

## NETFLIX VERSUS GOOGLE TRANSLATE: A CASE STUDY OF THE ENGLISH-ARABIC TRANSLATION OF SCATOLOGICAL TERMS

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**Abstract:** *This study examines Netflix and Google Translate's renditions of English scatological taboo expressions into Arabic. The corpus consists of 110 items extracted from the movie The Wolf of Wall Street. The findings reveal that Netflix prioritizes cultural sensitivity and appropriateness by employing understatement (58.18%), explicitation (27.27%), and omission (14.55%) as subtitling procedures to either tone down or eliminate scatological offending language. For its part, GT proves to be even more attentive to using understatement (90.91%), albeit it is far less competent than Netflix in terms of language fluency (64% vs. 100%). GT is also less prone to employing omission (6.36%), a Netflix mishap (14.55%) which adversely affects discursive tone and emphasis. The findings also show that Netflix, in contrast with GT, effectively utilizes explicitation and does not produce instances of incomprehensible transliteration. On the one hand, the study concludes that the omission of some scatological terms by Netflix, which can be readily captured by non-flagrant Arabic counterparts, can mar the tone of dialogic discourse. On the other hand, GT, while it is adequately trained to detect scatological terms and tone them down, it seriously falters in terms of linguistic accuracy.*

**Keywords:** *Netflix, Google Translate, scatological terms, translation procedure, English-Arabic.*

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Subtitling, the most common audiovisual translation (AVT), involves adding captions in the target language (TL) to an AVT material that renders temporally and spatially the meaning of the communication segment being spoken and viewed (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2014; Gambier & Gottlieb, 2001). It has a rich history dating back to the early 1900s, when the first subtitles were introduced in silent films (Nagels, 2012). It is crucial to ensure that the subtitled text accurately matches the visual content on the screen. This requires observing specific guidelines regarding the space available, the number of lines, and the characters per line. Time limitations in subtitling are also important to ensure that all content is synchronized and displayed on-screen properly. These constraints can affect the subtitling process and intermittently lead to the production of shorter text. Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014) observe that text reduction can involve condensing, rephrasing, or omitting information.

Netflix has effectively emerged as a video streaming service that provides a large range of movies and TV series in several languages to delight consumers worldwide (Ponkala, 2018). Launched in 1997, it started as an online interface, delivering its large inventory of movies through the US Mail, which took several days to arrive. Therefore, the service only attracted a few customer groups, such as movie fans who didn't care about new releases, early adopters of DVD players, and online purchasers (Christensen, Raynor & McDonald, 2013). However, as new technologies allowed Netflix to shift to streaming video over the Internet, the company eventually became more appealing to customers worldwide. This shift enabled Netflix to offer a wider content selection with an all-you-can-watch, on-demand, low-price, high-quality, and highly convenient approach.

Netflix also provides subtitles in several languages, recognizing the significance of subtitling and its components, including localization, human subtitles, formatting guidelines, quality assurance methods, and collaboration with translation partners. In particular, localization is a significant subtitling function that tailors subtitles to specific languages and cultural preferences. It guarantees that the subtitle is culturally appropriate and acceptable to the intended audience (Esselink, 2000). To ensure accuracy, trained translators provide human subtitles that carefully follow the platform's subtitling guidelines. Style and formatting guidelines are also vital in subtitling. They ensure that subtitles are reliable and adhere to prescribed formatting requirements, making them easier for viewers to read and understand. Furthermore, quality control measures ensure that the subtitles are visually appealing and easily interpreted.

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Netflix has a quality control method to ensure the authenticity and reliability of its subtitles. This technique involves checking subtitles for correctness according to the platform's requirements (Xie & Aurisset, 2016). While auto-generated or semi-automatic translation systems may be employed to create subtitles, they frequently lack the quality and accuracy of human subtitles. Consequently, Netflix prioritizes the use of human subtitles to provide the greatest possible viewing experience for consumers globally (Ponkala, 2018).

For its turn, Machine Translation (MT) is a field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that creates automatic tools capable of translating text or speech from one language to another. The core aim of MT is to remove language barriers and enable communication between people who speak different languages. One of the most reputable tools in the MT field is Google, which has implemented GT, an advanced MT technology. The popularity of GT has grown significantly in recent times due to its web interface, mobile apps, and API that can translate a variety of language pairs. Google utilizes statistical machine translation (SMT) and neural machine translation (NMT) procedures to produce translation (Bahdanau, Cho & Bengio, 2014).

Previously, GT has relied on SMT, which involves developing statistical models based on bilingual corpora to predict translation choices. MT systems apply language standards and alignments between parallel phrases to generate translation. However, it employs NMT models significantly to enhance the quality of translation. MT leverages artificial neural networks, specifically recurrent neural networks (RNNs) or transformer models, to extract contextual and semantic data from source statements to produce more accurate translation (Wang et al., 2022). Google benefits from ongoing research and development to improve GT's effectiveness. It has refined the translation procedure by using large-scale training data, improving neural network structures, and innovating artificial intelligence approaches. Google also values user feedback and contributions to improve translation accuracy over time.

## **Theoretical Studies**

Scholars have suggested different approaches to translating/subtitling taboo expressions in general. For example, Gottlieb (2016) noted that censorship involves using less offensive expressions or omitting taboo expressions altogether. However, censorship has limitations, as it can lead to a loss of meaning and nuance in the translation. Euphemisms or less offensive expressions can be another approach to subtitling taboo expressions. This approach involves finding an expression in the TL that conveys the intended meaning without being abusive or vulgar (Gambier & Gottlieb, 2001). Xavier (2022), on the other hand, suggested that there are options in applying strategies such as addition, maintenance, dysphemism, euphemism, standardization, omission. They are

employed when pragmatic, communicative, semiotic aspects, and subtitling constraints are influenced by these options.

Farghal (1995) emphasized the importance of context and intention in understanding the use of euphemisms in translation, asserting that the Cooperative Principle, as proposed by Grice, plays a vital role in using euphemisms, as speakers rely on shared knowledge and assumptions with their interlocutors to convey their intended meaning. He identifies several forms of Arabic euphemisms, including figurative language, understatement, ellipsis, borrowing, circumlocution, etc., as well as several taboos that call for euphemism, including sexual, scatological and religious references.

Censorship has been a common approach in countries with strict censorship laws or cultural beliefs prohibiting certain types of content. It entails employing more acceptable terms or avoiding the taboo expressions entirely (Carroll & Ivarsson, 1998). However, censorship can have detrimental implications, such as depriving the translation of its intended meaning and subtleties, thus affecting the audience's understanding of the original text.

Additionally, the use of taboo expression is a sociocultural practice. Sulpizio et al. (2019) stated that the use of taboo words and processing their offensive nature is a cross-cultural phenomenon. Moreover, the reception of taboos is affected by the receiver's relation to the language with taboos in one's native language appearing more offensive. Likewise, Hunt et al. (2023) related taboo language and its varieties with sociocultural influences and contexts. In the same vein, Abdulhadi and Hamza (2023) stated that the use of swearwords is influenced by culture with their connotative meanings emerging from the context of their use.

Sulpizio et al. (2024) also suggested that the use of taboos is globally common as a universal linguistic behavior that relates to social and psychological functions with influences of sociocultural knowledge that is specific to its communities. Furthermore, Lafreniere, Moore, and Fisher (2022) indicated that the function of swearwords is not limited to offense as they may also influence how a statement is perceived and even believed. In addition, Arvian and Hadi (2024) listed expressing negative emotions such as anger and disappointment, identifying or confirming statements, discrediting, offending, and emphasis or bringing attention as functions or reasons for swearing.

Therefore, cultural adaptation becomes a more practical approach, as it involves lowering taboo expressions to make them more appropriate to the target audience's cultural norms, which requires a deep understanding of the SL and TL cultural norms and linguistic principles. It is beneficial when the taboo expression is culturally specific and has no direct equivalent in the TL (Gambier & Van Doorslaer, 2016). However, exaggerated cultural adaptation may result

in the loss of the intended meaning and impact of the ST, which can eventually affect the audience's overall experience of the audiovisual material.

While these procedures were traditionally facilitated by human translators with their choices being influenced by internal and external factors, like many forms of translation, machine translation began to take root in subtitling. According to Karakanta (2022), this may take shape as the employment of neural machine translation or as automated subtitles. However, Hagström and Pedersen (2022) argued that the introduction of machine translation into subtitling resulted in increased subtitling speed but also led to issues in cohesion and completeness among others. More recently, Calvo-Ferrer (2023) saw that machine translation could have a place in providing quality subtitles as some programs like ChatGPT are currently able to provide subtitles that are not always discernible from human subtitles. These views were affected by knowledge in subtitling and they would likely be affected by the contents of the text as well as the machine translator.

### **Empirical Studies**

Censorship of English taboo expressions in Arabic audiovisual translation is a pervasive phenomenon shaped by sociocultural norms, religious sensitivities, and institutional policies in the Arab world. Several studies have documented how translators systematically tone down, euphemize, or omit offensive content – particularly those involving sexual, scatological, or blasphemous language – to align with conservative cultural expectations. According to Abu-Rayyash, Haider, and Al-Adwan (2023), the translation of swear words in English-Arabic subtitles on Netflix often relies on mitigation strategies such as paraphrasing, omission, and generalization to avoid direct confrontation with taboo terms, thereby softening their pragmatic impact. Al-Adwan and Yahiaoui (2021) also observe that audiovisual content distributed in Arab countries undergoes considerable censorship, especially in the subtitling of sexual and religious taboos, leading to a loss of authenticity and a shift in narrative tone. Similarly, in their analysis of Arabic-dubbed American films, Alghamdi and Mazid (2020) show that cultural taboos frequently necessitate creative strategies such as euphemistic substitution or humorous reformulation to preserve viewer acceptance without fully distorting the message. These translational choices, while often seen as pragmatic, underscore the ideological filters governing the Arabic AVT industry, which seeks to reconcile global media flows with local cultural values.

Several case studies have dealt with human subtitling of English taboo expressions into Arabic. Al-Yasin and Rabab'ah (2019) investigated the connotative equivalence of taboo expressions in American hip-hop movies and their Arabic subtitles. The results show that Arab fansubbers render taboo words into Arabic through euphemism and omission. While euphemism conveys

the connotative functions of English taboo words, omission obliterates them. Similarly, Almijrab (2020) argued that cultural substitution and taboo for taboo subtitling procedures are more effective than omitting taboo expressions, which may lead to the loss of the ST's intended meaning.

In a similar context, Debbas and Haider (2020), in their study of Arabic subtitles of *Family Guy*, showed that in subtitling religious taboo remarks, the predominant procedures are scene deletion and word omission. Their results also indicate that euphemism and word omission are the two strategies adopted for subtitling taboo expressions. Similarly, Abdelaal and Al Sarhani (2021) and Al-Zgoul and Al-Salman (2022) found euphemism and omission to predominate the scene in Arabic subtitles of taboo expressions and swear words.

Al-Jabri, Allawzi, and Abushmaes (2021) compared the euphemistic strategies employed by MBC4 and Netflix in two Arabic-subtitled versions of the US sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*. The findings indicate that Arabic subtitles produced by the satellite Arabic TV channel reflect a higher level of politeness due to the utilization of euphemism as a main politeness procedure to avoid rude and embarrassing terms, while Netflix has used more liberal subtitling procedures.

Haider and Hussein (2022) examined the use of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as a means of euphemism in the intralingual subtitles of Netflix's Arabic series *Jinn*. It is found that the MSA intralingual subtitles have contributed to toning down the inappropriate language and rendering the show more acceptable to the audience. Additionally, Haider, Saideen, and Hussein (2023) explored the subtitling of taboo expressions from a conservative to a more liberal culture in the Arab TV series *Jinn*. They demonstrate that subtitlers have used various procedures to render culture-bound expressions from Arabic into English, including euphemism and cultural equivalence. They also show that unfriendly suggestions and noun supports are the most frequently targeted connotative functions of swear words.

These empirical studies, as can be observed, have investigated subtitling procedures of taboo expressions mainly from English into Arabic audiovisual materials, highlighting euphemism, cultural substitution, and omission as subtitling procedures.

By contrast, only few studies have investigated the quality of the product of MT tools and auto-generated subtitles. Zong (2018) stated that the process of MT depends on the text analysis in terms of grammar, meaning, and style. The MT process starts by splitting the sentence into words and then identifying the meaning of each word through the online dictionary, then by analyzing the sentence or clause according to grammar rules in order to convert it into a conceptual construct, and finally, a TL model is used to generate the sentence

in the TL. The language model, according to him (p. 4), is an “intermediate language between the source language (SL) and the TL, through which various languages can be translated into another desired language. If coupled with bidirectional translation software, the automatic translation system can translate multiple languages”.

Ali (2020) examined the quality of machine translation from English into Arabic, focusing on the impact of various linguistic features on translation quality. He identifies the common errors machine translation systems make and suggests strategies to improve machine translation quality. MT quality can be improved by incorporating more linguistic knowledge into MT systems and using post-editing procedures to refine the generated translation.

Malakul and Park (2023) addressed the impact of three different types of subtitles in the Thai language (auto-subtitles, edited subtitles, and no subtitles) on learning comprehension, cognitive load, and satisfaction to determine whether it is sufficient to use AI technology as an auto-subtitles system to facilitate online learning with educational videos. His results show that the auto-subtitles system that generates Thai language subtitles for English educational videos has greater feasibility of implementation to facilitate online learning compared to editorial subtitles by Thai natives. Therefore, Thai subtitles generated by the auto-subtitles system in English educational videos can facilitate students’ learning comprehension, cognitive load, and satisfaction.

Chan, Kruger, and Doherty (2019) investigated the impact of automated subtitling on student learning in a sample of English first- and second-language speakers. The results show that high error rates and high presentation speeds reduce the potential benefit of subtitles. These findings provide an essential foundation for future studies on using subtitles in education.

Finally, Varga (2021) analyzed online automatic subtitling platforms’ key features and limitations based on different applications such as video-to-text transcription programs, machine translation programs, and text segmenters. Concerning MT subtitles, the study indicates that online applications must be sufficiently trained and adequately calibrated. Therefore, post-editing is highly recommended to ensure quality translation, especially in less known or used languages. As for auto-generated subtitles, the results show that the text segmenters are still struggling with spatial and temporal limitations specific to subtitling. In addition, numerous errors were noticed on the screen, including issues with reading speed, subtitle duration (both maximum and minimum), segmentation, and line length, among others. It is concluded that this technology needs to be further developed and enhanced.

These MT studies have provided some empirical evidence that MT and auto-generated subtitles still encounter serious issues that relate to accuracy, fluency,

and adequacy. However, they also point to some potential areas for improvement, such as incorporating more linguistic knowledge into such systems and using post-editing techniques to refine machine-translated texts.

Despite the growing interest in studying subtitling between English and Arabic, the research on MT in this area is still scarce. While several studies have investigated Arabic subtitles of English taboo expressions in general (Mehawesh & Neimneh, 2021; Shhaiber & Haider, 2023; Thawabteh, 2012; Yahiaoui, Hijazi, & Fattah, 2020), none to the best of our knowledge has compared them in terms of translation procedure and quality with an MT output (specifically GT output), a research gap which this study seeks to fill. The present study, therefore, attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What translation procedures do Netflix and GT employ to render scatological taboo expressions?
2. How effective are these procedures in terms of translation quality?
3. Is GT trained to detect and deal with cultural sensitivities like Netflix human translators?

## **Methodology**

### ***Data selection***

After careful consideration of several movies, *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) is chosen as the primary source of data due to its unfiltered use of bad language. Directed by Martin Scorsese, the movie is a biographical black comedy that depicts the story of a stockbroker who engages in fraudulent activities to deceive investors. The characters' disregard for societal norms is reflected in their reckless behavior, creating a world of extreme indulgence and debauchery. Therefore, it is recommended that viewer discretion be exercised watching the movie.

### ***Data Collection***

Scatological taboo expressions are carefully detected and noted before they are collected into a distinct corpus. Scatological expressions were selected based on specific semantic and cultural criteria drawn from existing literature on taboo language and audiovisual translation (e.g. Allan & Burridge, 2006; Jay, 2009).

The corpus consists of 110 items of scatological expressions. The obtained data is analyzed using Sketch Engine software, which provides a variety of tools for corpus linguistics analysis, including frequency, distribution, and translation patterns of taboo terms (Tables 1 below).

**Table 1.** *Frequency and percentage of scatological terms.*

Term	Frequency	Percentage
shit	93	84.55%
ass	10	9.09%
asshole	3	2.73%
scum	2	1.82%
crap	2	1.82%
Total	110	100%

### ***Data Analysis***

A modified taxonomy of euphemizing strategies based on Farghal (2005) and Allan and Burrige (2006) is adopted to examine Netflix and GT's procedures for rendering English scatological taboo expressions into Arabic. The data reveals four procedures: understatement, omission, explicitation, and transliteration.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Netflix procedures for subtitling scatological taboo expressions***

Three subtitling procedures are attested: understatement, explicitation and omission. Table 2 shows the distribution of subtitling procedures for scatological taboo words.

**Table 2.** *Distribution of Netflix subtitling procedures for scatological taboos.*

Subtitling Procedure	Frequency	Percentage
Understatement	64	58.18%
Explicitation	30	27.27%
Omission	16	14.55%
Total	110	100%

First, as Table 2 shows, the majority of scatological terms (58.18%) have been understated to avoid explicit or objectionable expressions. Netflix uses gentler terms than their more expressive vernacular Arabic counterparts to make them acceptable to the viewers. The examples in Table 3 demonstrate the strategic use of euphemistic terms to convey the intended meaning while minimizing the possible effect of scatological expressions.

**Table 3.** *Examples of understating scatological taboo expressions.*

No.	ST	Netflix subtitles	Literal translation
1.	Most of the Wall Street <i>jackasses</i> that I bust.	«تيرتس لوو» ي ق م ح م ط ع م مهيلع ضربقأ نيذلا	Most of the Wall Street <i>idiots</i> I catch.
2.	You know what else? You dress like <i>shit</i> !	يف عشب كقوذ؟ فرعتأ !سبالملا	You know? Your taste is <i>ugly</i> in clothes!
3.	And you as well. I see you've already met the village <i>asshole</i> .	تلباق كئنا ىرا. أضيا انأ .فيرقلا ق م ح أ لع فل اب	Me too. I see you've already met the village <i>idiot</i> .
4.	She was a single mom on the balls of her <i>ass</i> .	اهل لوح الءابزع أم تنك قوق الو	She was a <i>helpless</i> single mother
5.	They're up my <i>ass</i> . Don't worry about it.	ال، يترخؤم يف اهن! قلقت.	She's in my <i>groin area</i> . Don't worry.

As is clear in Table 3, Netflix has handled the English scatological taboos by employing less offensive Arabic equivalents that appropriately capture the intended meaning without flagrantly offending the target audience. For example, the terms *jackasses*, *shit*, and *asshole* in examples 1-3 are replaced with their euphemized Arabic equivalents ،يق م ح ،عشب ،ق م ح، 'idiots, ugly, stupid'. By way of illustration, for instance, if the subtitler decided to preserve the degree of offence in the English scatological taboo term *shit* in example 3, they would offer a decision, they would offend the audience by breaking acceptable social norms. Similarly, the taboo expression 'on the balls of her *ass*' in example 4 has been subtitled into the mild idiomatic Arabic expression قوق الو اهل لوح الءابزع أم تنك 'She neither has will nor power, i.e. She is helpless' and the formal يترخؤم 'my behind' is used to tone down *my ass* in example 5 instead of the offensive يزيط 'my ass'. In this way, understatement proves to be a very effective and socially acceptable procedure for rendering many scatological taboo terms while preserving the tone and context of discourse.

Second, explicitation, which is a translation procedure used to make the implicit information in the SL more explicit in the TL, is commonly used to ensure that the TT effectively conveys the intended meaning in a way that the target audience can easily understand it while considering cultural and linguistic factors. Nord (2005) states that explicitation bridges the gap between implicit ST and the need for explicitness in the TT. Venuti (2017) also discusses the importance of highlighting the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the TL when dealing with implicit terms. Explicitation is noticeably used when dealing with scatological taboo expressions as Table 4 above shows (27.27%), particularly when the scatological term *shit* is used as a heavy duty general word to indicate something specific within the context while expressing anger and frustration, as the examples in Table 4 demonstrate.

**Table 4.** Examples of explicating scatological taboo expressions.

No.	ST	Netflix subtitling	Literal translation
6.	It's stupid. <i>Shit</i> with me?	؟ينصخت روماً	Things about me?
7.	did a lot of bad <i>shit</i> .	نم ريثكلا تبكترا ي.صاعملا	I committed a lot of sins.
8.	for <i>shit</i> that had nothing to do with me.	انصخت ال ةمتهت ببسب	Because of a charge that doesn't belong to us.

Table 4 indicates that the general scatological taboo term *shit* may be explicated into contextually non-taboo specific items when subtitling utterances like the ones in examples 6-8 above. That is why *shit* has been successfully explicated into 'أروماً، ي.صاعملا، ةمتهت، things, sins, charge', respectively. This contextual and cautious selection which involves a move from semantic generalization to semantic specification is consistent with explicitation, seeking to make implicit information explicit while preserving cultural sensitivities and language subtleties.

Finally, omission accounts for 16% of subtitling scatological taboos. This involves unjustifiably deleting inappropriate scatological terminology, which may have an emphatic discursive function, rather than replacing them with softer substitutes. Table 5 gives some illustrative examples.

**Table 5.** Examples of omitting scatological taboo expressions.

No	ST	Subtitle	Literal translation
9.	What's up her <i>ass</i>	؟اهتل كشم ام	What's wrong with her?
10.	Meanwhile, he thinks he's getting <i>shit</i> rich,	نظيس، ءانثال هذه يفو ،أي رث حبصاً هنأ	In the meantime, he will think that he has become rich.
11.	My first <i>shitty</i> day as a broker.	راسم سك يل موي لوأ	My first day as a broker.

One should know that the omitted scatological terms in examples 9-11 perform an emphatic discursive function in the ST and could be appropriately captured by less offensive language while preserving the strained context of discourse in Arabic. In example 9, the Arabic interaction 'تنع لل اأبت' 'Damn it' may be used to reflect the speaker's frustration, viz. 'اهتل كشم ام! أبت. 'Damn it/Gee! What's wrong with her?' Similarly, in example 10 the emphatic post-modifier 'في اعلى' 'to the highest limit' may be utilized to reflect the emphasis furnished by the taboo word *shit*, viz. 'هنأ نظيس، ءانثال هذه يفو. 'In the meantime, he will think that he has become rich 'to the highest limit', i.e. so rich'. For its turn, example 11 may be subtitled as 'لوأ موي/مداص موي لوأ' (My first shocking/damned day as a broker) in order to convey the tone of the scatological term *shitty*.

## GT procedures for translating scatological taboo expressions

Understatement proves to be a predominant procedure (90.91%), higher than that of Netflix (64%), for rendering scatological taboo expressions by GT. The small remaining percentages are claimed by omission (6.36%) and transliteration (2.73 %). Table 6 below displays this distribution.

**Table 6.** *Distribution of GT procedures for translating scatological taboo expressions.*

Procedure	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Understatement</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>90.91%</b>
Accurate understatement	64	64%
Inaccurate understatement	36	36%
Omission	7	6.36%
Transliteration	3	2.73%
Total	110	100%

First, let us look at some examples of accurate and inaccurate use of understatement in GT's translation of scatological taboo expressions, as displayed in Table 7.

**Table 7.** *GT Examples of accurate and inaccurate translations of scatological expressions.*

No	ST	GT	literal translation
12.	Look at this <i>shit</i> .	فارقلا اذه لى رظنا!	Look at this <i>disgusting</i> thing.
13.	Then they kicked his <i>ass</i> .	هتارخؤم اولك رمث.	They kicked him in the <i>groin</i> .
14.	We would wipe our <i>ass</i> with it.	هب ان تارخؤم حس من انك.	We were wiping our <i>groin</i> with it.
15.	She was a single mom on the balls of her <i>ass</i>	تارك لى ع قبزاع مأ تنانك اهتارخؤم	She was a single mother on her <i>ass</i> balls.
16.	You don't know <i>shit</i> about chop.	نع فارقلا فرعت ال تنانك مرفلا	You don't know the dirt about the chop.
17.	very acidic above the shoulders <i>mustard shit</i> .	قئض م ح ل تاروذاق ال عي م ج لدرخ ل ن يفتك ل ا قوف	All the acidic dirt is above the <i>mustard</i> shoulders.

As observed in Table 7, GT employs understatement in translating commonly-used scatological expressions like *shit* and *ass*. This procedure tones down the taboo word and appropriately conveys the nuances or implications of the English expressions into Arabic. For example, the word *shit* (vernacular ارخ in Arabic) in example 12 is translated into فارقلا 'filth' and the word *ass* (vernacular زيظ in Arabic) in examples 13 and 14 is rendered as تارخؤم 'behind'. It would be insulting, for instance, to render example 12 into the Arabic utterance لى رظنا!

ارخ لا اذه ‘Look at this shit’, hence the appropriate use of understatement while preserving the tone of the utterance.

However, GT has offered many inaccurate cases of understatement due to linguistic and coherence problems, as can be observed in 15-17. In example 15, despite understating *her ass* into اهت رخوم, the literal translation of the English idiomatic expression does not make sense and is incomprehensible. Similarly, the literal translations in examples 16 and 17 do not make sense and are incomprehensible despite GT’s understating the scatological term *shit* into لارقلا ‘filth’ and تاروذاقلا ‘dirt’ in them, respectively. Apparently, GT needs to be contextually sensitized to idiomatic and figurative use in order to convey the intended meaning of such utterances.

Second, as shown in table 6, omission of scatological taboo expressions accounts for only 6.36%, which is less than half Netflix’s percentage (14.55%). Table 8 below presents some examples of omission.

**Table 8.** GT examples of omitting scatological taboo expressions.

No	ST	GT	Literal translation
18.	Meanwhile, he thinks he’s getting <i>shit</i> rich,	، كلذ نوضغ ي ف حبصأ هنأ دقت عي ، أي رث	Meanwhile, he thinks he has become rich,
19.	They don’t give a <i>shit</i> about money.	لاملا اب نومته ي ال مهنلا	They don’t care about money.
20.	Earning <i>shit</i> money	لاملا بسك	Earning money.

As can be observed, GT’s use of omission in examples 18-20 demonstrates its conscious attempt to modify language for different linguistic and cultural settings, which aligns with the tool’s clear goal of retaining linguistic sensitivity. However, just like omission of scatological terms by Netflix, it is critical to recognize that while this procedure helps to maintain appropriateness, it usually affects the intensity and subtle meaning of the original phrases by compromising the discursive emphasis furnished by such terms. For instance, the omission of *shit* in example 20 neutralizes the utterance and strips it of its evaluative tone, which implicates that the money referred to is earned illegally. This tone can be readily captured in the Arabic utterance by understating *shit* into مارحلا ‘religiously forbidden, i.e., illegal,’ viz. مارحلا لاملا بسك ‘Earning illegal money’.

Finally, the investigation shows that there are few instances (3 only) where GT has erroneously transliterated scatological taboo expressions, as is displayed Table 9.

**Table 9.** *GT examples of transliterating scatological expressions.*

No	ST	GT	Literal translation
21.	would ever stop thinking of us as some <i>shitkicker</i> bucket shop.	نع يضم تقو يا نم رجتمك ان يف ريكفتلا ولد ريك تيش	Ever thought of us as a <i>chit-kicker</i> bucket shop.
22.	No <i>shit</i> , you can't even buy 'em anymore.	يتح كنكمي ال ، تيش ال نال دعب اهئارش	No <i>shit</i> , you can't even buy it anymore.
23.	You are such a fucking <i>douchebag</i> , Hanna.	شودلا اذه لثم تنأ انح ، نيعللا	You're such a fucking <i>dosh</i> , Hanna.

The scatological expressions *shit-kicker*, *shit*, and *douchebag* in examples 21-23 have been transliterated, thus resulting in the incomprehensible Arabic forms ش.شودلا، تيش، ريك تيش. In fact, one cannot explain why GT has resorted to incomprehensible transliteration instead of understatement, or even omission, the way it has done with the bulk of other similar scatological taboo words in the corpus. For instance, the expression *No shit* in example 22 may be readily toned down into 'Nonsense' or 'غرف مالك' 'empty talk, i.e., nonsense' and, consequently, capture the discursive tone and emphasis of the utterance appropriately.

## Conclusions

The findings demonstrate that Netflix subtitling procedures for scatological taboo terms prioritize cultural sensitivity and appropriateness. That is why toning down such terms by the understatement procedure accounts for more than half the corpus (58.18%). This approach reflects the platform's commitment to preserving a balanced tone and respecting cultural sensitivities. However, while understatement maintains the contextual emphasis furnished through scatological expressions by toning them down in an acceptable manner in the TT, omission, which accounts for 14.55%, does away with this contextual emphasis by neutralizing and flattening the tension in the dialogic discourse, thus offering a false impression of what is going on emotionally and dynamically. Therefore, understatement is a more effective and appropriate subtitling procedure than omission for scatological taboo expressions. It works well when calling up general Arabic emphatic markers that are socially less offensive than their English counterparts.

Interestingly, GT turns out to be more attentive to toning down scatological expressions in the flow of discourse, viz. understatement scores 90.91% against 58.18% by Netflix. However, the competence in effectively employing understatement by Netflix (100%) far exceeds that of GT (64%), which means that 36% of GT's understatements are inaccurate in terms of language fluency. This clearly points to the serious need to improve GT's performance in fluency and coherence.

GT has also used omission less frequently than Netflix in handling scatological expressions (6.36% vs. 14.55%), which indicates that it gives more attention to the emphatic function of such expressions. While Netflix subtitlers' awareness of cultural sensitivities in intercultural communication is a move in the right direction, it need not go to the extreme by deleting scatological expressions and, by so doing, it flattens the discourse and strips it of its contextual dynamism. Instead, Netflix needs to make more use of understatement in cases where a scatological word plays a key role in the tone and context of discourse.

Further, the findings indicate that Netflix has significantly resorted to explicitation (27.27%) as a subtitling procedure by calling up the specific items referred to by *shit* when it is used as a slot filler representing a variety of specific referents, a procedure that is not accessible to GT, which predominantly prefers understatement (90.91%). In this way, explicitation emerges as a very effective subtitling procedure for scatological terms by Netflix in contrast with GT, which needs to be technically programmed to handle cases where a move from general terms, e.g., *shit* to specific terms, e.g., *money* becomes necessary through explicitation in order to avoid taboo expressions.

To conclude, on the one hand, Netflix shows supremacy over GT in effectively handling understatement as a main translation procedure due to GT's problems with language fluency and coherence, despite the fact that it emerges as more attentive to this procedure. This points to the dire need to improve GT's performance by providing it with linguistic algorithms that can deal more effectively with morphological, syntactic, and semantic features to upgrade its language fluency. On the other hand, Netflix's noticeable use of omission of scatological taboo expressions adversely affects the tone and emphasis of dialogic discourse and should be kept to a minimum, if not forsaken altogether, especially that the function of such expressions can be readily captured by non-scatological and less offensive emphatic markers or by explicitation when the scatological term *shit* is a replacement for a non-taboo specific one.

While this study offers meaningful insights through a focused analysis of *The Wolf of Wall Street*, it is worth noting that the use of a single film may limit the broader applicability of the findings. Future research could build on this case study by examining a wider range of films to further validate and expand upon the results.

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