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Subtitling Saudi Arabic slang into English: the case of “The Book of the Sun” on Netflix

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The aim of this study is to analyze Saudi Arabic slang expressions and examine their subtitling into English. The data utilized in this research consists of slang terms identified in the film titled “The Book of the Sun”, available on the streaming platform Netflix, along with their corresponding English translations. This study primarily examines three key dimensions of slang expressions: originality, conciseness, and humor. It also explores the subtitling strategies used to render these slangs and the effectiveness of such strategies. The study’s findings indicate that all identified slangs (100%) are created by assigning new meanings to pre-existing established words in a creative way. Some of them are made concise by mapping them into *faʿʿala* verb template. Additionally, the subtitler has employed specific strategies to convey the intended meaning of these slangs, namely generalization, paraphrase, official equivalent, direct translation, and cultural substitution. However, the study posits that the strategies employed are ineffective in conveying the intended meaning of slang expressions.

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Introduction

Verbal communication can exhibit either a formal or informal nature, contingent upon various factors (Wolfram and Schilling, 2015). A key distinguishing characteristic between informal communication and formal one is the use of expressions deemed inappropriate in formal settings or written discourse (Harared, 2018). These expressions encompass profanities, idiolects, dialects, and slang, among others. The focus of the current study is on the latter category, slang.

Films typically endeavor to mimic authentic dialog to create realism and engage audiences. Therefore, it is not surprising to frequently see the incorporation of slang expressions in films. Slang, being an integral component of informal discourse across linguistic contexts, naturally finds its place in cinematic dialog. It is believed to have existed since the inception of language itself, serving as an inherent component of any language used in everyday communication (Frazer and Eble, 1997b). Although slang is often perceived as less acceptable in society, there is a clear trend indicating a significant rise in the use of slang expressions in movies and television shows (Zhou and Fan, 2013b). Utilizing slang expressions pose little issue for viewers sharing the same linguistic background as that of the film. However, it can present a challenge for viewers from diverse cultural backgrounds who speak different languages.

Translation serves as a medium for facilitating intercultural communication, enabling the transfer of a source text to individuals with different linguistic backgrounds (Munday, 2007). However, the task of translating culture-bound terms introduces challenges across various dimensions (Abdelaal, 2019). Zojer (2011) further asserts that culture-bound expressions manifest in various forms, including sociolects, dialects, and slang. Nevertheless, subtitling presents a more significant challenge compared to written translation, as it necessitates unique approaches to address challenging terms. This is primarily due to the inherent limitations of the subtitling medium, which constrain the possibility of immediate solutions (Al-Jabri et al. 2023). The task of subtitling slang introduces additional difficulties given that slang varies not only across cultures but also within the same culture among different social groups (Allen, 1998). Considering that slang terms are often associated with lower social status language, not all subtitlers possess the necessary skills to handle them adequately (Hashish and Hussein, 2022). Moreover, it is worth noting that the use of slang often carries a heightened emotional tone, adding to the challenges encountered in its translation (Sornig, 1981). As Fawcett emphasizes, “a constant headache in all forms of translation is posed by phraseology marked as familiar or slang” (2014, p 157). Consequently, it falls upon subtitlers to devise effective strategies for accurately conveying the intended meaning of slang expressions. This ensures that the translated content is as enjoyable for the target audience as it was for the original viewers. However, this endeavor is far from straight forward, especially when translators are required to translate from A language into B language, which many academics consider less ideal (Al-Jabri, 2017).

This research paper aims to address a relatively underexplored area within the field of Arabic-English translation studies, namely the subtitling of slang expressions. To the best of researchers’ knowledge, the existing body of research on the subtitling of cultural terms, and slang in particular, primarily focuses on translation from English into Arabic rather than the reverse. The emphasis on the English-Arabic direction is not arbitrary; it is driven by the rise and global expansion of video streaming services, such as Netflix, which have recently facilitated the streaming of Arabic content to English-speaking audience.

The exploration of Arabic content in the domain of subtitling is relatively recent, and this is particularly true for Saudi content.

The availability of Saudi works on streaming services is somewhat limited. According to Ja’fari (2020), only six Saudi films were released on Netflix in 2020. As previously mentioned, this research examines instances of Saudi slang identified in the film “The Book of the Sun”, which was released on the streaming platform Netflix in 2020. The narrative of the film revolves around a group of Saudi adolescents aiming to realize their ambitions through creating and sharing content on YouTube. The film’s focus on a group of young people makes it a valuable resource for studying the specific slang expressions spoken by this age group. This research focuses on the analysis of Saudi slang terms, specifically examining their originality, brevity, and humorous nature (where applicable). It also investigates the strategies used to translate these slang expressions and assesses their effectiveness in accurately conveying the intended meanings. Given the English-speaking audience’s unfamiliarity with these slang terms, a literal translation is impractical. The objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify examples of Saudi Arabic slang terms and analyze their characteristics in terms of originality, conciseness, and humor.
2. Investigate the strategies employed to render these slang terms from Arabic into English.
3. Assess the effectiveness of the strategies used in subtitling these slang terms from Arabic to English.

The present study is organized as follows. Following this introduction, “Slang” offers a comprehensive explanation of the term “slang”, including its defining qualities and a review of previous research on slang in the English-Arabic language pair. “Subtitling” is devoted to elucidating the concept of subtitling. “Subtitling Strategies” outlines the subtitling strategies that will be used in the study, whilst “Methodology” describes the methodology adhered to in this research. “Findings and Discussion” is devoted to presenting the results and their discussion. Finally, “Conclusions” serves as the concluding section, summarizing the study’s findings and offering suggestions for future research.

Slang

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, slang is defined as “the special vocabulary used by any set of persons of a low or disreputable character; language of a low and vulgar type” (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). Flexner (1960) argues that slang is a subset of vernacular language that is not widely accepted as proper or formal usage. In contrast, Andersson and Trudgill (1990) propose that slang encompasses a broader range of language beyond vernacular language, asserting that slang is a composite that often incorporates foreign vocabulary. Frazer and Eble (1997b) define slang as a dynamic collection of informal words and phrases used by individuals to establish or reinforce social identity within a group or align with societal trends or fashions. According to Coleman (2015), a term is likely to be considered slang if it is confined to individuals who share common interests, activities, or age groups. Mattiello (2005) suggests that slang, typically common among a specific group of users, is often used to express unity or rapport among its members. Allen (1998) notes that the slang used by a specific group is not easily comprehensible by those outside of that group. Zhou and Fan (2013b) found that factors such as gender, occupation, and age influence the use of slang.

Linhua (2006) suggests that the process of creating new slang involves both the formation of novel words and phrases and the attribution of new meanings to existing terms. Regardless of the group of users, such as adolescents, criminals, college attendees,

or social media users, there are certain characteristics commonly associated with slang. Fromkin et al. (2017) argue that slang possesses metaphorical, playful, elliptical, lively, and transient qualities. Andersson and Trudgill (1990) note that slang is characterized by its creative formation and conscious usage, as speakers rarely employ slang unconsciously. This deliberate use of slang serves to highlight linguistic distinctiveness and indicate affiliation with specific social groups. According to Zhou and Fan (2013b), there are distinct differences between slang and standard English in the following respects:

1. **Humor:** Slang terms are often intended to elicit humorous effects. One instance of slang in American discourse is “NATO”, which originally stands for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The slang “NATO” is used to describe someone who only talks about intentions without actually implementing them.
2. **Conciseness:** Slang phrases are typically succinct and easier to articulate. This can be achieved through apocope, as in the case of “vamp” being a shortened form of “vampire” or by substituting an evocative monosyllable for a longer term, such as “veep” to refer to the vice president.
3. **Originality:** Slang often emerges from linguistic creativity and the act of renaming objects or concepts. This might involve inventing new terms or altering existing ones. For instance, the term “flying coffin” is slang for airplanes.
4. **Instability:** It is unusual for slang terms to last for extended periods. However, many slang terms serve a practical function and eventually shift into standard English. What one generation finds novel and engaging may become outdated and obsolete for the next.

Slang, one of the cultural terms that pose challenges in subtitling, has been the subject of numerous studies across various language pairs. For instance, investigations have been conducted into the translation of slang in subtitling (see for instance, Hamaida, 2007 “French-English”; Eftekhari, 2008 “Iranian-English”; Ningrum, 2009 “English- Indonesian”; Barzegar, 2012 “English-Persian”; Ferklova, 2014 “English-Czech”). In relation to the English-Arabic language pair, most existing research tends to incorporate examples of slang while addressing the broader subject of subtitling cultural concepts. In other words, the majority of these studies do not directly focus on slang as a dedicated subject of investigation. Instead, they primarily examine terms that are specific to certain cultures in a broader context (see for example, Homeidi, 2004; Balfaqeh, 2009; Bahumaid, 2010). However, Hashish and Hussein’s study (2022) specifically focused on the practice of slang subtitling in the context of English-Arabic translation. Their research indicated that due to the absence of comparable slang terminology, the predominant strategy used in Arabic subtitles was paraphrasing, followed by euphemisms and omissions.

As mentioned earlier, the research on subtitling slang from Arabic to English is relatively sparse. Only one study has been identified on the subject, specifically Al-Kharabsheh and Yassin’s (2017b) research, which investigates the translation of slang and colloquialisms in the film “The Dupe” movie from Palestinian vernacular to English. Their analysis identifies three primary challenges associated with translating Arabic slang into English for subtitling purposes: the misinterpretation of certain slang terms with religious connotations, the omission of some slang terms from subtitles, and the significant loss of cultural meaning.

Subtitling

The conventional approach of initiating research papers on audiovisual translation by recounting the early phase of the

discipline and its evolution is now considered outdated, given its recognition as an established branch of translation studies (Bogucki and Deckert 2020). However, it is important to note that the development of audiovisual translation is still ongoing. In fact, its expansion is recognized as a direct result of research in specific field. Pérez-González (2019) defines audiovisual translation as the various practices, procedures, and outcomes stemming from the translation of multimodal content across different languages and cultural contexts. According to Baldry and Thibault (2006), the production and understanding of multimodal material rely on the use of diverse semiotic resources, often referred to as multimodal modes.

Subtitling is widely recognized as the primary method used for translating audiovisual content, playing a crucial role in the evolution of the translation field in recent years (Díaz-Cintas, 2013). According to Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2021), subtitling is a translation technique that involves the written rendering of the original dialog exchanges spoken by various characters. These are typically displayed at the bottom of the screen, along with any other textual information that appears on screen (such as letters) or is audibly transmitted through the soundtrack (such as song lyrics).

Subtitles can be linguistically classified as either interlingual or intralingual (Gottlieb, 2005; Zdenek, 2019). Intralingual subtitling refers to the practice of displaying a textual rendition of the spoken dialog on screen in the same language as the original audio. On the other hand, interlingual subtitling involves providing textual translation from one language to another.

The limitations of space and time impose constraints on subtitles (Hervey and Higgins, 1992). Spatial considerations encompass several elements, including the number of lines and characters per line, the positioning of subtitles on the screen, the choice of typeface, and the color of the text. According to Díaz-Cintas (2018), it is recommended to limit the length of subtitles to a maximum of two lines, ensuring they occupy no more than one-twelfth of the screen. Additionally, it is suggested that the average number of characters per line should be about 35. To minimize the possibility of viewer distraction, neutral typefaces are typically chosen, and white subtitles are predominantly used. Time constraints refer to the limited duration that a subtitle is intended to be visible on the screen (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2021). Another technical challenge is the conversion of the spoken message in the source language to written text in the target language where “many oral features, such as pauses, repetitions, false starts, etc. that are very common to spoken discourse, get “cleansed” to adapt to the code of written language” (Pedersen, 2005, p. 167).

As previously stated, this current study examines the practice of subtitling from Arabic to English, classifying it as interlingual subtitling. The research focuses on analyzing the subtitles available on Netflix. Founded in 1997 by Hastings and Randolph in the United States, Netflix began as a postal DVD rental business (Schmidt, 2020). Customers would request their chosen films and receive them by postal in the form of a Digital Versatile Disc (DVD). After viewing, customers would return the DVD to Netflix. It was not until 2017 that Netflix launched its video streaming services in the United States (Osor, 2016). By 2016, Netflix had expanded its services to all countries, excluding North Korea and Syria. Nowadays, Netflix has grown beyond content distribution to produce a substantial number of highly acclaimed original works (Osor, 2016; Pedersen, 2018). De Silva (2021) asserts that the extensive variety of content, high-quality original programming, and widespread appeal to various demographic groups are key factors driving people to subscribe to Netflix.

Subtitling strategies

Lorscher (1991, p. 76) defines a translation strategy as “a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of a problem which an individual is faced with when translating a text segment from one language to another”. In the same vein, Chesterman (1997) argues that a translation strategy is a process that involves textual manipulation to achieve a desired relationship between the source text and the target text.

Numerous scholars within the field of subtitling have developed typologies of subtitling strategies. Some typologies were developed for general subtitling purposes (see Lomheim, 1999; Gottlieb, 1992), while others were specifically designed to address particular challenges in subtitling, such as cultural terms and humor (see Nedergaard-Larsen, 1993; Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007). The investigation of slang in subtitles can be approached through a culture-specific typology, as these terms are cultural-specific.

One of the most frequently applied typologies in subtitling is Pedersen’s (2005), which was created to handle with cultural references. His typology includes the following strategies:

1. Official equivalent: This strategy involves using the pre-existing target language rendition of the cultural elements. In the context of slang, this approach involves replacing Arabic slang terms with their English slang equivalents.
2. Retention: This strategy involves keeping the original terminology from the source material without any alterations. This is mostly seen in conjunction with proper nouns.
3. Specification: This strategy refers to the act of retaining the cultural reference in its original, untranslated form while adding additional information to enhance its specificity.
4. Direct translation: This refers to the act of translating a source term directly, without any interpretation or modification. This could be particularly useful for rendering names of organizations and institutions.
5. Generalization: This linguistic strategy entails generating a target element that has a broader scope than the cultural reference in the source text, which pertains to a specific entity or concept.
6. Cultural substitution: This strategy involves replacing a cultural word with an alternative phrase that is familiar for the intended audience, or paraphrasing the term in question. Paraphrasing can either involve eliminating the cultural phrase while retaining the intended meaning, or discarding the original meaning and eliminating and substituting it with an equivalent term that fulfills the same objective.
7. Omission: This refers to the act of eliminating a cultural reference altogether.

Methodology

As previously mentioned, the present research analyses Arabic slang terms and determines the strategies used for subtitling them in the Arabic film “The Book of the Sun” into English. The film selected for this research is presented in the Saudi dialect. The data were obtained by watching the original film on Netflix platform with its English subtitles. The researchers manually identified instances of slang terms through repeated viewings, relying on their proficiency as native Arabic speakers. According to Chomsky’s (1986) widely cited notion, individuals with native language proficiency are considered qualified to assess linguistic choices within that language. Moreover, the researchers employed the definition of slang outlined by Oxford English Dictionary, as detailed in “Slang”, as the yardstick for identifying examples.

In order to improve the efficiency and organization of the research, the identified slang terms are categorized into three types: negative, positive, and neutral. Using the distinctions between slang and standard language outlined by Zhou and Fan (2013b) in “Slang”, each of the examples in the upcoming section will be analyzed in terms of humor (where applicable), originality, and conciseness. The fourth distinction emphasized by Zhou and Fan will not be analyzed, as it is not feasible to evaluate the lifespan of slang in the current study due to the need for years-long measurement. It is worth emphasizing that the qualities of slang terms delineated by Zhou and Fan (2013b) pertain exclusively to American slang. However, numerous previous studies have shown the universality of these properties, as evidenced by the works of Andersson and Trudgill (1990), and Linhua (2006). After analyzing the slang under consideration, the subtitler’s strategy is investigated and evaluated in terms of whether the qualities associated with the Arabic slang are retained. This research employs Pedersen’s (2005) typology of subtitling culture-specific terms, discussed in “Subtitling Strategies”, to analyze the strategies used. All examples include a back translation into English to illustrate how they are rendered by the subtitler.

As previously mentioned, the data for this study comprises the film titled “The Book of the Sun”, which became available for streaming on Netflix in 2020. The official premiere of the movie took place in Jeddah followed by Riyadh. The narrative of the film unfolds in 2010 and focuses on a student named Husam who is about to complete his secondary education. However, he became deeply involved in videos production during the peak of Saudi YouTube’s content creation era. During his final year of education at school, he is engaged in producing low-budget horror film. Assisting him in this endeavor are his closest friend, Maan, his competitor, Ibrahim, and their physics instructor, Orabi. The film was chosen due to the abundance of slang terms utilized in its dialogs. This stems from the fact that the main characters are high school seniors, an age commonly associated with frequent use of slang. Furthermore, to the best of the researchers’ knowledge, this is the only Arabic film on Netflix featuring teenage protagonists exclusively, ensuring a sufficient number of examples for data analysis and discussion.

Findings and discussion

Data analysis revealed the presence of 36 slang terms in the film. A total of 22 instances of negative slang terms were identified, accounting for 61% of the overall occurrences. The data reveals that there was a total of 5 positive slang expressions, making up 14% of the sample. In contrast, 9 instances were neutral expressions, representing 25% of the overall count. In the following section, a comprehensive analysis will be conducted on a representative sample of examples from each category. The table below illustrates the findings of the discussion in numbers.

Strategy	Official Equivalence	Omission	Paraphrase	Generalization	Direct Translation	Cultural Substitution
Negative Slangs	4	2	4	10	1	1
Positive Slangs			4			1
Neutral Slangs	2		3	3	1	

The number of examples selected for discussion correlates with the overall number of instances identified in each category.

Negative slang.

The Arabic Slang	English Subtitle and Back Translation	The Strategy
حسام يا بزر يا جزمة	Hussam you bastard يا نذل حسام	Omission

In Arabic, the word “Bazir” generally denotes either seeds of plants or children (Mu’jam Al-Waseet, n.d.). According to the NTC’s Gulf Arabic-English Dictionary, which concentrates on the colloquial Arabic spoken in the gulf region, the slang *bazir* in the Saudi dialect means child. Therefore, using this slang to refer to adults is derogatory, as it implies that the targeted person lacks maturity and fails to display the attributes typically associated with adulthood. The Gulf dictionary gives the example of *هذا بزر ما عليك منه* which translates to English as “This is (only) a child. Ignore him, do not pay attention to him” (Qafisheh, 1997, p.41). The aforementioned slang exhibits creativity, as it is derived from a metaphorical association between the nascent seeds that symbolize the first stage of a plant’s growth and an individual displaying signs of immaturity. Simultaneously, this analogy elicits a comedic effect, as comparing an individual who is nearing the end of their adolescent to a seed can evoke amusement.

The strategy used for translating this slang term is omission, as the subtitler appears to have judged it adequate to translate only the other adjective in the utterance. The use of this strategy is considered inaccurate, as it leads to a loss of the intended connotations associated with the aforementioned slang.

The Arabic Slang	English Subtitle and Back Translation	The Strategy
ليش تخليه بصورك ولسعك 300 و الا 600 ريال	Why get caught speedy on camera and pay 300 or 600 Riyals امام الكاميرا بسرعة عليك بسعة امام الكاميرا 600 ريال وتدفع 300 او 600 ريال	Generalization

The slang *lasaʕa* is derived by attributing an additional meaning to the preexisting word *lasaʕa*, which originally denotes the action of stinging (Mu’jam Al-Waseet, n.d.). The creation of this slang demonstrates the three characteristics outlined by Zhou and Fan (2013b). First, the act of creating this slang term demonstrates creativity, as it entails drawing a parallel between the experience of getting stung (either by an individual or a bee, for instance) and the act of being caught by a camera while speeding on roads, subsequently incurring a financial penalty. The commonality lies in the experience of discomfort, as both being stung or fined for speeding are generally undesirable. Second, this slang has a humorous impact, aptly conveying the emotional distress experienced after being caught for excessive speed. Finally, this slang term is concise, as it condenses the phrase “make you pay a fine” into a single word.

The subtitler employed the strategy of generalization by substituting the Arabic slang with a more generic verb, namely “pay.” This translation fails to accurately convey the precise intended meaning of the Arabic slang, and thus results in a reduction of its connotations.

The Arabic Slang	English Subtitle and Back Translation	The Strategy
ونصيح لمصح	And we give Musleh the finger	Official Equivalent

The slang in this example is “نصيح”, which translates to “giving someone the finger”. In both standard and colloquial Arabic, the word *اصبع* means finger, and it is always a noun (Mu’jam Al-Waseet, n.d.). However, this slang term creatively transforms the Arabic noun into a verb using the Arabic morphological pattern “فَعَّل”, which denotes hyperbole. As a result, the slang term not only condenses a rather profane meaning into a single-word term, but it also does so in an exaggerated way. Needless to say, the

term conveys a humorous effect due to its profanity and linguistic creativity.

In English, the term was subtitled as *give the finger*, employing the strategy of using an official equivalent, which delivers the same meaning. However, the impact is somewhat toned down due to the loss of brevity and hyperbole, which are prominent linguistic features of the original Arabic slang.

The Arabic Slang	English Subtitle and Back Translation	The Strategy
قერი أقصد عربي	My ass. I mean Orabi	Official Equivalent

In this example, the slang word is “قერი”, which translates to “my bottom”. In standard Arabic, the word “قعر” refers to the lowest part or point of something, such as *قعر البئر* the bottom of the well (Mukhtar Alсахah, n.d.). By adding the personal possessive pronoun “ي”, the meaning is transformed to indicate the speaker’s *butt*, serving as a means to belittle Orabi. The slang word is both concise and humorous, as it compares Orabi to one’s butt.

The subtitler used the equivalent English slang term *ass*, which corresponds to the Arabic slang term *قერი*.

The Arabic Slang	English Subtitle and Back Translation	The Strategy
انت حتجيب العيد	You will get us in huge trouble	Paraphrase

The slang term in this example is the phrase *حتجيب العيد* which translates to “you will bring Eid. This phrase, which consists of just two words, is widely popular not only in Saudi Arabia, but across the Arab World. The expression indicates that the person to whom the phrase is directed is causing trouble. This slang is frequently employed to talk about someone who aims to fix something but instead ends up ruining it. It’s akin to when a fool prematurely informs people of Eid’s arrival, intending to bring them joy. Nonetheless, the results are not as intended (Islam Question and Answer, 2023).

The term is creative as it draws on the cultural connotations of the term *عيد*, giving it new layers of meaning that suggest a troublesome situation. Although the slang is a phrase, it is composed of only two words, aligning with the characteristic brevity of slang. Moreover, it conveys a humorous effect due to its unexpected and metaphorical nature.

The subtitler employed the strategy of paraphrase, translating it as *you will get us in huge trouble*. Although the core meaning is transferred successfully, the original communicative function is lost. More creative translations could be effective in this context, such as the idiomatic expression *you’ll put us in a pickle*.

Positive slang. Example (1):

The Arabic Slang	English Subtitle and Back Translation	The Strategy
تري بعمدنا نسوي شي حريقة مع بعض	We can make something incredible	Paraphrase

In this example, the speaker uses the slang term *حريقة*, which literally translates to *burning fire*. In Arabic, this term is used to describe a situation where fire has started and flames are visible (Mu’jam Al-Waseet, n.d.). However, this concise slang word transforms the negative connotations of the word into positive ones, using it to describe something as amazing or exceeding expectations.

The subtitler resorts to the strategy of paraphrase, using the word *incredible* to convey the intended meaning, although this sacrifices some of the communicative effect. The subtitler could

have used the term *dope*, which is popular among young people and serves as slang for *excellent*.

Example (2)

The Arabic Slang	English Subtitle and Back Translation	The Strategy
والله هي صاروخ	She is a hottie	Cultural substitution

Generally speaking, the word صاروخ in Arabic means a projectile propelled over long distances by gases expelled from its bottom (Mu'jam Al-Waseet, n.d.). Similar to the previous example, the slang صاروخ “rocket” transforms the negative associations of the word into positive ones, using it to describe a girl who is extremely attractive. The comparison here draws upon the association between the destructive power of a rocket and the potent impact of a beautiful girl’s allure. Similar to most examples, the Arabic slang term is both creative and concise, additionally conveying humorous effect through the association it makes.

The English subtitle *hottie* demonstrates a strategy of cultural substitution, which retains the original meaning. However, a more direct equivalent that could be used is the slang term *bombshell*, which corresponds more closely with the Arabic term.

Neutral slang. The general meaning of the verb سلك in Arabic pertains to cleaning, specifically in the context of clearing drains and chimneys (Almaany Dictionary, n.d.). The slang in this example is حنسللكه which translates to *we will unclog for him*. While unclogging a drain indicates removing something that is blocking the way so things pass smoothly, this slang suggests the humorous humoring a person so he will think things are going well with no obstructions. This creative slang draws a humorous comparison between the act of unclogging a drain and the act of humoring a person, all condensed into a single word. The fact that Arabic uses attached pronouns makes the process of composing a one-word clause or sentence easy and acceptable even in colloquial Arabic. The current slang, for example, comprises the verb نسللك *unclog*, the subject (attached pronoun) نحن *we*, and the object (attached pronoun) (ه) *him*.

The Arabic Slang	The Subtitle and Back Translation	The Strategy
حنروح نقله لا شكرا وحنسللكه	We just tell him no thank you then leave	Paraphrase

The Arabic slang is replaced by *leave* in the subtitles, which neither retains the original meaning nor preserves the communicative effect.

The Arabic Slang	The Subtitle and Back Translation	The Strategy
؟يعني انت فاكرني ميسوط وبدت يعني؟	I am not exactly on a date here	Direct Translation

The slang word used in this example is intriguing interesting choice as it is borrowed from the English word *date*. The speaker creatively adapted this word into the Arabic morphological pattern *يفعل*, resulting in the term *بدت*, which means “to have a date”.

Although it is borrowed from the English word “date”, and used as such in the English subtitle, it does not convey the same effect. The creativity of the Arabic slang draws from the effect of borrowing, which is lacking in the English subtitle. The effect might have been better reflected had the subtitler opted for the French word *rendez-vous*, which is familiar to the target audience.

Conclusions

The aim of this study is to examine slang expressions used in Saudi Arabic and assess their translation into English subtitles. The study focused on thoroughly analyzing the selected examples of slang

before investigating the strategies used by the subtitler to express them. The purpose of following this procedure is to showcase the unique characteristics of slang and ascertain if these characteristics are maintained or eliminated in subtitles. The findings of the study suggest that the attributes of creativity, conciseness, and humor are largely lost throughout the translation process, even when slang is replaced with English slang in the subtitle. This is shown by the prevalent use of the generalization strategy by the subtitler, which was employed 13 times, followed by the paraphrase strategy, which was used 11 times. The study shows that when slang is replaced by a more general term or paraphrased, the specific characteristics linked to it will not be effectively communicated to the target audience. Rephrasing or generalizing the information would undoubtedly enhance the comprehension of the English-speaking audience more efficiently than just eliminating slang or translating it verbatim. Nevertheless, it would not elicit the same level of influence on the intended recipients as the source slang. In addition, the translation of just six Arabic slangs into their English counterpart slangs emphasizes the substantial linguistic and cultural differences between the two languages as English in many cases lacks direct equivalents for Arabic slang terms.

Data availability

Data collected for the study is available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/OJEGWF>

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