



## Investigating Lexical Choices in the English Version of Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*: A Stylistic Analysis

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### Abstract

This paper examines lexical choices in the English version of Naguib Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley* from a stylistic perspective. With the support of the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) where Halliday uses his approach to study the vocabulary as a powerful tool of linguistic meaning production, the study focuses on analyzing the role of vocabulary as a source of meaning as it is presented in translation. The analysis concentrates on the chosen extracts and discusses the role of lexical items in the description of social relations, emotional states and character development. As the results show, the lexical options are systematically structured, especially with contrastive and evaluative language that is important in constructing meaning. The main realizations of these patterns are the ideational metafunction, which describes the experience, and the interpersonal metafunction, as the attitudes and relationships are coded. The analysis also shows that the meaning in translation is neither detached nor transferred but it is reconstructed through context-sensitive lexical choices. On the whole, the study brings to the fore the primary importance of lexis in the stylistic organization of the translated text and the importance of stylistic analysis in the interpretation of how meaning is realized in different languages.

### Keywords

Lexical choices, stylistics, Systemic Functional Linguistics, , Naguib Mahfouz, *Midaq Alley*

تحليل الاختيارات المعجمية في النسخة الإنجليزية من رواية زقاق المدق لنجيب محفوظ: دراسة أسلوبية

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### المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة الاختيارات المعجمية في الترجمة الإنجليزية لرواية زقاق المدق لنجيب محفوظ من منظور أسلوبية. وتعتمد الدراسة على اللسانيات الوظيفية النظامية لهاليداي (SFL) لتحليل كيفية عمل المفردات بوصفها مورداً أساسياً في بناء المعنى داخل النص المترجم. ويركز التحليل على مقاطع مختارة، بهدف استكشاف دور العناصر المعجمية في تمثيل العلاقات الاجتماعية، والحالات العاطفية، وتشكيل الشخصيات.

تكشف النتائج أن الاختيارات المعجمية تنسم بأنماط منتظمة، لا سيما من خلال اللغة التقابلية والتقييمية، التي تؤدي دوراً محورياً في تشكيل المعنى. وتُحقق هذه الأنماط أساساً الوظيفة التصويرية عبر تمثيل الخبرة، كما تسهم في الوقت ذاته في الوظيفة التفاعلية من خلال ترميز المواقف والعلاقات. كما تُظهر الدراسة أن المعنى في الترجمة لا يُنقل ببساطة، بل يُعاد تشكيله من خلال اختيار معجمي حساس للسياق.



وبوجه عام، تؤكد الدراسة الدور المركزي للمعجم في البنية الأسلوبية للنص المترجم، وتبرز أهمية التحليل الأسلوبي في فهم كيفية بناء المعنى عبر اللغات.

## الكلمات المفتاحية

الاختيارات المعجمية، الأسلوبية، اللسانيات الوظيفية النظامية، نجيب محفوظ، زقاق المدق

## 1. Introduction

Literary translation is considered to be one of the most complex types of intercultural communications because it combines not only semantic content transfer, but also stylistic content reconstruction in various linguistic systems (Munday, 2022). Lexical choice is a central aspect of literary texts that establishes the narrator's attitude, emotional tone, social relations and development of characters; the style is realized in the language being chosen (Leech & Short, 2007). Viewed from a stylistic angle, translated texts can be studied not just as the content of the source material, but as linguistic entities created independently, in which the meaning is constructed by way of organised choices of language (Simpson 2004). This offers Naguib Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley* as the rich ground for studying the functionality of lexical selections in relation to the process of translating. Thus, this study centres on the novel itself and analyses the way it can be interpreted using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics perspective. Hence, this study is focused on the novel and elucidates its interpretation by applying Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics perspective which believes that the language is a means of creating meaning, in which the process of making choices happens simultaneously in the aspects of experiential, interpersonal, and textual meanings (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

### 1.1 Background

Naguib Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley* is a strong description of social interactions and relations, cultural conflicts, and daily life in a Cairene alley. The importance of the novel lies not only in the events but also in the linguistic texture of the novel where the accurate choice of lexical material forms a unique atmosphere and gives voice to a wide variety of characters. Reflecting the centrality of lexical choice to the production of literary meaning, as Leech and Short emphasize, "style is the linguistic characteristics of a particular text" (2007, p. 11), which hints at their position. Once translated into English, the text is no longer only about what is told, but how it is re-articulated through another linguistic system.

This paper deals with the English version of the novel stylistically, focusing on its lexicon which is an important element of meaning-construction. Instead of looking into the translation as a mere copy of the original version, the analysis regards it as a text in its own right, having its patterns, tastes, and stylistic influences. Simultaneously, the selective use of the Arabic source text is used when it is necessary in order to elaborate on the finer points of it, as well as at the points when the lexical use can be used to mark the change in the tone or cultural representation. Whether in the original or the translated text, linguistic choice can contribute to the interpretive meaning of a text. As Halliday argues, "a text is a product



of ongoing selection in a very large network of systems” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 23).

## 1.2 Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study is reflected in the idea that it touches upon the overlap of stylistics and translation by examining the specific case of lexical choices. It shows how meaning of the English version of *Midaq Alley* is constructed dynamically through vocabulary and is not simply conveyed over to the source text.

The study contributes to the field of stylistics by bringing out the importance of lexis in developing tone, characterization, and social environment. It also provides clues to translation practice by demonstrating how modulation of lexical translation can be a cultural negotiation. Moreover, the study adds to the Mahfouz literature, as it investigates the reconfiguration of the stylistic identity of the novel in English. It is also useful in offering a working paradigm on how the stylistic analysis can be used on translated literary works.

## 1.3 Research Questions

The following questions have been tried to be answered in the study:

- What is the role of the lexical choices in the English translation of *Midaq Alley* in meaning construction?
- What lexical patterns does the study identify?
- How do these decisions indicate changes in tone, characterization, or cultural subjects?

## 1.4 Scope of the Study

The present paper will concentrate on some of the extracts of the English version of *Midaq Alley* and lexical choices in both the narrative and dialogue. These stylistic characteristics are analyzed based on the aspects of vocabulary, such as connotation, register, and semantic areas.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Foundations

In general, stylistics deals with the studies of language in literary works and the linguistic decisions that are involved in creating meaning. It works on the premise that style is functional and not ornamental and it captures the connection between the language, the context and interpretation. Because style is a result of the linguistic nature of a certain text (as the arguments by Leech and Short (2007) suggest) the essential focus is put on the systematic study of the aspects (e.g. vocabulary, syntax, and cohesion etc).

One of the major ideas in stylistics is that language is a framework of options. Language is seen as a net of meaning-making choices, influenced by the context (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The choice of words is non-random and, instead, it represents



ideational meanings connected to experience and interpersonal and textual functions. In this way, it is possible to understand even better the role of vocabulary in reflecting reality, establishing relationships and structuring discourse.

The study of language and its artistic expression is an essential part of stylistics. Being willing to engage in stylistics implies, as Simpson (2004) puts it, studying how language functions as a location of creativity. Similarly, Fowler (1988) holds that literature can effectively be interpreted as language as long as it is studied using proper and strong linguistic models. This view emphasizes the fruitful overlapping of linguistics, and its tools of systematic and analytic activity, and literary criticism, which is normally concerned with aesthetic interpretation. With the help of such integration, rigorous and insightful analytical works with texts become possible.

The area has been broadened in the recent past as evidenced by the developments in the field. Corpus stylistics places emphasis on the role of patterning and collocation of lexical meanings in finding out repeated stylistic patterns with cognitive stylistics being concerned with identifying how readers process linguistic decisions and construct meaning in the course of interpretation. Likewise, the critical stylistics, especially that of Jeffries (2010), is used to point out the role of linguistic decisions in constructing an ideology and textual meaning. Combined, they reveal that stylistics is not a monolith but a multifaceted and continually developing field that is interested in the way language is used to create meaning in a variety of texts.

In literature translation, such insights are further complicated. As translation is a process of re-defining content in a different language, all things lexical become points of disagreement between the native and the new language. Though a strictly comparative translation paradigm will not be embraced in this work, this analysis will take into account the differences in vocabulary as a possible indicator of various tonal, cultural, or stylistic variation.

In general, the hypothetical premises of the current study are based on the premise that lexical selections are not just language pieces, but focal points of style building of a text. Using the proven paradigm in styles, the analysis finds itself to examine the role of the English version of *Midaq Alley* in creating meaning using meticulously chosen words.

## 2.2 Previous Studies

Some past research on Mahfouz's translations has focused on stylistic, cultural, and textual aspects in various ways. Elsheemi (2014) takes the lead in pinpointing certain recurrent translation problems of culturally-specific expressions and rhetorical language in the translation of *Midaq Alley*, *Palace Walk*, and *The Harafish*, noting that failure to be sensitive to culture and language can result in loss of style and ambiance. According to Altamimi (2016), translators establish their own linguistic patterns especially in using culture-bound expressions, proper names and reporting verbs in *Midaq Alley* which she considers to be a key factor in evaluating translator style; that is, lexical selection is a significant characteristic of translators' style. With the help of computational stylistics, Zaki



and Mohamed (2024) show that there are several differences between two English translation of *Awlad Haratina* at the lexical and structural level, where the quantitative identification of translator style is particularly revealed at the lexical level. Translation style and choices can impact on the coherence, readability, and overall integrity of the text, within the context of *Midaq Alley*, as discussed by Nakhli (2024). Likewise, Aubed (2026) demonstrates that translators can interactively recreate the socio-cultural meaning; that the translations are not only influenced by language transfer but also influenced by ideology, culture, and context.

### 2.2.1 Research Gap

So far, diverse aspects of translation such as cultural issues, translator style, text coherence and ideological positioning have been addressed in the existing studies of the translation of Naguib Mahfouz's works. Elsheemi (2014) addresses cultural and rhetorical issues in translation, Altamimi (2016) and Zaki and Mohamed (2024) explore the translator's style by corpus-based and computational approaches, respectively, and Nakhli (2024) looks at correlation between stylistic choices and coherence in the translation. Aubed (2026) studies socio-cultural representation by critical discourse analysis. These research works have contributed positively to the comprehension of translation of Mahfouz. However, little attention has been paid to the micro-stylistic function of lexical selection in the process of meaning construction in translation. In previous research, lexical features are sometimes discussed, but rarely as an independent stylistic; instead, they are usually discussed within broader framework. The role of vocabulary in the constructions of characterization, emotional tone, interpersonal relationships and personal view in narration are hence understudied. Furthermore, the English version of *Midaq Alley* by Trevor Le Gassick is one of the most widely circulated English versions of the novel, but has been rarely studied at the lexical and functional-stylistic level.

Previous studies have generally dealt with the translation from the macro-level, cultural/translational approaches and relatively little attention has been directed at the ways in which meaning is built up by specific lexical choices and recurring patterns in the semantic field. The current study tries to fill this void by employing this approach – a stylistic analysis of lexical choices in *Midaq Alley* using Halliday's SFL theory framework. The study seeks to illustrate vocabulary level meanings based on lexical patterning, semantic fields and metafunctional realization at the micro-level, between the macro-level translation studies and the detailed stylistic analysis.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This paper follows the theoretical perspective of Halliday, specifically Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which refers to the idea that language is a system of options and meaning is built by means of choices. This is the same view in stylistics where language takes centre stage in interpreting the text where Simpson (2004) argues that stylistics is a method in which “primacy of place is assigned to language” (p. 2). It is an important principle that any



stylistic analysis should begin with close attention to linguistic elements, especially the linguistic lexical decisions.

In this context, the ideational functionalism of language is the central to the present study, and relates to the representation of language and how it creates reality. This aligns with Leech and Short's view that stylistics investigates "the relation between the significances of a text, and the linguistic characteristics in which they are manifest" (2007, pp. 55–56). In this regard, the use of lexical decisions is central to the depiction of the social setting, cultural background and daily life in *Midaq Alley*.

Moreover, particular attention is given to the interpersonal role which has to do with the encoding of relationships, attitudes, and social positioning in the language. According to Fowler (1996), contextual differences are frequently perceived to have been the most evident at that level of vocabulary (p. 192) as it is the place where lexical variation is used to convey power, formality and social relations in the text.

Instead of using the entire set of SFL categories, the current research will rely on a narrower method that will pick the aspects that are most useful in the lexical analysis. As Leech (2008) describes stylistics as a "bridge discipline" connecting linguistics and literary interpretation (p. 2), the middle-ground methodology of analyzing the text helps provide both a precise linguistic analysis and a critical literary analysis, without unnecessary theoretical complexity.

### 3.1 Halliday's Metafunctions

In Halliday's systemic functional approach, language is regarded as a functional system with meaning being created by different choices made in a particular social context. An important part in this system is the "three metafunctions of language", the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual metafunctions. Together these metafunctions describe how language provides representation of experience, how it communicates or constructs social relationships and how it is able to organize meaning into coherent discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The three metafunctions are suitable for the analysis of the use of vocabulary in the meaning-construction process in the present study, having regard to the English translation of *Midaq Alley*.

#### 3.1.1 Ideational Function

The ideational metafunction has to do with the expression of human experiences such as actions, events, feelings, perceptions, and experiences of consciousness. It allows language users to build reality, by encoding participants, processes, and circumstances within discourse. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), language represents the external world of events and the internal world of thoughts and feelings. This function will be useful in the stylistic analysis, especially for the social setting and psychological states and the contribution of lexical selection in their creation of characterization. The ideational metafunction is explored by the use of lexical patterns in the present study that represent emotional conflict, society's hierarchy, judgment of morality and existential experience.



### 3.1.2 Interpersonal Function

Interpersonal metafunction is about the social and the relational nature of language. It allows speakers and writers to indicate attitudes, judgments, emotions, and evaluations; and to negotiate with authority, relationships, and social positions. This metafunction enables the interaction of the language user with the other participants and the modification of their responses through the linguistic means (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Interpersonal meaning can sometimes be conveyed in literary discourse by critical language euphemisms and expressive forms and socially marked lexical items. The interpersonal metafunction examined in this study is through the use of words that express affection, hostility, criticism, dominance and emotional intensity in the translated text.

### 3.1.3 Textual Function

The textual metafunction refers to the structuring of language into coherent and meaningful discourse. It helps to create coherence in language elements to create connected texts instead of isolated statements; creates thematic progression and semantic consistency. The textual metafunction is explained by Berry (1981) as the ability of language users to negotiate coherent discourse in context. Stylistic analysis can reveal this function through lexical repetitions, semantic accumulations, contrastive patterns and cohesive sequencing. For this current study, the textual metafunction is analyzed using the occurrence of relevant lexical patterns and semantic shift in the extracts, to account for their ways of supporting textual coherence and intensification of emotional meaning.

## 4. Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative stylistic method to examine lexical selection in the English translation of *Midaq Alley*. The analysis targets the relationship between words and the construction of meaning, characterization, emotional expression and social representation in the translated text. The data set comprises nine judiciously selected extracts from *Midaq Alley* (Mahfouz 1966) which have been translated into English.

The extracts were selected based on four criteria from narrative and dialogic texts: (1) lexical density, (2) presence of evaluative and stylistically marked vocabulary, (3) relevance to Halliday's metafunctions, and (4) representation of major social, emotional, psychological, and cultural contexts within the narrative. This purposive sampling allows the study to examine lexical choices that are stylistically prominent and functionally significant.

The analysis is done under the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework by Halliday with emphasis on the metafunctions of ideational, interpersonal and textual function. The analysis examines four aspects: the use of semantic field, evaluative language, lexical patterning and contextual meaning to shed light on lexical choices involved in the stylistic construction of the translated text.

## 5. Analysis



Rather than viewing words as individual items, the analysis views them as selections that form part of broader patterns that make up the discourse of the text. For each extract, the analysis explores the semantic fields, evaluative language and functions of the text. In so doing, the analysis seeks to show that vocabulary is crucial to the stylistic composition of the translated text and to the narrative and social meanings of the story.

The excerpt below demonstrates how the choice of lexicon is used to create a discourse of power and authority in the novel: *“He sits at a big desk piled almost to the roof with folders and papers. Coffee is forever coming in and going out, with visitors seeking his help and asking him questions. He sits there and rebukes some and curses others. Policemen are always coming in to greet him, and all officers respect him . . .”* (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 63).

The text expresses power by lexical accumulation and process phrases like *“coming in and going out”* and *“visitors seeking his help,”* which position the character as a central figure within a network of dependence. This reflects the ideational function of language, where meaning arises through selection (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 30). At the same time, evaluative items like *“rebukes,” “curses,”* and *“all officers respect him”* encode hierarchical relations, enacting power and social dominance through vocabulary (Halliday, 1994, p. 106).

The next passage shows the use of lexical deliberations to create a conflict between materialism and emotional satisfaction in the novel:

*“For a long time money had sweetened her loneliness; both what she kept in a bank and that which was carefully wrapped in neat bundles in her ivory casket. This money, however, would never compete with the fine man who was to become, with God’s permission, her husband.”* (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 52).

The material richness in the passage is prefigured by lexical elements that create a picture of economic stability including, *“money,” “bank,” “neat bundles,”* and *“ivory casket”*. This is, however, immediately neutralized with phrases like as *“loneliness”* and *“would never compete,”* which switch the emphasis to emotional and relational want. The opposition describes an ideational nature of language through which experiential meaning was encoded via choice (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Simultaneously, the framing of that *“the fine man... her husband”* implying that emotional fulfillment outweighs material acquisition in the end, and the conflict is created through lexical opposition, not through a narration.

The next passage shows how lexical decisions form a discourse of power, dominance and emotional struggle in the narrative: *“You are a princess in a shabby cloak, while these peasants strut in their new finery . . .”* ... *“I wish you were dead,” she blurted out ... “I want you, nothing but you.”* (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 86).

The opposition between “princess” and “peasants” creates a sharp social hierarchy, positioning the addressee as elevated while degrading those around her. These selections place the speaker at one end of the scale of elevating the addressee, and at the same time devalue others, which is the ideational role of language to construct social reality (Halliday



& Matthiessen, 2014). Simultaneously, emotionally stimulated phrases “*I wish you were dead*” and “*he said angrily*” are encoded with tension and resistance, reflecting the social roles and attitudes that are made during the use of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2001). The contrast between admiration and hostility (“*princess*”) and hostility (“*dead,*” “*angrily*”) form a stylized contrast between power relations of instability, and emotional instability in the relationship.

The next passage shows how the use of lexical elements creates the image of the loss of soul and personality change in the text: “*His eyes had lost their sparkle, and he now seemed sullen and faded beneath his scowling eyebrows.*” (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 89).

The excerpt foregrounds decline through lexical items such as “lost,” “sullen,” and “faded,” which belong to a semantic field of deterioration and emotional withdrawal.

The contrast between ‘sparkle’ and ‘faded’ suggests a shift from past vitality to present decline. Simultaneously, evaluative power of “*scowling eyebrows*” brings in an interpersonal touch, portending tension and negativity. In such a group of lexical decisions, transformation is implicitly represented in the text, and thus the change of characters is seen through vocabulary instead of a narration of it.

The next passage demonstrates how the use of lexicon creates an image of the character that is positive and ideal in the story: “*Abbas stood before him smiling while Uncle Kamil gazed at him tenderly. He was dressed in a smart white shirt and gray trousers... his curly hair gave him a decidedly appealing look. All in all, he seemed extremely fit.*” (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 118).

The text conveys attractiveness and approval in the forms of lexical words: smiling, tenderly, smart, appealing that are part of a semantic sphere of positive judgment. The decisions create an impression of physical beauty and emotional coziness, which direct the reader towards a positive opinion of the character. The intensifier “extremely” in “extremely fit” contributes to the vitality and strength and contributes to the idealized depiction. Meanwhile, the interpersonal dimension is achieved through the tenderness of tenderly that encodes feelings of affection and relatedness.

The following extract demonstrates how lexical choices construct psychological fear and spiritual anxiety:

“His imagination and the culture from ages past told him that some of his senses remained after death. Didn't people say that the eyes of a dead person could still see his family staring down at him? After all, he had seen death as clear as daylight before him and he had almost felt eternity enclose him. Indeed, he felt he was already in the darkness of the tomb, with all its eerie loneliness, with bones, shrouds, and its suffocating narrowness and the painful love and longing he would probably feel for the living world. He thought about all this, his heart contracting in painful melancholy, his hands and feet icy and his brow feverish. Neither did he forget the afterlife. The assessment of his life, the retribution . . . O God, what a vast chasm there was between death and paradise . . .” (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 123).



All the words used in the extract have mortality and religious judgment connections, such as “darkness of the tomb” and “shrouds”, “afterlife” and “death”, “eternity”, and “bones”, or “paradise”. These lexical choices realize the ideational metafunction by representing the character’s inner experience and spiritual consciousness. The interpersonal metafunction is found in emotionally charged expressions like “eerie loneliness,” “suffocating narrowness,” “painful melancholy,” “icy” and “feverish,” which are expressions of fear and psychological vulnerability. At the textual level, the repetition of vocabulary about death has a cohesive and progressive effect on the intensity of the emotions. In these ways of word choice the translation text builds up inner-tension and inner-conflict, revealing the role words can play as primary stylistic means in the creation of meaning.

The following extract illustrates how lexical choices construct emotional conflict, power negotiation, and shifting interpersonal relations:

“His sudden anger ignited her quick temper, and now all embarrassment and fear dissolved within her. All this added to the day's agonies and now her face turned pale. ‘Shut up!’ she shouted. ‘Don't talk like a maniac! Do you think you scare me? What do you want from me, you nothing? You have no claim on me. Get out of my sight.’ Before she finished his anger had subsided. He stared at her in confusion and in a trembling voice he muttered, ‘How can you say such things? Aren't you . . . weren't you once my fiancée?’” (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 134).

Lexical emphasis is placed on emotional strain with words like ‘anger’, ‘fear’, ‘agonies’, ‘pale’, ‘shouted’, ‘maniac’, ‘confusion’ and ‘trembling’ all within a lexical field of ‘conflict’ and emotional ‘instability’. These choices reflect the characters’ experience of their thoughts, emotions and mental processes, namely the ideational metafunction (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). Highly evaluative and confrontational expressions like “Shut up!” “you nothing” and “You have no claim on me” contain the interpersonal metafunction indicating a power struggle, rejection and resistance between the speakers. The progression from ‘anger’ to ‘subsided,’ and from ‘shouted’ to ‘muttered,’ creates textual cohesion. In these lexical features, the translated text makes unstable relationships and gives rise to emotional conflicts between characters that show the influence of vocabulary in interpersonal meaning and characterization.

The following extract demonstrates how lexical choices construct revenge, emotional conflict, and violent determination:

“Looking at him, she wondered if Abbas could possibly be capable of murder! She knew the answer, but she hoped the encounter might at least bring Ibrahim Faraj before the law; thus she would have her revenge and freedom as well... Abbas, however, was not listening... ‘We shouldn't suffer without him paying too... Why should that pimp get off free and laugh at us? I'll break his neck; I'll strangle him!’” (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 136).

The words, “murder”, “revenge”, “freedom”, “suffer”, “break”, “strangle”—all indicating violence and justice—come from a semantic field; these words highlight the theme of revenge and emotional tension. These choices realize the ideational metafunction and a



sense of inner conflict and desire for retribution (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). There are interpersonal expressions coded with anger and hostility (that pimp / I'll break his neck). The movement from “before the law” to “I'll strangle him” at the lexical level leads to a cohesion and the intensification of the emotion conflict. These patterns in the lexical level create a psychological suspense and ethical conflict in the translated product.

The following extract demonstrates how lexical choices construct blame, moral judgment, and social ideology:

“Hussain gazed at him for a long time, trying to understand him... Then he commented scornfully, ‘Hamida is the real culprit... A girl attracted him and he seduced her; he found her easy and he got what he wanted... he’s a clever fellow... Hamida's the real criminal, my friend.’” (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 141).

Lexically, moral value is heightened by words like “culprit” or “seduced” or “easy” or “exploit” or “clever” or “criminal” from a semantic field that encompasses words of blame, manipulation and social condemnation. These decisions execute the ideational metafunction which are the perception of social attitudes and gender relations in the story (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). The interpersonal metafunction is observable in situative expressions like “scornfully” and “the real criminal”, with which negative value judgments and ideological placement are communicated. The repetition of accusatory expressions around “Hamida” at the textual level: cohesion and reinforcement of the discourse of blame. Lexicological markers build up social prejudice and power dynamics in these connections, showing how the keywords set up meaning and characterization in the ideology.

**Table 1. Functional-Stylistic Analysis of Lexical Choices in Selected Extracts**

Extract (Page)	Dominant Lexical Pattern	Semantic Field	SFL Realization	Stylistic Function
p. 52	Contrastive lexis (money, bank vs loneliness)	Material wealth vs emotional lack	Ideational	Constructs inner conflict
p. 63	Process verbs + evaluative lexis (rebukes, curses)	Power and authority	Ideational + Interpersonal	Establishes social hierarchy
p. 86	Binary opposition (princess, peasants) + emotive lexis	Power, desire, conflict	Ideational + Interpersonal	Constructs unstable relationships
p. 89	Deteriorative lexis (lost, faded, sullen)	Psychological decline	Ideational + Interpersonal	Represents character transformation
p. 118	Positive evaluative	Attractiveness and	Ideational +	Builds idealized



Extract (Page)	Dominant Lexical Pattern	Semantic Field	SFL Realization	Stylistic Function
	lexis ( <i>smiling, tenderly, appealing</i> )	approval	Interpersonal	characterization
p. 123	Mortality-related lexis ( <i>death, tomb, paradise</i> )	Death and spirituality	Ideational + Textual	Constructs existential anxiety
p. 134	Conflict lexis ( <i>anger, shouted, trembling</i> )	Emotional instability	Ideational + Interpersonal	Encodes interpersonal struggle
p. 136	Violent lexis ( <i>murder, break, strangle</i> )	Revenge and justice	Ideational + Interpersonal	Intensifies moral conflict
p. 141	Accusatory lexis ( <i>culprit, criminal, seduced</i> )	Blame and social judgment	Ideational + Interpersonal	Constructs ideological positioning

## 6. Discussion

The analysis shows that lexical items of the English translation of Midaq Alley are not merely descriptive units, but instead they are used as meaningful elements in the construction of meaning, as key stylistic resources. Across the selected extracts, there are literary devices that recur throughout these such as contrastive diction, evaluative vocabulary, semantic repetition and emotionally charged expressions which always accompany characterization, social relationships and narrative perspective.

As shown in analysis, lexical selections create a variety of experiential senses ranging from power and authority, to emotional conflict, psychological deterioration, spiritual fears, revenge, and morality. This helps validate Halliday's perspective about language as a system of choices of experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The results also suggest that there is a consistent presence of the ideational metafunction in all the analyzed extracts with the consistent encoding of inner consciousness, social experience, and cultural reality through the usage of the vocabulary. Constructing attitudes, emotional intensity and power relations between characters is also more prevalent with interpersonal metafunctions, especially those conveyed in evaluative expressions like "rebukes," "you nothing," "scornfully," and "tenderly."

Moreover, the lexical repetition and contrastive patterning combined with semantic progression, especially in extracts about death, conflict and accusation, produce the textual metafunction, as do affective shifts in tone and atmosphere achieved through lexical



patterning. The results show that the selection of words for the target language is not merely a transfer from the source language, but is actually a reinvention of the stylistic and functional meaning in the target language, and that the choice of words is one of the most important tools of literary translation.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that words in the English version of *Midaq Alley* are central to the construction of meaning, characterization, and a representation of social relations. Vocabulary, acting as an important stylistic mechanism, is accomplished, through contrast and evaluation patterns, as an active medium of expression.

It is advised that future studies can further investigate the topic of lexical decisions in additional translations of works by Mahfouz or can take a comparative method, to explain changes in languages. Moreover, the incorporation of corpus techniques can give a more comprehensive overview of recurring lexical patterns in translated literary works .

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### Index

*“He sits at a big desk piled almost to the roof with folders and papers. Coffee is forever coming in and going out, with visitors seeking his help and asking him questions. He sits there and rebukes some and curses others. Policemen are always coming in to greet him, and all officers respect him . . .”* (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 63).

*“For a long time money had sweetened her loneliness; both what she kept in a bank and that which was carefully wrapped in neat bundles in her ivory casket. This money, however, would never compete with the fine man who was to become, with God's permission, her husband.”* (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 52).

*“You are a princess in a shabby cloak, while these peasants strut in their new finery . . .”* ... *“I wish you were dead,” she blurted out ... “I want you, nothing but you.”* (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 86).



*“His eyes had lost their sparkle, and he now seemed sullen and faded beneath his scowling eyebrows.” (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 89).*

*“Abbas stood before him smiling while Uncle Kamil gazed at him tenderly. He was dressed in a smart white shirt and gray trousers... his curly hair gave him a decidedly appealing look. All in all, he seemed extremely fit.” (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 118).*

“His imagination and the culture from ages past told him that some of his senses remained after death. Didn't people say that the eyes of a dead person could still see his family staring down at him? After all, he had seen death as clear as daylight before him and he had almost felt eternity enclose him. Indeed, he felt he was already in the darkness of the tomb, with all its eerie loneliness, with bones, shrouds, and its suffocating narrowness and the painful love and longing he would probably feel for the living world. He thought about all this, his heart contracting in painful melancholy, his hands and feet icy and his brow feverish. Neither did he forget the afterlife. The assessment of his life, the retribution . . . O God, what a vast chasm there was between death and paradise . . .” (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 123).

“His sudden anger ignited her quick temper, and now all embarrassment and fear dissolved within her. All this added to the day's agonies and now her face turned pale. ‘Shut up!’ she shouted. ‘Don't talk like a maniac! Do you think you scare me? What do you want from me, you nothing? You have no claim on me. Get out of my sight.’ Before she finished his anger had subsided. He stared at her in confusion and in a trembling voice he muttered, ‘How can you say such things? Aren't you . . . weren't you once my fiancée?’” (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 134).

“Looking at him, she wondered if Abbas could possibly be capable of murder! She knew the answer, but she hoped the encounter might at least bring Ibrahim Faraj before the law; thus she would have her revenge and freedom as well... Abbas, however, was not listening... ‘We shouldn't suffer without him paying too... Why should that pimp get off free and laugh at us? I'll break his neck; I'll strangle him!’” (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 136).

“Hussain gazed at him for a long time, trying to understand him... Then he commented scornfully, ‘Hamida is the real culprit... A girl attracted him and he seduced her; he found her easy and he got what he wanted... he's a clever fellow... Hamida's the real criminal, my friend.’” (Mahfouz, 1966, p. 141).