Qualitative analysis of the impact of deleting swearwords on their communicative effect in Arabic subtitling

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ABSTRACT
Swearwords are deliberately used in movies to achieve certain communicative effects, including the expression of characters' inner feelings, their social and educational backgrounds, and the relationships among the characters. Such traits need to be preserved in the interlingual subtitling of these movies so that the effects of swearwords on the source recipients are duly transferred to the target audience. However, for religious and cultural reasons, swearwords are either toned down or removed entirely in the subtitling process. In light of this, this study adopts a qualitative approach to examine the effect of deleting swearwords on their communicative impact in amateur subtitling of American crime drama movies into Arabic and to identify the probable causes of deletion. Data collection included collating swearwords from the dialogues of two American crime drama movies (Alpha Dog, 2006, and Harsh Times, 2005) with high occurrences of swearwords and their subtitles in Arabic. In the analysis of these data, Nida's principle of equivalent effect was adopted to examine the loss of the communicative effect of swearwords due to deletion. The findings of the study indicate that deleting swearwords results in an inaccurate portrayal of the character's personal feelings, their socio-cultural traits, or their relationships with other characters in the movie. It is argued that the probable cause of deletion is to abide by the target socio-cultural and religious norms. Thus, careful consideration of swearword handling in subtitling is essential to avoid such losses.

Keywords: Amateur subtitling; deletion; equivalent effect; subtitling constraints; swearwords.

INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has increased people's accessibility to audiovisual materials of all types. It has enhanced the interest of people to exploit such means for knowledge acquisition, acquaintance with other cultures, and for entertainment (Scherer & Sagarin, 2006). Nevertheless, since English is used in most of the audiovisual materials, overcoming this language barrier has emerged as an obstacle to people unfamiliar with English. Consequently, there has been a pressing demand on translators to carry out the interlingual transfer of various TV, cinematic, and video productions to other languages (Gottlieb, 2005).

Due to financial considerations, the invention of user-friendly translation programs was of great help in overcoming this barrier. The use of such programs has changed the role of the ordinary consumer of audiovisual materials into an active participant in the production process as well (Aljammaz, 2023). Hence, the neologism 'Prosumer' has been coined by Topscott and Williams (2006) to describe the involvement of consumers in the recreation, use, and dissemination of such productions to other viewers worldwide via the Internet facility.

The consumers' involvement in the aforementioned activities has created a large number

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of platforms of amateur dubbers and subtitlers who are characterized by the affection they have for the tedious work they undertake voluntarily. The feedback they receive from viewers makes them more familiar with the fans' preferences, particularly the adoption of translation strategies. On this basis, amateur subtitlers tend to be more creative to meet their viewers' needs (Diaz-Cintas & Sanchez, 2006).

According to Baker (2019), in order to "cater for the consumers' needs" in becoming acquainted with the distinctive features of the source culture, amateur subtitlers are said to be source text oriented (Perez-Gonzalez, 2012). Consequently, they exhibit a 'foreignization' translation inclination to "be loyal to the original and keep the exotic flavor of the original" and bring the target recipients to the source culture (Hu, 2018, p. 376). Supporting this notion, Perez-Gonzalez (2020, p. 176) believes that amateur subtitlers tend to "resist censorship", an attitude also taken by Aljammaz (2023), who argues that what motivates amateur subtitlers to volunteer to subtitle for free is to challenge societal and subtitling norms.

Nonetheless, amateur subtitlers lack the formal translation training and expertise necessary when facing difficult translation situations (Antonini & Bucaria, 2015, p. 7). Specifically, they seem to lack linguistic and pragmatic knowledge. Some amateur subtitlers major in clinical psychology, engineering, computer science, or management, but not in language or translation (Luczaj et al., 2014; Wang, 2014).

The amateur subtitling phenomenon has attracted a growing scholarly interest in recent years (Orrego-Carmona, 2014). Among the focused topics in some early studies were the problems amateur subtitlers encountered either due to the linguistic and technical constraints of subtitling, the low competency of these subtitlers, or the common problems amateur subtitling shares with traditional translation (Bogucki, 2009; Sajna, 2013). Moreover, several studies have been carried out on amateur subtitlers' treatment of culturally specific elements, particularly the strategies they adopted in the interlingual subtitling of swearwords in movies (Garcia-Manchon, 2013). The findings of such studies indicated that the strategies adopted portray a continuum ranging from complete fidelity to the source text, whereby all swearwords in the source text were faithfully rendered to the target language, to achieving complete acceptability in the target language, whereby all swearwords in the source text get omitted or toned down; a fact which points to the sensitivity of this issue. However, although the choice of a particular strategy is influenced by different ideological, cultural, and contextual factors, these elimination strategies have ignored the transference of the intended communicative effect of swearwords to the target recipients.

The difficulty of handling swearwords in interlingual and cultural transfer has been approached from different perspectives. From a cultural perspective, it is usually asserted that any mention or display of swearwords in public is objectionable in conservative cultures (Alsharhan, 2020, p. 21). This stems from the taboo nature of swearwords as they refer to disgusting experiences and references whose mention causes "offence" (Rabab'ah & Al-Qarni, 2012, p. 731). From a cognitive perspective, the obscenity of swearwords increases with the shift from the spoken to the written mode characteristic of subtitling. This is because when reading the swearwords in subtitles, several sensory channels will be engaged: seeing the words and reading them as well as hearing them from the soundtrack in the movie. Hence, the mere hearing of words, in dubbing, for example, is not as permanent as reading them while displayed on the screen (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998).

Identifying the translation strategies adopted in transferring swearwords to other languages has been the focus of several scholars in the field. For instance, Garcia-Manchon (2013) compared the translation strategies of professional and amateur subtitlers. The author found that deletion was the dominant translation strategy in handling swearwords when subtitling English movies into Spanish. In contrast, professional subtitlers adopted a more target culture-oriented behavior through self-censoring swearwords by deleting more swearwords than amateur subtitlers.

In another study, Khakshour Forutan and Modarresi (2018) compared the strategies adopted by professional dubbers and non-professional subtitlers to render cultural taboos in Hollywood movies into Persian. The findings indicate that professional dubbers preferred to edit and filter taboos, whereas non-professional subtitlers preferred exact and free translation.

Concerning the subtitling of swearwords in movies into Arabic, the surveyed studies exhibit inconsistency in the strategies of handling swearwords. For instance, Al-Yasin and Rababa'h (2019) carried out a study on the connotative equivalence of swearwords in American Hip Hop movies and their subtitles in Arabic. The authors argued that the use of euphemisms maintains the connotative functions of swearwords, whereas omission causes a misfire for these functions.

Taking a quality assessment approach, Abdelaal and Al Sarhani (2021) conducted a study on the subtitling strategies of swearwords in the movie 'Training Day' into Arabic. The authors found that omission and euphemism were the prominent strategies adopted to handle swearwords, and that the subtitling was of good quality. In addition, Al-Zgoul and Al-Salman (2022) conducted a study on the fansubbers' strategies of rendering swearwords in the 'Bad Boys' movies into Arabic. Their findings indicated that the most prominent strategy was omission, which resulted in blurring the connotative functional elements that swearwords are normally used to achieve.

Moreover, Abu-Rayyash et al. (2023) carried out a study on the translation strategies adopted by Netflix subtitlers to render swearwords into Arabic. The study revealed that omission was the most prominent strategy, which caused a "neglect of the feelings involved in the screenplay" (p. 8). The study examines the tendency to opt for deletion due to the space limitation of the subtitling modality. Similarly, Sahari (2025) conducted a study on the strategies adopted by professional and amateur subtitlers when rendering swearwords in the movie 'Pulp Fiction' into Arabic and found that, unlike professional subtitlers, amateur subtitlers tend to retain more swearwords in the subtitles.

Similarly, Aljammaz (2025) attempted to examine the extent to which professional and amateur subtitlers were able to achieve a balance between the intended emotional effect of swearwords and adhering to the Arabic religious and cultural norms. The findings show that although professional and amateur subtitlers opted for euphemism and deletion as common strategies when rendering swearwords, amateur subtitlers kept some of the intended emotional effect by maintaining taboos in the target text.

To sum up, it can be stated that the review of related past studies revealed that the majority of the studies seemed to focus on the identification of the subtitling strategies opted for when rendering the sensitive issue of swearwords. The effect of deleting swearwords on conveying the communicative effect they were intentionally incorporated to achieve was marginal, with only some scattered references here and there. The present study argues that movie directors intentionally incorporate swearwords to reflect the depicted atmosphere in, for example, brawls between gangs and the cops or among groups of criminals. In such situations, it is customary for the cops to use swearwords of different types to vent their inner feelings and demonstrate a dominant position over the gang members. Gangs themselves use such words as a reflection of their social or educational backgrounds or their membership in such groups. Hence, swearing expressions such as 'motherfucking', 'pitch', 'kick your ass ', and so forth, are common in movies focusing on such themes. In the interlingual subtitling, the deletion of swearwords would prevent the target audience who depend exclusively on translation from having an exact reflection of what they see in the images. Accordingly, the study attempts to provide an in-depth analysis of instances whereby swearwords are deleted in the subtitles and how this translation orientation would blur the communicative effect of such words to the recipients.

This being the case, the significance of the present study lies in its attempt to bridge this gap. Specifically, the study attempts to address the following questions: (1) To what extent does deleting swearwords in the amateur subtitling of American crime drama movies affect the conveyance of their intended communicative effect to the Arab audience? (2) What are the probable causes of deletion?

Equivalent Effect in Translation
The meaning interlocutors attempt to communicate is to be understood as a manifestation of language in use, whereby utterances are intended to perform certain communicative effects. Hence, the use of language is meant to achieve a purposeful act; interlocutors grasp meaning as use in their attempt to transfer their intentions and the communicative effect of their utterances. Understanding the effect of an utterance depends on the context of the situation, the relationship between interlocutors, and the socio-cultural setting.

Unless an awareness of the communicative effect notion is established when carrying out the interlingual subtitling activity, a semantic/pragmatic failure will occur when relaying the message to the target audience. This failure is further complicated when much of the intended meaning in the source text will be blurred via adopting elimination translation strategies. However, achieving such awareness requires a bicultural and bilingual competence on the part of the subtitler of the languages involved. This is justified on the basis that speakers within the same speech community develop a repertoire of shared knowledge through long socialization processes that enable them to understand each other effectively. To arrive at this level of competency and achieve adequate subtitling performance, subtitlers need to undergo long socio-cultural and linguistic socialization processes in the languages they mediate.

Preserving equivalent translation effects is an approach proposed by Nida (1964), who initially termed it 'dynamic equivalence'. Dynamic equivalence proposes that "the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message" (Nida, 1964, p. 159). This approach represents a revolt against earlier approaches to translation, which focused on form or content, and translators' notions of literal or free translation. Nida postulated that the main focus in any translation activity should be directed towards the recipient's response to the translated message. He states that "dynamic equivalence is therefore to be defined in terms of the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language" (Nida & Taber, 1969, p. 24). This proposition is also referred to as the principle of 'equivalent effect' in which " the main aim of the translator is to produce as nearly as possible the same effect on his readers as was produced on the readers of the original" (Newmark, 1988, p, 10).

Treatment of Swearwords in (Interlingual) Subtitling

Interlingual subtitling exhibits two complex shifts in the language mode: the change from the source to the target language and the shift from the spoken to the written mode. Both shifts are highly impacting on the subtitler's performance. The former confronts the subtitler with the cultural and linguistic mismatches between the two involved languages. The shift from the spoken to the written mode, on the other hand, implies another change from the informal to the formal register. According to Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2007, p. 185), "subtitling must use standard language". The necessity to use 'standard language' signals a tendency to leave out elements that are characteristic of the spontaneous, informal speech, including false starts, hesitations, swearwords, and slang. The use of such elements is meant to facilitate the communication of messages amongst interlocutors, and their removal from the subtitles will affect the transference of the intended communicative effect.

In addition to these shifts, interlingual and intralingual subtitling are further complicated by the space and time constraints. The former restricts the number of lines to two, each consisting of 35 characters, whereas the latter regulates the time at which subtitles appear and disappear from the screen. This should coincide with the articulation of the dialogue by each actor, but should not be less than one and a half seconds and not exceeding seven seconds (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). These constraints render subtitling a 'constraint translation' (Titford, 1982), or an 'adaptation', not proper translation.

As a result of the previously mentioned constraints, a reduction in subtitling is inevitable as it becomes difficult to render all information in the source text. According to Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2007), there are two types of reduction: 'partial reduction', which refers to a condensed version of the source text in the subtitled version, and 'total reduction', whereby certain elements in the source text are completely deleted from the subtitles. However, in this study, only the second type of reduction, namely, deletion, is relevant.

Generally speaking, deletion in subtitling is carried out on elements in the source text that are deemed of less significance for the comprehension of its message. These elements are of little semantic value, and their elimination will spare the audience the extra effort of reading plenty of information. Furthermore, the interaction of other audio and visual channels in the movie helps compensate for this deletion. Finally, the decision to adopt deletion is determined as deemed suitable for the needs of the target audience.

When applying these notions to swearwords, some scholars, notably Mattsson (2006, p. 3), argue that swearwords are "considered unnecessary for the progress of a film's storyline itself; but only add more or less redundant information to the plot." Furthermore, Mattsson (2006, p. 3) asserts that they "seem less important for the comprehension of a film compared to the importance of e.g. nouns and verbs". In addition, Hjort (2009) perceives the deletion of swearwords as permissible to provide more space to other, more significant semantic units. The same position is held by Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2007), who condition the deletion of swearwords by the space limitation of the small TV screen.

However, the previous account on the treatment of swearwords in subtitling underestimates the purposeful implementation of such words in movies. Swearwords are incorporated for sound characterization of individuals who exaggerate their use in their language interaction to become idiosyncratic of their aggressive styles. Moreover, they are used to reflect people's reactions in the expression of various inner feelings in response to sudden happenings and in portraying the relationship among interlocutors. Accordingly, deleting them will impair the conveyance of all these communicative effects to the recipients.

METHOD

The term 'swearwords' as used in the study adopts the definition by Andersson and Trudgill (1990, p. 53), which is a type of language that:

1. refers to something that is taboo and/or stigmatized in the culture;
2. should not be interpreted literally; and
3. can be used to express strong emotions and attitudes.

In line with this definition, the word 'bitch' is not a swearword if it is used in contexts to mean 'the female dog', that is, in its literal meaning. It is perceived as a swearword only in its pejorative connotation when addressing, for example, a woman to 'disparage' her.

Accordingly, swearwords meeting the conditions in this definition in the movies were collated to be analyzed. Each of the identified swearwords and its counterpart in the Arabic subtitles are underlined in the results and discussion section. A literal back translation of the Arabic subtitles is also provided to help non-native speakers of Arabic read and understand these subtitles. In the discussion of each example, the deleted swearword in the subtitles is indicated by spaced dots (. . . . .).

Research Approach and Data of the Study

This study is qualitative in nature. It attempts to examine the effect of deleting swearwords in the selected movies on conveying their communicative effect in the subtitled versions in Arabic.

The corpus consists of the scripts of two American crime drama movies (*Alpha Dog, 2006,* and *Harsh Times, 2005*) and their amateur subtitles in Arabic, with a total number of 41474 words. The use of two movies with the highest number of swearwords is sufficient to highlight the translator's treatment of swearwords. This is an important issue in studying the effect of deletion as a translation strategy on transferring the intended communicative impact of such words to the recipients. The selection from the crime drama genre is made on the basis that this genre depicts the deployment of language by low-class speakers such as criminals, gangs, and drug dealers. In their daily interactions, these speakers resort to frequent use of swearwords for certain communicative effects such as venting anger, frustration, or showing solidarity or power. An initial analysis of the selected movies displays the highest number of swearwords within this genre for a period extending from 2000 to 2010. The highest occurrence of swearwords in the selected movies is confirmed by Moad's (2011) list of movies with the most audible uses of the word "fuck." This list ranks the most offensive movies on the basis of the instances of the word "fuck" in each of them. Moreover, the beginning of this time span corresponds to the time the Internet became common in the Arab World (Gamal, 2008).

Data Collection

The spoken dialogues of the movies were downloaded from the following website in .srt formats:

1. www.opensubtitles.org;
2. https://www.opensubtitles.org/ar/subtitles/10195538/alpha-dog-ar,
3. https://www.opensubtitles.org/ar/subtitles/10783659/harsh-times-ar.

These websites were selected because they are among the most widely used and publicly accessible sources for movie subtitles, frequently utilized by viewers and researchers alike. The sites display download statistics that reflect the popularity and reliability of the subtitle files. Furthermore, they provide aligned versions of movie dialogues and their translations, which facilitates systematic comparison between the source text and its subtitled version. Then, the spoken dialogues were converted to .txt formats to be more workable using other analysis software. After that, each movie script and its subtitles were placed side by side to form a parallel unidirectional corpus. All instances of swearwords in the source text were hand-picked and compared with those in the subtitles to check for any instances of deletion. These websites are among the most commonly used websites by fans to download subtitles for movies. Moreover, they indicate the number of downloads of each movie, which highlights the popularity of the movie. In addition, they provide the movie dialogue and its subtitles, which allows for comparisons between the original text and its translation.

Data Analysis

All instances of deletion were identified, and the loss of the communicative effect of swearwords was examined, exploiting Nida's (1964) concept of 'equivalent effect'. Determining the communicative effect impaired by deletion was made while watching the scene in which the deleted swearword appeared. This has given an opportunity to make use of the image to decide on the type of relationship between participants at the time of uttering the swearword, as well as other socio-psychological parameters that might have a bearing on the intended communicative effect. Consequently, whether the speakers were kidding with their addressee or intended to express anger, frustration,

or to intensify the expression of inner feelings played a role in determining the conveyed effect.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed that deletion accounted for 42.79% of the 1318 total number of swearwords in the movies. As a translation strategy, deletion refers to the complete omission of swearwords in English movies when subtitling into Arabic. According to Dimitriu (2004, p. 165), this is a domestication strategy used "in order to adjust - linguistically, pragmatically, culturally, or ideologically - the translated texts for their target audiences." As a result of this strategy, the total number of swearwords in the Arabic subtitles was significantly decreased. This domestication strategy did not leave any traces of swearing overtones in the target text. However, it has adversely affected the conveyance of the intended communicative effects for the Arab viewers. Due to space limitations, only typical illustrative examples that were randomly selected will be analyzed.

Swearwords From the Body Functions

Example 1 illustrates the deletion of the swearword 'shit', which was connotatively used to stress the speaker's assertion. This swearword was employed in the source text to strengthen the speaker's position to persuade the addressee to join him in the killing of someone, as instructed by the leader of the gangs. According to Scherer and Sagarin (2006), swearers exploit the force of swearwords to persuade their addressees to do something. A great deal of swearwords gain their strength by virtue of what they refer to above or below their referential meaning. For instance, although 'poo', 'shit', and 'feces' all denotatively refer to the same substance, it is only 'shit' that is perceived as offensive due to its bad connotations (Allan & Burridge, 2006). More importantly, using or hearing swearwords brings to language users a mental image they associate with what they experience in the real world. Indeed, the connotative meaning of swearwords overshadows their referential meanings. Accordingly, the majority of swearwords are exploited to pass over certain communicative effects. In film subtitling, while such communicative effects are easily comprehended by the source audience, the deletion of swearwords results in a failure in conveying the intended communicative effect of the original use to the target audience.

Example 1 (AD):

And you sure <u>as shit</u> don't want Sonny Truelove knocking at your door.	وانت متاكد -------- بانك لاتريد سوني ترولوف أن يقرع بابك (Lit. And you sure . . . . . . you do not want Sonny Truelove to knock your door.)

In this scene in the movie, when the addressee refused to join the speaker in the killing of someone, the latter warned him that the leader of the gangs would not leave them alone. To emphasize this warning, the speaker used the swearing expression 'as shit', which gains its force through its association with filth and unpleasant excrement. The attributes of the referent this word denotes in the real world create negative reactions, making the word stigmatized. Based on its stigmatized nature, the word 'shit' is sanctioned in polite discourse as it causes offense. Accordingly, it is usually employed for swearing purposes to express strong communicative effects. In the Arabic subtitles, on the other hand, the swearword was deleted by the subtitler. As a result, the strength of the sentence in the source text was, by virtue of the swearword 'shit', adversely decreased in the subtitles. In other words, the subtitles did not fully convey the same communicative effect as intended in the source text. Accordingly, an equivalent effect was not conveyed to the Arab viewers in the subtitles. Hence, Arab viewers, particularly those who are familiar with this word, might question the disparity between the fierce and hostile attitude they see on the screen and the normal and friendly discourse in the subtitles. The subtitler did not even attempt to compensate for the swearword 'shit' with another swearing expression from another semantic field that might preserve some of the intended communicative effect of the source text swearword.

As for the reasons triggering deletion, the space and time constraints should be ruled out because the number of characters in the Arabic subtitles is 38, which is almost half the permissible number of characters in two-liner subtitles. As for the feedback effect from the soundtrack and image on the screen, it was of little help to justify deletion, as the word 'shit' was clearly audible. According to Greenall (2011, p. 58), it is the nature of swearwords in movie dialogue to "stand out from the remaining context-often prosodically, too- and will thus be quite noticeable even for a non-native audience." Interestingly, the word 'shit' is not so

strange to a great deal of the Arab audiences, hence its articulation brings it to focus. Accordingly, one is tempted to think of three possible reasons behind this translation strategy. The first is the offense that the Arab colloquial equivalent of the swearword 'khara', [shit/excrement], may cause to the Arab audience. The second is the low linguistic competency level of the amateur subtitlers, which made them unable to integrate the expression 'as shit' into the subtitles. The third is that they might have thought that the expression was of little significance to comprehend the storyline in the movie, hence it is dispensable (Georgakopoulou, 2009).

Swearwords From the Body Organs
Example 2 illustrates the deletion of the swearword 'asshole' in the Arabic subtitles. This swearword

gains its stigmatized connotation by virtue of its reference to the excretory body organ. In this scene in the movie, 'asshole' was used by the cops to insult one of the convicted gang members by comparing him to a dirty part of the body. Accordingly, it was purposefully employed as a stylistic feature of the way the police degrade convicts. It was an expression of the hegemony of the police over this convict (Dynel, 2012). These communicative effects were lost in the Arabic subtitles as a result of deletion. The resulting subtitles do not reflect how an angry cop should be talking (Scandura, 2004). Consequently, the strong communicative force of the swearword was attenuated to the Arab viewers who can see the quarrel between the cop and the convict.

Example 2 (AD):

Get on your knees, <u>asshole</u>.	أرضا على ركبتيك --------- (Lit. On earth on your knees, ...)

The number of characters in this subtitle is only 13; therefore, the space constraint cannot be the main reason for deletion. Moreover, the feedback from the image was of no help to the subtitler, as the audience can see a cop threatening a convict with a very high tone of voice and pointing a gun at him.

Therefore, one probable justification for deletion might be the very offensive attributes of the swearword 'asshole' if literally translated into Arabic, since the subtitler did not opt for functional equivalence.

Example 3 (HT):

I'm going to take that <u>big ass of yours</u> home	سآخذك إلى المنزل ... …… (Lit. I will take . . . .. . <u>you</u> to the house.)

In example 3, the swearword 'ass', which the speaker used to express the affective meaning of despise and scorn towards the addressee, was deleted. What added to the strong communicative effect of the insulting swearing expression in this scene is the fact that the speaker was a male addressing a female who was in a brawl with. When the speaker got control of the addressee, he uttered this word as a sign of disrespect and humiliation. It reflects the type of relationship between the speaker and the addressee, which was mainly that of showing power and domination on the part of the speaker and submission on the part of the addressee. Hence, the speaker uttered this swearword as a 'seal' for his victory over the defeated enemy (Bianchi, 2008). However, these negative communicative effects disappeared from the Arabic subtitles as a result of deletion. On the contrary, what the translation in Arabic depicts is an intimate relationship between the speaker and his addressee. To reiterate, the speaker is portrayed as making an invitation to take his addressee to his house. The

friendly atmosphere in the subtitles communicates a wrong message to the audience about the confrontational and venomous environment in this scene. More importantly, what the audiences see on the screen contradicts what is conveyed in the subtitles. As a result, the deletion of the swearword contributed to skewing a great deal of the intended communicative effects in the source text, leaving the audience bewildered about the reasons triggering this change. In other words, the deletion of the swearword worked to simplify the conflict between the opponents (Remael, 2003). Hence, doing away with the swearword in the subtitles portrayed the image of the vindictive and hostile protagonist as a "mild and toothless" and tame character to the target audience (Karjalainen, 2002). More importantly, the sexual overtones intended in the sentence "take that big ass of yours home" were lost in the subtitles. Indeed, the speaker wanted to express his desire for sexual intercourse with the addressee by using this expression.

Again, the space constraint was not the main reason for deletion, as the number of characters in the subtitles is only 15. In addition, the feedback from the soundtrack and image on the screen was of little help to the subtitler. What remains as a plausible justification is the unnaturalness of the translation to the Arab audiences if the word 'ass' were literally rendered. The sexual implications of this word render it very offensive.

Swearwords from the Animal Field

Example 4 illustrates a case where the swearword has the same form but different meanings; one of them is conceived as being offensive. The sense of the word that carries swearing rules out its other senses and becomes the most dominant due to the frequency of use and familiarity of people with that word. Hence, it is the reflected meaning of the swearword that is given prominence (Leech, 1981).

For instance, the word 'gay' has the positive meanings of denoting something 'cheerful, bright or lively' besides the sexual negative connotation 'homosexual'. In most contexts where this word is used, the sexual association pushes the other meanings of this word to the background. Thus, in swearing contexts, it is that part of meaning which forms our shocking response to this swearword. Indeed, it is this element of meaning that makes people frown upon swearwords and expressions when displayed in public. It is not a surprise, then, that it is this same property that stimulates speakers to incorporate swearwords to achieve certain communicative effects. Consequently, their deletion impairs the conveyance of their intended communicative effects and prevents the target audience from fully grasping the aggressiveness of the characters using them.

Example 4 (HT):

| Lucky you got little <u>bitch</u> feet, | حظك جيد أنك لديك ما يكفيك---------- |
| | (Lit. Your luck is good that you have what suffices you . . . .) |

In example 4, the deleted swearword 'bitch' was used to devalue the addressee. The word 'bitch' in its conceptual meaning is neutral and indicates a female canine animal from the dog species. However, the reflected meaning of this word is extended to designate a promiscuous woman, which makes the word derogatory and offensive. Hence, whenever the word 'bitch' is used in addressing women, it is meant to be pejorative. The swearword 'bitch' in this example was used to describe the speaker's opponent as being worthless, contemptible, and ridiculous, hence it was meant to belittle the opponent. It made the sentence highly charged with meanings of disgust and ridicule to be communicated to the source text audiences. The deletion of this word in the subtitles has encapsulated the sentence in a formal register in Arabic, whereby the intended communicative effect of the source text was completely eradicated. The emerging register in the subtitles changed the sentence into a compliment on the good luck of the addressee, 'Your luck is good'. Consequently, the conflictive and insulting atmosphere in the movie was changed into a friendly one in the subtitles. Hence, deletion disguised a great deal of the communicative effect of the sentence. As a result, the target text cannot be said to be equivalent in effect to the source text in terms of the reactions from the viewers (Rodríguez-Medina, 2015).

The number of characters in the subtitles is only 20; therefore, there was much space for the subtitler to transfer the whole source text. Moreover, the swearword 'bitch' is so common worldwide, signaling a negative effect from the feedback. The only remaining reason behind opting for deletion is the coarseness and vulgarity of this expression, which prohibit its exposition in public domains.

Swearwords from the Incest Field

Example 5 illustrates a different case whereby swearwords can also show the socio-cultural factors of interlocutors engaged in a speech exchange; their idiosyncratic features, dialect, class membership, individuality, level of education, and the type of discourse conveyed, whether formal or colloquial. Their use is a depiction of the emotive purpose of the exchange, which reflects the speaker's social relationship with the listener. According to Nedergaard-Larsen (2010), sociolinguistic features of the speakers, including sociolect, dialect, and speech variety, have to be maintained in the target text. On this basis, several swearwords in the corpus were exploited to achieve one or more of these social communicative effects, and deleting them in subtitling would impair conveying such effects and the depiction of the intended atmosphere to the target audience.

Example 5 (AD):

You'd give it a kiss on the tip. I bet you_would, <u>motherfucker.</u>	لقد قبلته ----------- (Lit. You kissed it . . . .)

In example 5, the swearword 'motherfucker,' which was used to express a social meaning typical of the register of low-class people, was deleted. In the world of uneducated gangs, criminals, and drug dealers, it is customary that members of this community address each other with vulgarisms and swearwords. Their use of swearwords is a sign of their belonging to this community (Wang, 2014). In example 5 above, the swearword 'motherfucker' was used by a gang to tease another gang from the same socio-economic group. As for its associative meaning, the word 'motherfucker' reflects a disgusting taboo experience due to its association with incest, which disparages the purity of the image of the mother. In the Arabic subtitles, all these social communicative effects intended to be exposed to the audiences were toned down by adopting the deletion strategy. The idiosyncratic style characteristic of gangs via the use of swearwords, their social class, and even the degree of intimacy were all masked from the target audience. Consequently, the message the director intended to convey to the audience by making the speech of the characters pregnant with swearwords was inaccurately communicated. The effect of this jeopardizing of the intended communicative effect created an interpersonal dynamic different from that intended in the movie (Hatim & Mason, 1997). Indeed, the target text was skewed in such a way that what the audience can perceive is a high level of formality.

The number of characters in the subtitles is only 8, and the feedback from the image was of little help to justify deletion due to the audience's familiarity with the swearword 'motherfucker'. A possible reason for the deletion may be the strong restraining socio-cultural norms against the use of incest denoting swearwords. Example 5 further illustrates this point.

Swearwords from the Religious Field

Example 6 illustrates the deletion of the swearword 'goddamn' in the Arabic subtitles. This word was used in its social meaning as indicative of the informal and harsh military discourse. In this scene in the movie, the swearword 'goddamn' was employed in an adjectival position to express a strong and fortified aptitude of a determined military recruit who wanted to get his officer's satisfaction. This use of swearwords is stressed by Scherer and Sagarin (2006), who argue that swearing increases the degree of persuasion. These nuances of meaning were supported by an authoritative high tone of voice characteristic of military discourse. The deletion of the swearword in the target text masked all these social communicative effects. The depicted character to the Arab audiences is a toothless and flat character who does not use the discourteous and coarse vocabulary characteristic of soldiers.

Example 6 (AD):

I could fill a <u>goddamn</u> trash can, sir	أستطيع أن أملأ صفيحة مهملات ----------- يا سيدى (Lit. I can fill a . . . . .trash can, sir.)

This deletion could not have been due to the space constraint because the number of characters in this subtitle is only 29. Hence, one might think of the unnatural translation if the swearword 'goddamn' were literally translated into Arabic, though the word 'laĩnah' [damned] was used as an equivalent for this word in other places.

Swearwords from the Sexual Activities Field

Example 7 illustrates a peculiar tendency of certain swearwords to co-occur with other words to express

certain communicative effects, hence forming collocations. Examples of such collocations include 'for fuck's sake', 'what the hell', 'get the fuck off', 'fucked up', and 'fuck off' (Stenström et al., 2002). Thus, the resulting meaning a swearword acquires by virtue of the company it keeps with other words is different from its meaning outside this combination. Hence, the collocative meaning of swearwords may be one of the difficult types of meaning to render in interlingual subtitling.

Example 7 (AD):

I don't <u>give a fuck.</u>	(. . . . .)

In example 7, the collocation 'give a fuck' was deleted in the subtitles. This swearing collocation was used by the head of the gangs to show indifference to the way they were going to deal with the hostage. The illocutionary force of this expression comes from the company the verb 'give' keeps with the sexual swearword 'fuck'. Accordingly, the resulting collocation has a communicative effect which is stronger than simply saying that the speaker 'does not care'. The vulgar swearing collocation 'give a fuck' implies the expression of anger and lack of concern. Moreover, it expresses an authoritative stance that is nonchalant of whatever might happen (Dynel, 2012).

In the Arabic subtitles, the whole dialogue was deleted by the subtitler in order not to translate this collocation. However, by opting for deletion, the subtitler impaired the conveyance of the collocative communicative effect to the target audience. Hence, deleting the swearing collocation prevented viewers from getting inside the characters they see on screen, leading the translation to become colorless.

Swearwords from the Racial Slurs Field

Example 8 illustrates the employment of swearwords for the expression of the speakers' personal feelings or their attitudes towards the addressee or some other things they describe. This is a reflection of the emotive effect communicated via the choice of a swearword deemed appropriate in the particular situation, comparable with the intended intensity of the feeling expressed. Hence, the use of swearwords within certain social groups is intended to signal solidarity, intimacy, or group membership and endearment. The expression of anger, frustration, and rudeness, or insults, is reflected through the use of swearwords instead of resorting to physical aggression. In the subtitling process, deleting such words hampers the conveyance of all these communicative effects to the foreign audience, who depend exclusively on subtitles to comprehend the movie.

Example 8 (AD):

| Why don't you try me, you <u>fucking</u> <u>kike</u>? | لا تعبث معي ------------------ |
| | (Lit. Do not twiddle with me . . . .) |

In example 8, the main swearword 'kike' and the premodifier swearword 'fucking' were deleted. The swearword 'kike' is a disparaging slur term used to express the affective meaning of contempt and disdain towards the addressee. Through its usage, the speaker intended to severely insult the addressee by this discriminating racial slur, as it was meant to incite via verbal abuse, referring to ethnic origin (Filmer, 2011). To add insult to the addressee's injury, the speaker emphasized the degree of offense with the use of the emphatic intensifier swearword 'fucking'. The result is the constitution of a highly charged negative attitude meant to provoke the addressee. By adopting the strategy of deletion, the subtitler disguised the speaker's venomous intent from those within the target audience who depend exclusively on the subtitles to grasp the meaning of the movie dialogue. As a result, the speaker's true attitude toward the addressee was softened because it was primarily conveyed through the use of swearwords. The use of swearwords in situations like this is important in signaling the interpersonal relations between characters. And when these words are removed, "the viewer may not fully understand either the psychological development of a character, the power relation between two characters, or some other dramaturgical component." (Kovačič, 1996, p. 297).

The subtitle consists of only 8 characters, and the feedback from the image is against deleting these swearwords because they were significant in conveying the speaker's pejorative evaluation of the addressee. A possible reason for opting for the deletion strategy may be the subtitler's unfamiliarity with the swearword 'kike' and the obscenity of the word 'fucking'.

CONCLUSION

The study has adopted an approach that explores meaning in use, whereby the semantic properties of the investigated word or expression are intertwined with its pragmatic manifestation. This has proven useful in designating the communicative effects each word exhibits in its socio-cultural context of situation.

The analysis has revealed that the intended communicative effects behind the use of swearwords were affected by deletion. It is apparent that the deletion of swearwords has worked to draw an inaccurate portrayal either of the character's personal feelings, the depiction of their socio-cultural traits, or the relationships they hold with other characters in the movies. These are among the

most important communicative effects expressed by swearwords to give a realistic portrayal of the gangs' tough environment. This finding conforms with Diaz-Cintas and Remael's (2007, p. 185) notion that "linguistic choices are never random." Accordingly, deleting swearwords can "affect character representation [and] ultimately the message of the film" (ibid., 200). When it comes to the probable causes of deletion, the analysis has shown that abiding by the target culture's socio-cultural and religious norms was more influential than the technical and linguistic constraints of subtitling. It is interesting in this regard to cite Lefevere (1992, p. 3) who argues that "on every level of the translation process, it can be shown that, if linguistic considerations enter into conflict with considerations of an ideological and/or poetological nature, the latter tend to win out." On this basis, deletion represents an 'avoidance' translation tactic where the target culture rejects the 'subversion' conveyed by swearwords in the source text (Varney, 2007). However, this avoidance can cause layers of the communicative effect to become 'lost in translation'. The result of such a loss "is a betrayal of the original text which, as a result, does not reflect the writer's intention or the characters' personalities" (Soler-Pardo, 2013, p. 131).

It appears that the amateur subtitlers' low translation training and expertise have had an effect on the translation performance. It seems that these subtitlers have been overwhelmed by the great number of swearwords and sought an outlet in deletion. It is interesting to note that, contrary to what is characteristic of amateur subtitlers as being source text oriented, deletion is usually conceived as a strategy shaping a target audience-oriented inclination.

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