

# Challenges of Translating Slang Expressions in American Song Lyrics of the 21st Century into the Arabic Language

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**Abstracts:** Slangs are phrases that have strong roots in the culture of a given social and cultural stratum; translating them is challenging. Slang is a kind of daily socio-linguistic manifestation that emerges from a particular socio-cultural or socio-economic group's efforts to codify its members' ideology or mental projections. Slang refers to a language or set of words that are widely used but seldom defined. This study is an Arabic translation of slang used in 21st-century American songs. The research also examines how the slang was translated and the attributes that made them practical communication tools. Arabic speakers learning American English will benefit most from this concentration on slang and its context. The analysis is carried out through the thematic analysis method based on an apparent qualitative study. Twenty (20) slang terms borrowed from 21st-century American pop songs were adapted to be translated into Arabic. The study's data consists of slang expressions in the song lyrics of two American hip-hop/rap singers, Eminem and Wiz Khalifa. *Marshal Mathers II* by Eminem (2013) and *Khalifa* by Wiz Khalifa (2016) were picked as the only albums by each artist. To communicate with native Arabic speakers, the researcher modified the English-Arabic Translator used for superficial translation. Functional equivalents, social equivalents, modulations, substitution, and paraphrases are the main translation strategies adopted in translating the selected slang into formal Arabic. Based on the thematic evaluation, it was discovered that paraphrasing is the most effective strategy for translating American slang into Arabic. Consequently, the research shows that the meanings of slang terms are affected by context and situational variability. The conclusion is that slang plays a significant part in a conversation. To utilize it fully, learners must be familiar with their contexts and interpretations.

**Keywords:** Slangs, Translation, Translation Methods, American Songs of the 21st Century, Discourse Analysis, Arabic Language.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Linguistic knowledge is essential since it allows speakers to produce different variables while conveying broad and narrow thoughts in other circumstances (van Thao, Herman, and Tho, 2020; Niswa et al., 2023). The socio-linguistic personality of the individuals is incorporated in the creation of language items and common conceptions in every culture, community, subculture, and socio-economic system (Eble, 1996; Purba et al., 2022; Herman et al., 2022). Anderson and Trudgill (1990) claim that people's language units are often developed in connection to their socio-economic status or subculture, with conventional interpretations attached to convey that group's worldview or aesthetic paradigm (Ngongo et al., 2022; Silalahi et al., 2022; Nasution et al., 2023).

Slang is a common socio-linguistic phenomenon that emerges from inside a particular social, cultural, or economic group with the express purpose of encoding that group's ideology or conceptual projection. In historical socio-linguistic explanations of slang, particularly from a purist linguistic perspective, slangs are words that are created inside a social group or that have their meanings altered by members of that group to make such phrases seem more unique or conventional, with the result that others outside of that group are left out of the conversation. In other words, slangs are daily socio-linguistic phenomena that pervade the communication style of a wide range of socio-cultural and economic groups and may contribute to the expansion of the lexicons of languages. This study's significance is also thought of via the lens of looking at slang through the print of group communication mannerisms.

Given the wide variety of human communication needs, translation is essential to our daily lives. The demand for

translators is growing as the world's economies, cultures, and technologies become more interconnected. Since translation study requires familiarity with at least two languages and associated cultures, it falls under contrastive linguistics. Translation is the act of communicating meaning from one language to another. That is, it's the method utilized to convey the intended purpose of a phrase or text from one Language to another by creating a new term in the target language or adapting an existing word from another language for usage there. Bassnett (1980:21) states that "translation entails the transfer of meaning represented in one collection of language signals into some other by clever use of the lexicon and vocabulary; the procedure incorporates a complete range of extra-linguistic factors as well" (Saputra et al., 2022). There should be no drop-off in interest or comprehension between the original text and its translated version. It ought to have the same strengths as the source material and elicit the same emotions from its audience. A translator, therefore, must be adept in both reading and writing. The translator has to get as close as possible in terms of vocabulary, meaning, and rhythm. A translator has to be careful not to insert any new information or thoughts into the text. His role is not to provide context or background but to faithfully convey the essence and power of the source text. Terms and the arrangement of words in a phrase may be used to emphasize or downplay a statement's significance.

Translating is not about changing the sound of words or how they're put together in a sentence; it's about conveying a new meaning. As a complex interweaving of vocabulary, syntax, style, phonology, and use, meaning may be a product of the Language itself. In general, only things that have to do with the meaning are translated, although there are exceptions (poetry, for one) where the sounds are more essential than the meanings. A word or a string of words may be parsed for meaning, allowing for standalone comprehension. Therefore, the smallest unit of meaning is a word, and the most significant unit is a sentence. Instead of seeing translation as a prescription guided by dogmatic and outmoded beliefs about the accuracy, it should be seen as an action of communications regulated by concerns of understandability and readability. To put it another way, translation is the process by which one text in one language is converted into another text with an identical meaning.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Review of the Conception of Slangs in Communication**

As a socio-linguistic phenomenon and an unofficial conversational feature, slang has received considerable attention from researchers, particularly those whose work focuses on the foundations of Language. In an introductory article, Oktavia (2017) distills a variety of slang research to reveal how Language and culture shape and motivate the development of slang. The grammatical structure of slang and its rise to popularity in the standard variation of a language have also been studied.

This has been the prevailing intellectual narrative in determining which expressions should be labelled as slang, even though scholars often disagree over how a given term should be defined. Researchers seem to disagree on what constitutes slang, although they all agree that slang is a highly inventive and socially flexible kind of informal Language.

The responses, as mentioned earlier, suggest that scholars disagree on a standard definition of slang and that several reports coexist. Dalzell and Victor (2008: 241) conclude that "slang is not easy to describe without comparing with definitions of other informal linguistic variables."

Slang is used everywhere worldwide since people create informal discussions setting that enables them to create unique communication features. Slang is a kind of everyday language widely used and understood, but the exact definition remains elusive. In every culture and era, this concept has existed. It's different in different periods and places. As opposed to a preconceived notion of Language, slang can address a wide range of societal requirements, a demonstration of the inventiveness of the Language and communication user. Despite the wide variety of conflicting interpretations and definitions of slang found in the academic literature, we evaluate the ones most closely aligned with the direction of this study.

Before giving the definitions of slang, it is essential to highlight that the consensus view of the notion in the

literature, according to Yanchun and Vanhong (2013), is that slang is inherently locative because the interpretation locates a specific one. As Anderson and Trudgill (2005) asserted, slang is a group-enclosed communication mannerism that may pass across a speech border. Slang is a socio-linguistic characteristic that often originates inside a particular socio-economic or socio-cultural group to convey the group's unique concepts and views.

Wahyuni and Rosa (2013) argue that slangs are the colloquial term developed by a specific group to meet their urgent communication demands, regardless of the counterpart's presence in the standard variety of the same language. Oktavia (2017) argues that slang is an irregular interactional variable in which speakers within a specific group create the term out of a need to communicate a shared understanding of the world within that group and in which the term's meaning is conventionally and narrowly structured to reflect that social perception. According to some academics, this is how slang should be described, and there is consensus between experts on this point.

From this description, we may infer that slangs are contextual variable, the meanings of which are determined by the members of the group to which they belong to encode their communication requirements and exclude those not part of the community. According to Wulandari and Ardi (2012), speakers employ slang on purpose even though they are fully capable of expressing their ideas in the more formal type, but they choose not to or actively avoid doing so in an attempt to adhere to the linguistic norms of the group to which they belong in communication.

## **2.2. A Review of Slangs in American Pop Songs of the 21st Century**

Undeniably, it may be tough to pin down the beginning of any given bit of slang (Wahyuni & Rosa, 2013). Slang terms are created when a group needs to develop their Language. Speaking a language unique to one's tribe and historical period helps people feel more secure in their identities and gives them pride. This helps explain why specific communities have their unique vocabulary. Given the rapid pace of modern life, slangs are no more originated and used only inside closed social circles. Many media, including literature, film, television, the Internet, and music, include it often. Many musicians nowadays employ slang terms in their songs to highlight their individuality. Some slang terminology may be found in the lyrics of songs from just about every musical genre, although hip-hop and rap lyrics tend to include more than other genres. Hip-hop and rap music are sources for most slang that eventually becomes commonplace, which is why we're analyzing hip-hop and rap specifically in this study. Hip-hop and rap share a lot of common ground and influence from one another due to the shared usage of standard musical components, including rhythm, rhyme, and style. Rap music is primarily about "telling it like it is," whereas hip-hop often has more upbeat and optimistic lyrics.

The lines between musical genres have begun to blur as more and more musicians include these aspects in their work. Since hip hop was born in the South Bronx of New York City in the 1970s, it seems to reason that the majority of the decade's most influential rappers would hail from the United States. The standards and patterns of slang employed by U.S. hip-hop artists are followed even when other internationally renowned musicians from outside the United States enter the scene. In the late 1980s, hip-hop gained widespread popularity with new communication and information technologies like the Internet. Fans would primarily listen to it on SNS like MySpace, YouTube, Worldstarhiphop, and Spotify as it gained popularity.

Consequently, the current study concentrates on American hip-hop/rap tracks for multiple considerations. To begin, hip-hop was created in the United States. Second, while English is commonly spoken in numerous nations worldwide, American English is the benchmark for English as spoken, written, and taught almost everywhere in the English-speaking world, along with British English. Third, most generally recognized hip-hop musicians with remarkable successes in the journey are mainly from the U.S.

Hip-hop is known for its unique vocabulary. As a result of hip-hop's unprecedented commercial achievements in the 1990s and early 2000s, many of the slang phrases employed within the music's lyrical content have been adopted by speakers of other languages and even by those who aren't fans of the genre. Words like "cool," "dude," and "dope" first appeared in Hip-Hop and Rap song lyrics, and they have since become cultural icons. Several fads are enormous and famous for a short period, then fade away, while others remain popular for much longer. Some phrases have survived the test of time and continue to be used today because they are convenient and valuable in

everyday discourse. Though some permanent slang could remain, most of them vary in meaning, following the context and environment of the speakers at a given moment. It follows that the context and period in which its users reside, in this instance, the United States, heavily influence the development and evolution of slang's meaning and use.

### **2.3. Challenges in Translating Slang Expression**

Words and phrases that are unique to a language, a culture, or even a particular variant in a language might have interpretations that are only conveyed via that Language. These words and phrases can be culture-specific, language-specific, or even dialect-specific. Slang is defined by its distinction from the mainstream, attractiveness, spontaneity, and rapid development of new phrases and abbreviations, including expressions that vary from amusing to just plain bizarre. These characteristics distinguish slang from standard Language.

In actuality, non-standard forms of Language, such as slang, provide several challenges not only in the process of cultural translation but also in the process of accurate translation. It is challenging to identify comparable social setups across cultures (that is, culturally distinct circumstances, such as American pop discourse, rap song lyrics, or rowdy supporters' cries of solidarity). This is because each culture has its unique social conventions. When comparing languages, it may be challenging to discover comparable styles of expression. Moreover, it is challenging to deal with non-standard varieties because they are frequently utilized when creating a remarkable array of influences (such as expressiveness, pretentiousness, and faddishness), which are all explicitly challenging for the translator. This makes dealing with non-standard varieties, particularly challenging.

As people or a peer group considers using slang in one circumstance may be seen quite differently by another individual or peer group in a varying possibility. In most cases, these qualities indicate wit, humour, imagination, inventiveness, and spontaneity; alternatively, they may use metaphors and other figurative and expressive techniques. Perhaps most crucially, they are a component of a particular cultural group.

As a result, one of the most important aspects of functioning as a practical (as well as expert) translator is possessing a solid command of both the target and source languages. This situation enables the translator to maintain a degree of adaptability if any slang terms arise during the translation process. Since they may be used in various ways depending on the context, they are one of the most challenging text elements for a translator or interpreter, even though they are rather prevalent. For instance, native English speakers will use the term "cool" in conversation to indicate that they agree with another person or to communicate a sense of amazement. Various terms in Arabic, for example, may convey a similar meaning; nevertheless, people of different countries that speak Arabic do not use these words nearly as often in conversation as English speakers use the term "cool."

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study is primarily a qualitative analysis. The analysis is carried out through the use of the thematic analysis method. This study's data consists of slang terms in the song lyrics of two American hip-hop/rap singers, Eminem and Wiz Khalifa. *Marshal Mathers II* by Eminem (2013) and *Khalifa* by Wiz Khalifa (2016) were picked as the only albums by each artist. The two musicians leading the line were chosen because they are considered the best in the genre of hip-hop and rap in the United States. They've been at it in the hip-hop game for a while and won many accolades and recognition from other fields. Their music consistently rises to the top of music charts worldwide. They utilize a few slang terms that have been around for a while but are seldom used in everyday speech. However, because of their broad audience, the slang phrases quickly catch on and enter common usage. That is to say that they have occasionally helped in the background to maintain slang. Hip-hop/rap songs often detail the performers' or writers' personal experiences. Most artists had difficult upbringings, families that fell apart, were bullied, etc.; these experiences often influenced their work. Because of this, most songs include a string of curse words while discussing inappropriate subjects.

The translation was conducted at two different levels. The first level requires using a machine translation system, Arabic-English Translator, wherein the focus is to derive a surface equivalent of the slang. The second step is to provide Arabic slang that either conveys the same meaning as the English slang or expresses a similar sense,

with a possible contextual variation.

#### 4. DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

##### 4.1. Data Presentation

Different methods were implemented to translate the texts after the surface equivalents of the slang were derived through machine translation. The choice of a translation method depends on the type of slang expressions and the degree of challenge to get a suitable equivalent in the target language (Arabic). The table below contains the selected slang, the sources, the machine translation equivalent in Arabic and the appropriate equivalents in Arabic.

S/N	SLANG EXPRESSIONS	ARTIST/MUSIC TRACK	MACHINE TRANSLATION	SUITABLE EQUIVALENTS
1.	Baller	Eminem: bad guy	منفق المال (munfaq alma)	بالير (balir) (One who spends money a lot)
2.	Chillax	Eminem: so much better	البرد والاسترخاء (albard waliastirkha')	walaw (ولو) (be comfortable)
3.	Green	Eminem: survived	قنب هندي (qunb hindiun)	حشيش (Hard drugs)
4.	Bust a nut (to ejaculate)	Eminem: stronger than I was	تمثال نصفي الجوز (timthal nisfi aljawz)	القفز (alqadhf) (slander/ irresponsible)
5.	Word up	Eminem: Asshole	ما أخبارك (ma 'akhbaruk)	شاكو ماكو (shaku maku) (what's up)
6.	Done give a damn	Eminem: Brainless	أنا لا أهتم ('ana la 'ahtamu)	Khali wali (ولي خالي) (I don't care)
7.	I don't do <b>hood</b>	Eminem: The Monster	أنا لا أفعل غطاء محرك السيارة	أنا لا أرتكب جريمة ('ana la 'artakib jarimatan) (I hate crime)
8.	<b>Holla</b> my name	Eminem: The Monster	أزيز اسمي ('aziz asmi)	اعبدني (aiebidani) (worship me)
9.	<b>Bitches</b> up at six	Eminem: Evil Twin	الكليات تصل في السادسة (alkalabat tasil fi alsaadisa)	العاهرات فظيحات (aleahirat fazieat) (Whores are atrocious)
10.	Shit	Eminem: Legacy	القرف (alqarf)	Kol hawa (eat shit)
11.	Deadass	Wiz Khalifa: Celebrate	الحمار الميت	Bi sharafak, or Min sijak (من سيجاك) (seriously)

12.	Bomb	Wiz Khalifa: Elevate	قنبلة	'Yallah' or  'جيد جدا'
13.	I hate a chicken	Wiz Khalifa: City View	أنا أكره الدجاجة	(la takun jabanana) لا تكن جباناً
14.	The bitch gon hot	Wiz Khalifa: Celebrate	الكلبة جميلة بشكل رهيب	الكلبة جميلة بشكل رهيب  Or  Mashallah
15.	I am down	Wiz Khalifa: Make a place	أنا محبط	Yallah Shabaab
16.	I am getting cake	Wiz Khalifa: Zoney	أنا أحصل على كعكة	أنا أحب مؤخرات كبيرة
17.	I gat no drill	Wiz Khalifa: Cowboy	ليس لدي تدريب	eben halal (ابن حلال)
18.	I bo no forsin	Wiz Khalifa: Cowboy	أنا فخور يا صاح	أنا أستمتع بالتباهي
19.	I gat more moola	Wiz Khalifa: Elevate	أنا جات أكثر مولا	لدي مال لا يمكن تصوره (ladaya mal la yumkin tasawuruh)
20.	Gon geh to bussin	Wiz Khalifa: City View	عليك أن تصمت	Khallas (خلص)  Or  Kol Hawa

#### 4.2 Discussion

The twenty slang expressions presented in the table above are typical expressions used by Arabic speakers across communities. They are used in informal discourses by speakers, and the meanings are created to suit the immediate communication need of the speakers. The equivalents are provided based on what is already functional in Arabic. For example, the American hip-hop slang "gon geh to bussin" may be translated as "shut up." However, "Kol Hawa" is a roughly comparable slang term in Arabic. Although it may be considered somewhat obscene in English, it is ubiquitous among young Arabic speakers as a means to joke with one another in a lighthearted manner. The Arabic term translated as "shut up" literally means "consume crap," although it is more often used in

this context. When people stay around with young Arab persons for a significant amount of time, there is a good possibility that you will hear this slang phrase used several times throughout the course of a discussion. Beginner Arabic speakers may find the usage of this term a bit strange.

The usage of the slang term "word up" is another example that can be seen in the lyrics of American hip-hop songs. Shaku maku is a kind of Arabic slang that might be considered an equivalent. This describes an informal and humorous way to ask, "What's up?" The term comes from Iraqi slang, although practically everyone in the Arab world understands it. The question "what's shaking?" is a possible translation into English.

Another example is the phrase "I don't give a dame," which is used in the hip-hop culture of the United States. This is the same as saying "Khali wali" in Arabic, considering the context of the sentence. If you don't care about anything, the best alternative is to use the slang phrase "Khali wali," which translates to "I don't care." This is something that almost any native speaker can use rather often, as is also the case with that. They would remark something along the lines of "I can't do it, Khali walli" if they were in a hurry for something or were late for an appointment. When individuals want to sound and act more like an actual resident of the area, consider employing this slang regularly.

It was indicated previously that the research would try to answer whether translation tactics or procedures are employed and chosen by translators in turning American hip-hop slang terminology into formal Arabic. After an analysis of the data, it was discovered that there weren't any standardized strategies, conventional translation suggestions, standards, or fundamental requirements in translating all of the slang words the translators could adhere to. As a result, inadequate translation and varying translation varieties of the same term can result from this situation. There is a gap in meaning across languages and cultures since slang phrases are inextricably linked to a particular culture and are only used inside that culture under certain circumstances. It is common for translators to fail to express all of the intricacies and complexities of hip-hop song slang terminology owing to a lack of cultural knowledge and being oblivious of the cultural connotations and variations in norms and customs across languages, in this example between Arabic and English. Because some of these phrases may not be able to be translated at all, it can be challenging to find a solution to the issue of translating culture-specific terminology. This is a significant challenge.

Many hip-hop slang expressions, in many instances, do not have comparable counterparts or matching linguistic elements throughout the Arabic context. Yet, the generated expressions may not contain the expected real meaning if there are relative equivalents. The fact that the different languages (English and Arabic) in question have fundamentally different grammatical structures, vocabularies, and syntactic structures leads to difficulties in their translation into one another. Even the most up-to-date specialized collocations and the vast majority of prominent Arabic-English dictionaries struggle to preserve the rapid advancement and evolution in social and information systems, making it difficult for them to provide accurate translations. As a result, dictionary definitions are of constrained usage in numerous contexts. Many hip-hop slang words are so new that they are not classified or incorporated in dictionaries since they are not old enough.

It is not easy to translate the slang phrases used in American hip-hop since there is often a dearth of counterparts in standard dictionaries. As a result, dictionaries that cover current Language need to be updated to include new words and new meanings of existing words. Specific hip-hop slang phrases ask for more than one translation method, which the translator is either unaware of or attempts to execute by critically analyzing many Arabic slangs to choose an adequate counterpart. That is to say, a good number of them must be conveyed while also being explained simultaneously. The vocabulary of hip-hop is very formal, laden with technical jargon, and distinctive in its use of lengthy sentences, declarative phrases, and passive voice. As a result, using Language correctly and succinctly is essential when communicating in this style of speech. Because of this language's nature, it is challenging for translators to comprehend and become proficient with the meaning and denotation of the translated phrases.

Inability to grasp the Language owing to a dearth of familiarity with the original text or a lack of competency, which leads to misinterpretation of the desired meaning of slang words, terms, culture-specific terminology, etc., that also contributes to possible erroneous translation. The translation process might have significant difficulties if the translator is not well-versed in the subject matter. The following are the translation tactics or procedures used and

embraced in translating American hip-hop slang into formal Arabic: functional equivalents, social equivalents, modulations, substitution, and paraphrases. These methods were used to translate the most significant aspects of American slang terminology into their Arabic counterparts to offer the audience a deeper comprehension of the material at hand and to transmit this information in a manner that was accessible to them.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research provided an Arabic translation of a selection of American slang terms emphasizing their respective meanings and usages. The researcher must have enough background information and mental capacity to understand the explored concepts fully. Consideration must also be given to the genre of writing and its intended audience. The translator must accurately interpret slang phrases primarily by observing their use. Translating concepts that need a deep understanding of the source language is not always straightforward. Analyzing the actual signal of a communicative expression demands fluency in the source language, and being fluent in the targeted Language necessitates the translator's ability to present the desired contents in methods that seem equally acceptable to potential target audiences. Because of the inseparable nature of cultural meanings from the Language, a translator must be fluent in both cultures to bridge the gap between them effectively. Knowledge of hip-hop language is required. Improving translation quality by using "tried and true" methods for translating American hip-hop slang is possible. Consequently, translation is not only a question of finding equivalent words in another language but of finding acceptable methods of conveying things. To effectively translate novel English slang into Arabic, one must be fluent in both languages and have a firm grasp on the cultural nuances of each.

This research provides various guidelines for practice that translators may utilize to improve their work while dealing with hip-hop slang. Hip-hop slang expressions can only be translated by professionals fluent in both the source language (SL) and target language (TT) since this will ensure that the intended meaning is conveyed. Understanding the cultural context in which these hip-hop slang phrases are used is essential for a faithful translation. When translating American hip-hop slang, it is suggested that translators first familiarise themselves with the terminology. As with any specialized vocabulary, translators need context for these slang expressions to do an excellent job of conveying the intended meaning. When translators are familiar with the original context, they get clues concerning the interpretation and are well-equipped to select the appropriate words to communicate the feeling the artist meant. Only by reading, studying, and analyzing the source material thoroughly from a translator's perspective can one be sure that the whole meaning of the original has been conveyed in the target language. The most effective translations give the original author's intention and tone faithfully. It's worth noting that it's challenging to find a translation that adequately captures the meaning of slang expressions without considering the context in which they are used. For this reason, accurate translation requires a firm grasp of the original text's tone and style and the use of tried-and-true translation methods. vi. It is advised that translators of these hip-hop slang phrases be abreast of developments in both the terminology and the technology behind them

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