Article

Improving Equivalence: Strategies for Handling Non-Standard Arabic Expressions in Translation Dictionaries

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Abstract: This study responds to the call for reliable equivalents in translation dictionaries of non-standard Arabic expressions. Such expressions, including dialectal, colloquial and culturally bound vocabulary, are common across the Arab world but are often overlooked or inadequately covered by dominant dictionaries focused on Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). By proposing an approach that enriches the coverage of non-standard Arabic expressions to achieve linguistic and cultural equivalence, this study aims to address this imbalance. Based on Fillmore's (2006) Frame Semantics as the underpinning theoretical framework, this study applies a qualitative approach to assess the effectiveness with which semantic frames can capture the contextual and functional meanings of such expressions. A set of ten commonly used expressions from across a range of Arabic dialects was selected through purposive sampling against the following predetermined criteria: frame identification, cultural setting and lexical mapping. The findings of the study reveal clear gaps in current dictionaries, especially in relation to their treatment of cultural context and cross-dialectal variation. Several entries were found to be either absent or misrepresented, lacking the precise meanings tied to their social and functional use. The study recommends that semantic frames, corpus-based examples, dialectal cross-references and multimedia components should be incorporated in the lexicographical entries. Besides, using these elements would significantly enhance the contextual accuracy and usability of translation dictionaries and thus meet the needs of translators, language learners, and researchers interested in Arabic and intercultural communication.

Keywords: Frame Semantics; non-standard Arabic expressions; translation dictionaries; lexicography; cultural context in translation

Introduction

Translation dictionaries are vital tools which improve both the accuracy and efficiency of communication among different languages. Their significance is specifically notable in Arabic-English translation in that they assist in overcoming the linguistic and cultural gaps that could emerge between the two languages. The Arabic language is characterized by the large number of its dialects as well as the wide usage of non-standard expressions in daily communications; qualities often underestimated by traditional dictionaries (Chekayri, 2014; Ørum, 2018). These include standard colloquial, informal and regional dialects, which are associated with deep cultural connotations and meanings, thus making the translation process into other languages very intricate (Collins & Ponz, 2018; Al-Awthan, 2019; Harmoush, et al., 2023). Because of this, translation dictionaries fail to express the nuanced differences which exist in the language, resulting in translation

difficulties as well as shortcomings in equivalence, ultimately leading to possible misinterpretations (Nykyri, 2010; Ainsworth, 2016).

Similar challenges can be seen in other diglossic languages, including Hindi and Swahili, where lexicons tend to focus more on the standard variety and thus exclude the varied forms found in informal and regional conversations (Busari, 2022). Formal Hindi lexicons sometimes do not include words that are common in Bollywood or modern urban spoken language, while regional dialects of Swahili widely spoken in Kenya and Tanzania have conventionally been given secondary priority (Nassenstein, 2016). These similar cases from various nations highlight the need for incorporating non-standard and dialectical variations in translation dictionaries.

This study investigates the shortcomings of translation dictionaries in terms of their ability to represent the non-standard expressions of Arabic accurately. Such shortcomings lead to challenges because of the lack of corresponding nuances or misinterpretations occurring during the translation process (Zarnoufi et al., 2020). Traditional lexicographic practices mostly focus on representing MSA, thus overlooking the complex and diverse dialectal differences necessary for effective everyday interactions in the Arabic language (Al-Wahy, 2017). These shortcomings do not just reduce the effectiveness of translation but also negatively influence the communicative competence of non-native translators/speakers, who heavily depend on dictionaries to convey meanings, embedded in the sociocultural context of the Arabic linguistic community.

This study aims to examine the effective methods for the incorporation of non-standard Arabic expressions into Arabic-English dictionaries as well as the development of accurate and applicable guidelines for lexicographers. The proposed approach is expected to enhance the equivalence of concepts and solve existing problems regarding the translation of non-standard Arabic expressions. The present study ultimately aims to make more comprehensive and helpful tools for translators, language learners and researchers through the enrichment of dictionary content. To conclude, this study aims to answer the following questions:

 i.   What are the main challenges faced by translation dictionaries in representing non-standard Arabic expressions effectively?
 ii. How do existing Arabic translation dictionaries currently handle non-standard expressions, and what are their limitations?
 iii. What strategies can be developed to improve equivalence for non-standard Arabic expressions in translation dictionaries?
 iv. How can lexicographical practices be enhanced to better incorporate the cultural and contextual nuances of non-standard Arabic?

Literature Review
Arabic is a highly documented diglossic context, in which MSA coexists alongside multiple local dialects (Dakwar et al., 2018). Although largely used in formal settings like written texts, educational settings and media, non-standard Arabic, that comprises colloquial, informal and regionally-specific varieties, continues to be primarily used in informal spoken communication throughout large parts of the Arab world (Algatroni, 2021; Gwasmeh, 2021). The presence of these heterogenous speech forms poses a particular challenge for lexicographers, since standard dictionaries have mostly reflected MSA use, thus under-representing and, most likely, marginalizing the deep cultural meanings embedded in non-standard varieties (Benzehra, 2011; Benzehra, 2012; Khallaf, 2023).

Empirical research supports the claim that Arabic-English dictionaries have large gaps in their coverage of non-standard vocabulary. In this regard, Biel (2008) explains that such dictionaries do not include informal words and culturally specific colloquialisms, thus making them less useful to professional translators and second-language learners. Similarly, Ahmed (2009) records this trend, while Anderson (2025) maintains that the absence of dialectal entries creates uncertainty for users, particularly second-language speakers, in understanding meanings that are enriched through cultural context, thus emphasizing the need for more comprehensive and sophisticated dictionary coverage.

Recent research on lexicography and translation studies (e.g., Alharahsheh et al., 2023) has placed much focus on sociolinguistic and cultural considerations in dictionary compilation procedures. This implies

that dictionaries should not only aim for linguistic accuracy but also achieve cultural and pragmatic relevance, especially in languages like Arabic, which have high internal variation (Elayeb and Bounhas, 2016; Zammit, 2020). Similarly, Jneid (2008) and Nielsen (2022) highlight the significance of signifying wide linguistic variation so as to achieve increased functional usability of dictionaries in actual use contexts.

Based on the existing limitations, many plausible propositions have been made. For instance, Zhao (2024) sheds light on the significance of including explanatory glosses and annotation providing users additional cultural and contextual information and thus contributing to a reduction in misinterpretation. Gugliotta (2022) also recommends developing corpus-based dictionaries, which can potentially represent actual use trends, frequency information and variations in lexical choice.

Nonetheless, persistent issues impede incorporating the non-standard Arabic in bilingual dictionaries. One significant issue arises from the immense variability present in Arabic dialects, which renders standardization of translation equivalents a particularly daunting task (Bakalla, 2023). Furthermore, the intrinsic sociolinguistic complexities associated with the Arabic language stress that lexemes with similar forms may have different referents based on geographic distribution, thereby compounding issues linked to classification and categorization (Al-Wer et al., 2022).

To conclude, the discussed literature reveals a substantial gap in the treatment of non-standard Arabic in Arabic-English dictionaries. While MSA is claimed to dominate lexicographic practice, there is growing scholarly consensus on the necessity of a more balanced and culturally sensitive approach. Addressing these gaps improves both the usability as well as accuracy of dictionaries and offers better support to translators, learners and researchers working within Arabic-English language contexts.

Theoretical Framework
This study adopts Frame Semantics model (Fillmore, 2006) for data analysis, which offers a systematic way to investigate how linguistic structures express meaning and interpret experiential content in a given context. A semantic frame includes many lexical and phrasal items which yield different interpretations under the influence of cultural and contextual determiners and show effectiveness in outlining the features of colloquial language. This theory has increasingly been used in the context of multilingual lexicography, as represented by projects like Multilingual FrameNet (Baker & Lorenzi, 2020), aiming to harmonize semantic frames across several languages like Spanish, Japanese, Chinese and Brazilian Portuguese, among others. The results of these studies show that many basic frames (e.g., commercial transaction and placing) are discovered to have broad cross-lingual representation across different languages, though represented by distinct lexical and syntactic forms.

The standards of assessment used in this study are derived from Fillmore (2006); however, the standards used in the current study have been modified to suit the linguistic, cultural and contextual features of non-standard expressions in Arabic. These standards ensure the reliability and applicability of the definitions provided in the dictionary, as well as the translations of the idiomatic expressions.

i. Frame Identification: The first step involves the identification of the relevant semantic frame evoked by each non-standard expression.

ii. Contextual and Cultural Analysis: Each expression is analysed within the context of its own particular multicultural and social setting, highlighting the local social customs, traditions and practices giving meaning and relevance to the expression.

iii. Lexical Mapping: Having determined the proper framework for the expression, this expression is then placed within the determined framework in order to ensure that the translation not only reflects the literal meaning of the expression but also the functional and contextual features that apply to the target expression.

iv. Equivalence Testing: This deals with evaluating the degree to which the selected target expression in the target language reflects the source message in terms of the transmission of the intended meaning, emotional appeal and cultural appropriateness.

The Frame Semantics enables a thorough analysis of non-standard Arabic expressions in the current study. A representative entry of Arabic-English dictionary should include:

i. Definitions and Translations: Clear-cut definitions and translations that accurately convey the relevant semantic and pragmatic properties of each word in its specific context of usage.
ii. Usage Notes: The following explications shed light on the wide usage of the phrase, both geographical variations as well as contextual nuances that feed into an enriched understanding.
iii. Illustrative Sentences are examples that clearly illustrate the usage of the phrase in everyday situations, and increase understanding and facilitate correct usage.
iv. Cultural Annotations are interpretive comments embedded in the text and provide necessary contextual information about relevant cultural references and background information required to gain a full understanding of the broader implications of the expression.

Methodology

1. Study Design
This study adopts a qualitative approach for the analysis of the representation of non-standard Arabic expressions in Arabic-English dictionaries in order to determine the efficacy of Frame Semantics (Fillmore, 2006), in promoting precise and culturally appropriate translations. This approach could be considered as the most suitable for this study due to the need for an exhaustive examination of linguistic patterns, contextual uses and cultural nuances, affecting non-standard varieties.

2. Data Selection and Sampling
The data consists of 10 purposively sampled non-standard Arabic expressions from a variety of Arabic dialects. Pragmatic relevance and analytical richness informed the selection of the selected sample in the present study to warrant in-depth scrutiny of the problems of their translation. These expressions have been selected to represent a wide variety of Arabic dialects, including Iraqi, Gulf, Yemeni, Egyptian, Sudanese, Jordanian and Palestinian, thus encapsulating the linguistic and cultural diversity of spoken Arabic throughout the region. All of them are frequent in daily use and widely known among native speakers, which makes them especially useful for research into genuine communicative practice. Their semantic significance is in the striking discrepancy between their literal and their inferred pragmatic uses, recurrently leading to serious difficulties in their translation because of their figurativeness and their context dependence

Furthermore, the selected expressions were not adequately represented or were missing in current Arabic-English dictionaries, thereby reflecting the limitations of conventional lexicographical approaches. Their utilization in this study highlights the necessity for dictionary entries that are more functionally and culturally precise.

Table 1. The selected non-standard Arabic expressions from various Arabic dialects

No.	Non-standard Arabic Expression	Literal Meaning	Equivalent	Arabic Dialect
1-	شلونك؟ (Shlonak?)	"What is your colour?"	"How are you?"	Iraqi/Gulf dialect
2-	يا نهار أسود! (Ya nahar aswad!)	"Oh, black day!"	"Oh no!" / "What a disaster!"	Egyptian dialect
3-	عليك الله؟ (Alaik Allah?)	"Upon you by God?"	"Really?" / "Are you serious?"	Sudanese dialect
4-	"أبرد لك" ibrud lak	"Cool down for yourself"	"Calm down" / "Relax" / "Take it easy"	Yemeni dialect
5-	فالك طيّب (Falak Tayyib)	Your omen is good"	"Good luck!"	Gulf dialect

6-	مبلّش فيني(Mballesh feeni)	"He started with me"	"He's picking on me"	Jordanian/Palestinian dialect
7-	"راسك يابس" (rāsk yābis)	"Your head is dry"	"You're so stubborn"	Egyptian/Levantine dialect
8-	قطّينا السالفة(Qattina al-salfa)	"Drop the story"	"Change the topic"	Gulf dialect
9-	خلّصني(Khallesni)	"Finish me"	"Hurry up / Get it done."	Many Arabic dialects
10-	اعفية عليك! (Afya aleek!)	"health on you"	"Well done!" / "Bravo!" / "Good job!"	Iraqi dialect

3. Methods of Data Analysis

The analysis was guided by the principles of Frame Semantics and undertaken in a number of steps. Every non-standard Arabic expression that was shortlisted was analyzed to identify the semantic frame it evoked, taking into account the quality and availability of contextual information, usage examples and cultural comments.

The comparison subsequently shifted towards assessing the adequacy of the translations for expressing the full communicative purpose of the source utterances. This meant testing for equivalence between target and source language (i.e. English and Arabic respectively), and specifically in terms of retention of cultural context and pragmatic function. At the same time, a semantic analysis was employed to test lexicographical practice more broadly. Factors like clarity, comprehensiveness and cultural sensitivity were tested to ascertain their contribution to dictionary entry overall effectiveness.

To ensure the frame identification and semantic interpretation reliability, inter-coder reliability procedures were used. Two experts coded the expressions independently according to pre-defined semantic frames. In calculating Cohen's Kappa coefficient as a measure of basic coding agreement, any disagreements were resolved in discussion aided by a third expert.

For adding more validity and reliability to the findings, expert validation was incorporated. A team of specialists in Arabic lexicography and translation studies reviewed and critiqued a sample of non-standard Arabic expressions that were analyzed, making comments on the application of Frame Semantics and offering improvement suggestions. Their commentary enriched the analysis and helped ensure that the suggested approaches were both theoretically sound and practically feasible.

The Findings

This section presents the analysis of the ten selected expressions. Each expression is analyzed based on the four objectives of the study, namely, identifying the challenges in the representation of non-standard Arabic expressions in dictionaries, evaluating current lexicographic practices, proposing improved strategies for equivalence and finally enhancing cultural and contextual integration in dictionary entries. Using Frame Semantics, the analysis shows how literal meanings fail to capture pragmatic and cultural nuances. Analysis of "شلونك؟" (Shlawnak?)

The greeting used in Gulf and Iraqi varieties, "شلونك؟" (*Shlawnak*?), literally meaning "What colour are you?", is widely interpreted to mean "How are you?". The lack of a direct translation is problematic for translators. To overcome these challenges, Frame Semantics (Fillmore, 2006), a cognitive and contextually focused theoretical linguistic model, provides a strong framework for the creation of dictionary entries. One of the major challenges translating the casual greetings like "شلونك؟" has to do with the dominant role of MSA in traditional lexicographical practices, which often excludes colloquial expressions in favour of prescriptive grammatical norms. Consequently, the salutations which are most commonly employed in ordinary communication may be completely excluded or insufficiently covered due to overly literal translation methods.

The analysis of a typical greeting like "شلونك؟", and its variants like "إزيّك؟" in Egyptian and "كيفك؟" in Levantine, reveals a stable pattern: regardless of their different pronunciations and ancestries, these phrases

have identical communicative functions. This conclusion confirms Frame Semantics suitability for categorizing varied linguistic forms into unified functional classes like Greeting and emphasizes pragmatic meaning's significance in relation to literal meaning. In addition, it enables dictionaries to become more accessible, ethnically based and pragmatically organized.

To deal with such shortcomings, this study proposes classifying the expression "شلونك؟" in the semantic field of "greetings," and explaining the differences between its denotational meaning and pragmatic uses, and combining the different dialectical forms into one classification. Adding explanatory phrases, proper cultural settings and dialectical variations, such as Egyptian Arabic "إزيّك؟" as well as Levantine Arabic "كيفك؟," would immensely enrich the richness of the lexicon entries. The nature embedded in this method makes the approach more culturally sensitive and reliable; and thus, it enables better information accessibility for intercultural communication and strengthens the foundation for the comprehension of linguistic diversity.

1. Analysis of the Non-Standard Arabic Expression "يا نهار أسود!" (Yā Nahār Iswid!)

The Egyptian Arabic idiomatic phrase "يا نهار أسود!" (Yā Nahār Iswid!) is used to express feelings of surprise or discontent and poses significant challenges to translators because of its metaphorical and affective nature. Although the literal translation "Oh, black day!" might at first glance seem understandable, it does not capture the pragmatic connotations of concern or uncertainty inherent in the phrase. This difference between the idiomatic meaning and its literal translation is typical of the shortcomings of traditional translation dictionaries.

Another substantial issue relates to the authoritative status of MSA in lexicographic dictionaries, often at the expense of modern colloquial terms, such as the interjection "يا نهار أسود!". Since Egyptian Arabic is one of the most widely spoken dialects, the omission of these dialectal words seriously limits the functional value of dictionaries. As a result, this lack hinders the efficacy of such dictionaries for learners, translators and non-native speakers of Egyptian Arabic striving to perform ordinary communication in Egypt.

The application of Frame Semantics offers a productive approach by placing an expression like " يا نهار أسود!" in a semantic context that efficiently captures emotional reactions. A model dictionary entry must distinguish between denotative and pragmatic senses (like "Oh no!" or "What a disaster!"), include accurate dialectal markings (particularly for Egyptian Arabic), provide relevant illustrative sentences, and offer explanatory notes contextualized within the culture. The contrast with positive antonyms, like "يا نهار أبيض!" (Yā Nahār Abyaḍ! "Oh, white day!"), clarifies its usage, considerably increasing the accuracy, cultural applicability and general usefulness of the dictionary.

2. Analysis of the Non-Standard Arabic Expression "عليك الله؟" (ʿAlayk Allāh?)

The Sudanese Arabic expression "عليك الله؟" (ʿAlayk Allāh?) often serves as a rhetorical question that expresses doubt, skepticism or the need for affirmation, similar to the English expressions "Really?" or "Are you kidding?". The literal translation of the expression, "God is upon you?", has the unintended effect of introducing religious overtones or suggesting a level of spiritual seriousness, thus failing to capture its usual, mundane usage.

The major hindrance in creating accurate translations for expression like "عليك الله؟" is due to the overarching focus of traditional lexicographic resources on MSA. This focus does not adequately capture the colloquial informal nature of the language that dominates everyday conversations. Therefore, this shortcoming is replicated in the limitation of dictionaries, hindering learners and translators from gaining a holistic and accurate appreciation of real Sudanese Arabic conversations, thus limiting their linguistic skill and knowledge pool.

In order to tackle the intricacies inbuilt in translation, the current study promotes systematically categorizing "عليك الله؟" under the semantic category of "expression of skepticism." This requires the creation of exhaustive dictionary entries that cover both the literal and pragmatic senses involved with the expression and track its dialectal origins in Sudanese Arabic. In addition, the inclusion of cultural notes, illustrative example sentences, and cross-dialectual equivalents like "عن جد؟" (ʿAn jadd?) in Levantine Arabic and "صدق؟"

(*Ṣidq*?) in Gulf Arabic would considerably improve the accuracy, cultural sensitivity and overall effectiveness of translation dictionaries, thus ensuring enhanced intercultural communication.

3. Analysis of the Non-Standard Arabic Expression "إبرد لك" (*Ibrud lak*)

The expression "إبرد لك" (*Ibrud lak*), common in Yemeni Arabic, is often used in informal speech as a way to urge people to ease their psychological burden, reduce stress caused by difficult situations, or to soften excessively serious temperaments. The literal translation, "Cool down for yourself," can be misleading when taken literally, as it might unintentionally suggest a physical cooling process instead of conveying the intended emotional relief.

One of the major challenges in the accurate translation of "إبرد لك" is the traditional lexicographical approach, which overwhelmingly focuses on MSA and largely overlooks dialectical differences, especially those of Yemeni Arabic. This neglect has led to substantial gaps in linguistic materials, hence hindering the work of translators, students and non-native speakers seeking to convey the utilitarian applications and sociolinguistic implications of such terms. Therefore, the users of such dictionaries are insufficiently equipped to attain successful communication or to appreciate the fine connotations that are typical of communication in the Yemeni dialect.

In solving these problems, the current study proposes placing this term in the semantic frame of "calmness and emotional control," dictionaries are able to well convey both its denotational meaning ("Cool down for yourself") and its pragmatic uses (e.g., "Let it go," "Ignore it," or "Take it easy"). In addition, dictionary definitions ought to clearly denote dialectal variations (in the case of "إبرد لك," Yemeni Arabic), supply example sentences as illustrations and include cultural annotations that clarify the metaphorical intent of the expression, which stresses the encouragement of emotional calm over physical cooling. Finally, inclusion of cross-references to corresponding expressions from other dialects, like "خذ الأمور ببساطة" (*Khudh al-umūr bibasāṭah*, "Take things easily") in Modern Standard Arabic or "ريح بالك" (*Rayiḥ bālak*, "Put your mind at ease") in Egyptian Arabic, would serve further to promote understanding and usability by dictionary users.

4. Analysis of the Non-Standard Arabic Expression "فالك طيّب" (*Fālk ṭayyb*)

The Gulf Arabic expression "فالك طيّب" (*Fālk ṭayyb*) is frequently used in day-to-day communication to wish someone luck or good wishes, as in the English expression "Good luck!" When literally translated as "Your omen is good," the expression reflects significant cultural concepts in the Arab world about luck and good omens. The cultural foundation presents some difficulties for lexicographers and translators, since a simple literal translation does not necessarily carry over the pragmatic significance and affective worth of the phrase.

One of the greatest challenges in truly representing the essence of "فالك طيّب" in translation dictionaries is the misinterpretation possibility that can result from a straightforward translation. People who are non-native speakers may interpret the expression literally, reading it as an actual sign of omens rather than recognizing it as a commonly used social utterance that relays positivity and encouragement. Furthermore, typical Arabic-English dictionaries give greater priority to MSA, thereby neglecting prevalent dialectical utterances such as "فالك طيّب" despite their commonality and prominence in social communication in Gulf Arabic contexts.

The analysis of "فالك طيّب" toward "موفّق إن شاء الله" and "بالتوفيق" presents a shared cultural meaning inherent in the expression of goodwill in blessings and positive statements. Though different in structural make-up and local use, both phrases achieve a similar communicative purpose through their expression of goodwill and encouragement. In order to meet these challenges, this study proposes categorizing the phrase under a "well-wishing" semantic frame as this would capture both the expression's literal meaning ("Your omen is good") and pragmatic intended meaning ("Good luck!"). A model dictionary entry needs to have clear dialectal labeling (Gulf Arabic), functional examples of its employment, and cultural notes explaining the phrase's use as a positive social act, rather than a mere reference to omens. Furthermore, the utilization of identical phrases from other dialects, i.e., "بالتوفيق" (*Bil-tawfīq* – "Good luck") in MSA or "موفّق إن شاء الله"

(*Muwafiq in shā' Allāh* – "May you be successful, God willing"), would significantly improve user comprehension, translation quality and facilitate intercultural communication.

5. Analysis of the Non-Standard Arabic Expression "مبلّش فيني" (*Muballish fīni*)
The expression "مبلّش فيني" ("*Muballish fīni*") is commonly used in the Palestinian and Jordanian colloquial dialects to describe situations in which one person repeatedly teases, annoys or goads another person. While the literal translation, "He started with me," might imply the beginning of a conversation or activity, the more suitable communicative translation of this idiomatic expression in English is "He's picking on me" or "He's bothering me." The distinction among idiomatic expressions and literal structures poses great challenge to computational translation, as it often fails to take into proper account the pragmatic and cultural nuances inherent in face-to-face human communication.

One of the main challenges in bringing about a precise translation of "مبلّش فيني" in the discipline of translation studies is the risk of misinterpretation that could be caused by a purely literal translation strategy. Without a necessary context-related understanding, non-native speakers might translate the phrase as simply proposing something without realizing the contextually appropriate connotations of harassment or annoyance. The lack of representation disqualifies dictionaries from performing their crucial role, thus hindering effective communication between learners, translators and researchers working with colloquial Arabic.

For effective explication of these issues, placing "مبلّش فيني" in the semantic context of "conflict or annoyance," translation dictionaries can explicate not just its denotative meaning ("He started with me") but the pragmatic implicature conveyed by the speaker ("He's picking on me"). Dictionary entries should include dialectal usage (in this case, Jordanian/Palestinian Arabic), provide example sentences within contextualized environments, and include cultural notes that indicate that the expression generally carries an informal complaint of recurrent annoyance or teasing. Additionally, cross-referencing analogous expressions in other dialects, like "ناوي عليّ" (*Nāwi ʿalayy* – "He's out to get me") in Egyptian Arabic and "منشن عليّ" (*Minashin ʿalayy* – "He's on my case") in Levantine Arabic, would increase the accuracy, contextualization and functional usability of the translations.

6. Analysis of the Non-Standard Arabic Expression "راسك يابس" (*rāsk yābis*)
The Arabic phrase "راسك يابس" (*rāsk yābis*) is widely used throughout different dialects of colloquial Arabic to describe people who are seen as obstinate, stubborn, or unwilling to change their perspectives. Even though the literal meaning of this phrase, "Your head is dry," can appear confusing or nonsensical to outsiders, its meaning is very close to that of the English phrase "You are so stubborn!" The distinction between literal and figurative language highlights a common difficulty faced by translation dictionaries, namely the effective communication of idiomatic phrases that, by nature, are highly embedded in cultural contexts and carry a metaphorical nature.

Another complication in the pursuit of an accurate translation of the expression "راسك يابس" stems from the need to avoid possible misinterpretations that can be caused by a literal translation strategy. People who are not familiar with Arabic and have minimal exposure to the cultural context of this idiomatic expression can misinterpret it as a reference to a medical condition, as opposed to its actual implication as a symbol of obstinacy or stubbornness.

To meet these needs, this expression should be placed within the semantic structure of "stubbornness/personality traits,"; dictionaries can successfully communicate both its literal meaning (Your head is dry) and its pragmatic implication (You're so stubborn!). Detailed dictionary entries should explain the dominant dialectal context of the phrase, provide representative example sentences that describe its everyday usage, and include cultural notes that explain the metaphorical connection between dryness or stiffness and the unwillingness to accept new ideas. In addition, the addition of cross-references to similar expressions from other dialects, such as "رأسه ناشف" (*Rāsu nāshif*) in Egyptian Arabic, would facilitate understanding and strengthen the position of dictionaries as tools for accurate translation and intercultural communication.

7. Analysis of the Non-Standard Arabic Expression "قَطِّينا السالفة" (*Qaṭṭīnā al-sālifah*)

The Gulf Arabic expression "قَطِّينا السالفة" (*Qaṭṭīnā al-sālifah*) is used in everyday conversation to indicate a wish to change the topic of conversation. Although its literal translation, "Drop the story," might imply the actual dropping of a story, the meaning conveyed is closer to phrases such as "Let us change the subject" or "Let us stop talking about this."

One of the major challenges faced by translators with regard to the expression "قَطِّينا السالفة" is the potential for misinterpretation that comes with a literal translation without proper contextual knowledge. Non-native speakers might interpret this phrase as a mere signal to dispose of or give up a tangible object, without realizing its metaphorical role as a prelude to discussion. This is compounded by the common tendency of dictionaries to favour MSA, which tends to overlook colloquial expressions such as "قَطِّينا السالفة," which are commonly used within the Gulf Arabic dialect.

By classifying "قَطِّينا السالفة" under the semantic frame of "conversation management," lexicons can properly reflect both its denotative meaning ("Drop the story") and its intended pragmatic meaning ("Change the topic"). A full dictionary entry should clearly label the expression as belonging to Gulf Arabic, include pragmatic example sentences that reflect common conversational situations, and include cultural annotations that explain its social role as a polite way of moving away from sensitive or unwanted topics. Additionally, cross-referencing equivalent expressions used in other dialects, e.g., "غير الموضوع" (*Ghayyir al-mawḍūʿ* – "Change the subject") in Modern Standard Arabic and "خلينا نسيب الحكاية" (*Khalīnā nsīb al-ḥikāya* – "Let's leave the story") in Egyptian Arabic, would greatly enhance the dictionary's real-world usefulness, increase understanding and promote more accurate intercultural communication.

8. Analysis of the Non-Standard Arabic Expression "خلّصني" (*Khalliṣny*)

The Arabic word "خلّصني" (*Khalliṣny*) is often used in other colloquial situations in everyday speech to urge someone to hurry, get a task done quickly, or to stop procrastinating. Although its literal meaning, "Finish me," seems melodramatic or ominous to non-Arabic speakers, the operational meaning is much closer to the usage of colloquial English expressions like "Hurry up," "Do it," or "Just do it!" This difference between the literal meaning and the operational usage poses a big challenge to translation dictionaries.

One major issue faced in the translation of "خلّصني" has to do with the potential miscommunication that can occur with a direct, literal translation. Without contextual explanation, native speakers may misunderstand the phrase as carrying a more negative or stern implication, in lieu of identifying it as a common, idiomatic expression used to express urgency or impatience. In addition, standard dictionaries generally prefer MSA register, often overlooking colloquialisms like "خلّصني," in spite of their common usage in spontaneous everyday conversation in many Arabic dialects, such as those used in the Levantine, Gulf, Egyptian and North African regions.

In order to fully respond to issues of translation-related difficulty, the use of Frame Semantics (Fillmore, 2006) offers a thoughtful conceptual framework. By placing "خلّصني" into a semantic paradigm defined by "urgency and impatience," lexicographers can most usefully distinguish its literal sense (translated as "Finish me") from its various contextual uses (e.g., "Hurry up," "Get it done"). Appropriately written dictionary entries should both mirror the standard dialectal usage of this item, including paradigmatic sample sentences illustrating common usage contexts, along with cultural glosses explaining its informal and colloquial implications of urgency or a tone of good-natured irritation. Additionally, including cross-references to similar expressions, such as "خلص بسرعة" (*Khalliṣ bisurʿah* – "Finish quickly") in Modern Standard Arabic or "يلا خلّص" (*Yalla khalliṣ* – "Come on, finish!") in Levantine Arabic, would add to the value of the dictionary, thereby facilitating better understanding and more useful intercultural communication.

10. Analysis of the Non-Standard Arabic Expression "عفية عليك!" (*ʿAfyah ʿalayk!*)

The Iraqi Arabic expression "عفية عليك!" "*ʿAfyah ʿalayk*!" is used to express commendation or approval, similar to the English "Well done!", "Bravo!", or "Good job!". Literally, the translation would be "Health on you," but this could be interpreted as relating to bodily health or blessings; however, in most situations, it is used to express admiration or appreciation of achievements. This deviation from its specific definition highlights the

major challenges facing lexicographers and translators in providing sufficient contextual explanation to avoid possible misinterpretations by language users.

One of the biggest hindrances to the comprehension of the phrase "عفية عليك!" is a widespread fallacy related to its literal meaning. The lack of cultural sensitivity can lead the translators and/or learners to wrongly restrict its usage to medical conditions only, and also exclude its profound implication as a significant expression of gratitude or solidarity. Moreover, contemporary dictionaries prefer using the lexis of MSA over colloquial expressions like "عفية عليك!" despite the fact that these colloquialisms are essential for creating effective communication in Iraqi Arabic.

Finally, one major hindrance in correctly translating the phrase "عفية عليك!" is the likelihood of misinterpreting its literal translation. Without proper cultural insight, translators might misinterpret this phrase as relating to the physical health of an individual only, and ignore its common usage as an off-the-cuff phrase for expressing deep admiration or encouragement. Furthermore, dictionaries are often biased toward the vocabulary of MSA, and lead to omitting idiomatic phrases like "عفية عليك!" from their listings, even though these expressions are used regularly in Iraqi colloquial Arabic.

Table 2. Summary of Expressions by Frame and Dialect

Expression	Dialect	Literal Meaning	Pragmatic Translation	Semantic Frame
شلونك؟	Gulf/Iraqi	What colour are you?	How are you?	Greeting
إزيّك؟	Egyptian	How are you?	How are you?	Greeting
كيفك؟	Levantine	How are you?	How are you?	Greeting
يا نهار أسود!	Egyptian	Oh, black day!	Oh no! / What a disaster!	Surprise/Discontent
عليك الله؟	Sudanese	God is upon you?	Really? / Are you kidding?	Skepticism
إبرد لك	Yemeni	Cool down for yourself	Take it easy / Let it go	Calmness/Emotional Control
فالك طيّب	Gulf	Your omen is good	Good luck!	Well-wishing
مبلّش فيني	Palestinian/Jordanian	He started with me	He is picking on me	Conflict/Annoyance
راسك يابس	General (Levant/Gulf)	Your head is dry	You are so stubborn!	Stubbornness/Personality Traits
قَطِّبنا السالفة	Gulf	Drop the story	Change the topic	Conversation Management
خلّصني	Levantine/Gulf	Finish me	Hurry up / Just do it	Urgency/Impatience
عفية عليك!	Iraqi	Health on you	Well done! / Good job!	Commendation

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025)

Discussion
This section provides the discussion of the findings based on the following subthemes:

1. Cultural and Figurative Complexity in Non-Standard Arabic Expressions
This study examines the challenges involved in achieving exact equivalence in dictionaries that cover non-standard Arabic expressions and suggests pragmatic remedies to counter such challenges. One of the significant findings of the current study is that many non-standard Arabic lexemes express not just figurative senses but also culturally-conditioned ones. This finding is consistent with the theory of Frame Semantics by Fillmore (2006) as it states that meaning arises within frames or structured experiences. For example, the dialectical phrases "خلّصني" (*Khalliṣny*) and "عفية عليك!" (*'Afyah 'alayk!*) are pragmatically translated to mean "Hurry up!" and "Well done!" respectively. This finding emphasizes the key significance of in-depth contextual and cultural analyses. It underlines Benzehra's (2011, 2012) critique of Arabic-English dictionaries

which do not integrate cultural specificity in idiomatic translations. Hence, interpretive models must shift from literal renderings to culturally embedded semantic frames.

2. Limitations of Traditional Lexicographic Practices

The present study reveals that spoken Arabic is affected by constant changes brought about by factors such as social interaction, media exposure and regional dialect variation. However, most of the current translation dictionaries have a dry format that neither properly reflects nor captures the flow of these transitional factors, leading to the possible obsolescence or insufficiency of a particular entry. Such finding aligns with those found in the previous studies by Biel (2008) and Ahmed (2009), highlighting the inefficacy of dictionaries which lack sociolinguistic adaptability. Therefore, it is necessary to enforce modern lexicographic theories in the form of Frame Semantics, corpus approaches and multimodal resources towards enhancing accuracy coupled with user-convenience. These approaches could address the concern of Rundell (2012) about the gap between lexicographic theory as well as practical dictionary utility.

3. Recommendations for Enriching Dictionary Entries

In order to advance the lexicographical procedures applied in the recordation of non-standard Arabic dialects, dictionaries must integrate systematic entries distinguishing connotative and denotative meanings. In addition, dictionaries must lay out systematic cross-dialectal equivalents through including quotations of cognate terms applied across a range of regional dialects. This finding is congruent with the recent calls for contextually enriched lexicons which are able to incorporate high internal linguistic variation (Jneid, 2008; Al-Wer et al., 2022). In the field of Frame Semantics, it is vitally significant that lexical entries sort expressions based on their communicative functions instead of simply listing them as distinct lexical items. Functional categorization into frames like praise, urgency, conversation management or obstinacy would improve users' orientation and mirror real-world usage patterns (Baker & Lorenzi, 2020). Expressions should be classified into functional frames like praise, urgency, conversation management or obstinacy, thus providing a better insight into their common uses in everyday interactions.

4. Toward a Modern, Multimedia Lexicographic Approach

A corpora-informed lexicographical strategy is, therefore, beneficial, especially when the corpus consists of authentic texts drawn from modern spoken Arabic in varied contexts, such as social media, TV shows, interviews and everyday conversations. This recommendation follows Gugliotta's (2022) advocacy for corpus-based Arabic studies and supports the integration of real-world language use into dictionary construction. Stressing the spontaneous use of language as inherent to the process of translation instead of adherence to rigorously selected terminology, this approach supports a modern, relevant and culturally sensitive method of translation. In addition, the integration of multimedia and technological aspects, such as audio clips, video clips, and pronunciation aids, is consistent with Zhao's (2024) framework for culturally annotated lexicography and supports greater inclusivity for users from diverse backgrounds. Such additions greatly enhance users' understanding by depicting crucial features such as intonation, emotional stress, and speech rhythm.

Conclusion

The use of Frame Semantics, dialect-specific annotation, sentence-illustrative images and other multimedia materials would significantly enhance the quality of translation dictionaries in terms of precision, cultural relevance and comprehensiveness. The inclusion of these measures could significantly enhance the accuracy of translation dictionaries. Such improvement is expected to be of great benefit to translators, language learners and researchers by ensuring that the non-standard varieties of Arabic are well-documented, sustained and communicated across different dialects and cultures. However, this study has some limitations. While the number of expressions studied is representative of major dialects, it is still relatively small; focusing on ten expressions in a given set of dialects may limit the generalizability of outcomes to the broader community of Arabic speakers, known for their high linguistic diversity.

Future research should focus on building the dataset to include a wider range of expressions based on formerly underrepresented dialects, e.g., North African Arabic, Hassaniya and other local vernaculars. In addition, constructing a prototype dictionary grounded in Frame Semantics for English-Arabic translation would provide a solid experimental environment that supports and realizes the above lexicographic model. The integration of artificial intelligence tools could enable the automatic classification of expressions based on their respective frames and dialects, support context-driven translation and enhance user interaction via features like voice recognition and instant cultural annotation. These efforts are likely to have a major impact on Arabic lexicography's digital transformation and highlight its applicability in multilingual and multicultural environments.

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