يوظفها الأمريكيون الأفارقة في صورتين أساسيتين هما القلب الدلالي (*inversion*) والانزياح الدلالي (*shifting*) حيث جرى تصنيف الأمثلة ومناقشتها وفقًا للتقنية المستخدمة في نقلها إلى العربية الفصحى المعاصرة، ومدى قدرة النص الهدف على نقل المعنى المتضمن في النص المصدر، وما يمكن فعله حيال الحالات المترجمة ترجمة خاطئة. وتبين النتائج أن التعابير المتغيرة دلاليًا نُقلت باستخدام تقنيات مختلفة وهي: النقل إلى تعبير أكثر حيادًا أو أقل تعبيرية (الترجمة الناقصة/ الاختزال)، أو إلى تعبير أرقى وأعلى أسلوبياً (الترجمة الزائدة/ الارتقائية)، أو إلى تعبيرات تعكس معنًا حرفيًا مباشرًا سطحيًا وغير مقصود (سوء التفسير)، أو جرى حذفها كليًا، أما الفئة الخامسة، فقد أظهرت أن بعض الأمثلة جرى نقلها بنجاح من خلال إيلاء الاهتمام والأولوية لوظيفة التعبير في النص الأصل ومحاولة إيجاد مكافئ عالي المستوى في اللغة الهدف بالوسائل المناسبة. وقد أثرت الترجمة الناقصة والترجمة الزائدة وسوء التفسير في رسالة النص المصدر على مستويات متعددة، منها درجة ملائمة الأسلوب اللغوي حيث استُخدم، والدقة والمعلوماتية، في حين أن إعطاء الأولوية لوظيفة النص المصدر أفضى دائمًا إلى ترجمة دقيقة وغنية بالمعلومات ومناسبة أسلوبياً. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن أنجع السبل للتعامل مع الأمثلة ذات التغير الدلالي تتمثل في معالجة كل حالة على حدة، مع توظيف تقنية واحدة أو مزيج من التقنيات المناسبة للترجمة وتقديم الوظيفة الدلالية ومحاكاتها في العربية الفصحى المعاصرة بالوسائل المناسبة بدلاً من التركيز على البنية السطحية أو التعقيد الدلالي للتعبير الأصلي. ونظرًا إلى أن اللغات الفصحى تميل إلى الوضوح

والتصريح، بينما تعتمد اللغات المحكية غير الفصحى على اللغة المجازية وأساليب صنع المعنى الإبداعية، فإن إعادة إنتاج السمات الدلالية للنص الأصل عبر الترجمة ليست دائماً ممكنة أو ضرورية عندما يتوافر مكافئ معجمي متعارف عليه ومناسب في العربية الفصحى، وعليه فإن التضحية ببعض من ميزات التعبير الأصلي الدلالية واختيار المكافئ المعجمي المباشر يُعد في كثير من الحالات الحل الأنسب تحقيقاً لترجمة طبيعية وواضحة. تطبيق ما سبق يأتي مع ضرورة إيلاء اهتمام خاص للجوانب التقنية للترجمة السمعية البصرية، مثل حد الأحرف والكلمات في السطر، والتزامن والتوقيت، وسهولة القراءة، إلى جانب اعتبارات أوسع تتعلق بدرجة رسمية اللغة ومدى ملائمة الأسلوب اللغوي المستخدم حيث استُخدم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإنجليزية الأمريكية الإفريقية، التغير الدلالي، القلب الدلالي، الانزياح الدلالي، العربية الفصحى الحديثة، الترجمة السمعية البصرية، الترجمة الوظيفية، درجة ملائمة الأسلوب اللغوي.