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The effects of deaf and hard-of-hearing subtitles on the characterisation process: a cognitive stylistic study of *The Wire*

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This article reports on a project to investigate the discrepancies between audio dialogue and corresponding subtitles for deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHOH) viewers in episode 1 of HBO's police procedural drama *The Wire*. We isolated and categorised discrepancies between the dialogue and the subtitles and used a cognitive model of characterisation to determine whether such differences were likely to lead to differing conceptions of character for DHOH viewers. We found that **most omissions from the subtitles were of interpersonal features of dialogue**, such as discourse markers, and that indications of the relationships between characters were adversely affected as a result. We suggest that the model of characterisation that we used can be valuable to professional subtitlers as a way of assessing the likely impact of deletions when subtitling drama.

Keywords: characterisation; cognitive stylistics; deaf; hard-of-hearing; subtitling; *The Wire*

1. Introduction

Spatio-temporal constraints when subtitling for deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHOH) viewers mean that DHOH subtitles frequently omit elements of the original character dialogue. Since this practice is often unavoidable, it is necessary for subtitlers to make value judgements about which elements of the original dialogue to cut or condense in the corresponding DHOH subtitle. This involves determining which elements of the dialogue can be omitted without impacting on the viewing experience for DHOH viewers. Current advice to subtitlers is vague on the issue of what should motivate such decisions, beyond an intuitive sense that some dialogic elements are more important than others. Luyken, Herbst, Langham-Brown, Reid, and Spinhof (1991) suggest that insights from linguistics are needed in order to properly assess the impact of cuts and condensations on such narratological issues as plot and characterisation. Consequently, in this article we apply analytical insights from linguistics in an effort to understand the effects of subtitling techniques on characterisation. We analyse the opening three scenes of the television drama *The Wire* (Simon, 2002–2008), comparing the DHOH subtitles with a transcript of the original dialogue. We isolate and categorise all the instances in which deletions, condensations, and other changes are made in the subtitles and, using a model of characterisation developed in stylistics (Culpeper, 2001), we determine whether the altered elements constitute characterisation triggers. As a result of this, we are able to

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estimate the extent to which alterations in DHOH subtitles are likely to affect the characterisation process that deaf viewers engage in, and whether this then leads to an impoverished viewing experience. We argue that insights from this kind of analysis can be of practical benefit to subtitlers by clarifying the link between linguistic form and functional effects, and by specifying the impact on characterisation of particular linguistic choices.

2. Subtitling practice

Current subtitling practice is constrained by a range of factors which impact on the space and time available for displaying subtitles on screen. Here we provide a brief summary of these constraints and the thinking behind cuts to the original dialogue in the corresponding subtitles. We also discuss current guidelines to subtitlers and argue that these could be improved by integrating insights from linguistics, particularly stylistics.

2.1. Constraints

In transferring language from the spoken to the written mode, subtitlers have to balance the inter-semiotic transference of meaning with some very tight spatio-temporal constraints. Viewers who have access to both the auditory and visual channels will notice that much of the dialogue is either condensed or omitted. De Linde and Kay (1999, p. 11) claim that, as the average reading speed of adults is approximately 66% of the average speaking speed, each subtitle must be reduced by around one-third. Their study, which surveyed various genres of television programmes, found that subtitles contain an average of 43% less text than the original dialogue (1999, p. 51). The extensive omissions are due to the fact that subtitles are bound by space and time. With regard to the former, the width of the screen dictates that around 40 characters per line is the maximum amount of text that can be displayed on screen at any one time. With regard to the latter, the speed at which viewers are able to read subtitles (around 150–180 words per minute is the average reading speed for adults) limits the amount of dialogue that can be shown in a given time period (Luyken et al., 1991). Furthermore, subtitles that are kept on screen during a shot change (a practice called ‘overlapping’) have been found to distract viewers. Consequently, this practice is generally avoided, meaning that changes in shot dictate subtitle display times (Luyken et al., 1991). As such, fast-paced scenes with many successive shot changes can be even more limited with regard to the amount of dialogue they can display. It is, of course, important to note that in practice there are ways of compensating for these issues: for example, extending the duration of the subtitle beyond the length of the utterance can compensate for slower reading speeds. Nevertheless, keeping two lines of subtitles on screen for longer than six seconds is strongly discouraged, as it can lead to viewers rereading (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 89).

While deletions are necessary in most forms of subtitling, subtitles for DHOH viewers often involve greater reduction of the original text, as it has been reported that DHOH viewers have a slower average reading speed than adults with hearing capability. However, reading speed is by no means the same for everyone and there is a broad spectrum of reading abilities amongst DHOH viewers. It has been claimed, for instance, that those who have had hearing capability and subsequently lost it are more likely to read at a ‘normal’ adult speed than people born profoundly deaf (de Linde & Kay, 1999). Nonetheless, more recent research has shown that there is little difference in the reading speeds of hearing and DHOH viewers, with the latter demanding only slightly slower

captions (Downey, 2008). Despite such findings, DHOH subtitles remain more restricted in the amount of dialogue they can represent on the screen than other subtitles due to the fact that DHOH subtitles must also specify non-verbal auditory information, such as prosodic detail, sound effects, music, and speaker identity. While translated (i.e. interlingual) subtitles do not have to attend to these details, DHOH (i.e. intralingual) subtitles must make extra time and space for this information, resulting in a greater need for omission of dialogue and other features. It is clear that the spatio-temporal constraints on subtitles demand reduction of the text, but clear guidance on which linguistic elements should be omitted is hard to find. It is, of course, difficult to provide comprehensive guidance for all situations. What we aim to demonstrate in Section 5 is that a model of characterisation developed in stylistics can act as a support method for assessing the likely impact of omissions.

2.2. *Text reduction*

In an early work on subtitles that remains influential among subtitlers in training, Reid (1987, p. 28) remarks that '[t]he shortening of the text for subtitling purposes is nothing more than deciding what is padding and what is vital information'. This begs the question of how subtitlers are to know which is which. In line with Reid, Luyken et al. (1991, p. 55) remark that, '[a]ll non-essential information must be omitted yet extreme condensation is also undesirable [...] It is evident that adaptation requires a considerable degree of linguistic skill'. Here again there is a distinction drawn between essential and non-essential information, and although these authors recognise the linguistic skill necessary for distinguishing between the two, there is no suggestion as to how to determine what is essential and what can be cut. This problem is common in subtitling research, with only cursory attempts at accounting for the stylistic effects of what is omitted.

De Linde and Kay (1999, p. 4) note that 'there are many elements of speech which at first appear superfluous and consequently omissible when converted into written form', citing discourse markers such as 'well' and 'you know' as examples. They go on to suggest that such elements could actually be 'integral to characters' style in spoken discourse' (1999, p. 4). Indeed, discourse markers are known to contribute to interpersonal information and to structure the flow of ideas and speaker stance in conversation, thus indicating character relationships and intersubjective positioning. Nevertheless, Gottlieb (1994a, p. 112), a subtitling scholar and trainer and a particularly ardent advocate of reduction in subtitles, describes discourse markers in movie dialogue as 'redundant'. In fact, he believes that 'the verbal style and characterisation of the speaker are better served with some reduction in the subtitles' (1994b, p. 273), though gives no reason for this position. He does, however, concede that in fictional texts 'style' is of primary importance, but he, or any other subtitling scholar and teacher, has not specifically examined how style can be attended to in subtitling dialogue.

All of this is not to say that omissions are made at random. Several researchers examining the kind of information that is generally cut from subtitles have all identified subtitling strategies consistent with Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) metafunctions: linguistic elements contributing to ideational meaning tend to be preserved, while elements contributing to interpersonal and textual meaning tend to be omitted (de Linde, 1995; Gottlieb, 1992; Kovačič, 1992). In this article we concentrate particularly on ideational and interpersonal meaning, given that textual meaning has already been explored in depth by de Linde and Kay (1999) in relation to cohesion in subtitles. The metafunctions are described in detail in Section 5. Information vital to developing the

text's narrative is generally maintained in subtitles, whereas information that contributes to characterisation and our understanding of character relationships is often cut, as with the discourse markers mentioned above. This has serious consequences for those texts in which interpersonal information is key to their meaning and stylistic effect.

Furthermore, in rendering spoken language as written, subtitlers are faced with the choice of how to handle accent, dialect, and colloquial features, all of which contribute to the characterisation process. Recent research shows that DHOH viewers want colloquial and dialectal features to be portrayed, as subtitles are their only contact with the spoken language and can be used to learn linguistic and social skills; they also find the 'simplification' of dialogue patronising (cited in Remael, 2007, p. 49; Santamaria & Rico, 2004; Van Herreweghe & Slembrouck, 2004). The features that contribute to interpersonal meaning and the characterisation process are therefore key in relaying the social aspects of a text, which are especially important to DHOH viewers who may feel marginalised from mainstream society.

2.3. Guidelines for text reduction

Although subtitling has been around in some form for almost a century, it has developed in response to technological, utilitarian, and financial demands, without much attention to the linguistic style of the text to be subtitled (Gottlieb, 1994b; Remael, 2007). The stylistics of DHOH subtitling is even more neglected than translated or 'interlingual' subtitles. While interlingual subtitling has benefitted from research in translation on linguistic style, intralingual subtitling has only really been investigated in relation to its functionality for DHOH viewers (de Linde & Kay, 1999; Downey, 2008). Although it has been suggested that a subtitler requires 'the stylistic sensitivity of a translator' (Gottlieb, 1994b, p. 101), linguistic approaches to DHOH subtitles have been severely lacking. Lyken et al. (1991, p. 143) drew attention to this problem in his study, noting the 'profound mutual ignorance of semiotic theorists and television Language Transfer [subtitling] practitioners in each other's work'. Similarly, Gottlieb (1994b, p. 266) noted that 'genuinely cognitive, linguistically-founded research is still very rare indeed'. This continued to be the case throughout the 1990s and although de Linde and Kay's monograph (1999) went some way towards addressing the issue, dealing with cohesive elements in particular, their treatment of the language of subtitles is limited. The stylistic effects of subtitling strategies have yet to be adequately described in the level of linguistic detail necessary to enable the reliable inference of specific connections between linguistic form and stylistic function. Furthermore, it seems strange that a practice that is so founded on reducing language should have no guidelines to outline which linguistic elements can be omitted from a text in keeping with the informative aims of subtitling, the constraints of the practice, and the style of the text.

In Remael's (2007, p. 48) recent survey of European subtitlers, all of the respondents agreed that standardised guidelines for subtitlers would benefit the profession as long as it was ensured 'that standardisation is not dictated on the basis of quantitative, financial, and/or technological requirements alone'; their concern reflects the imbalance of interest in subtitling so far, where these requirements have been attended to at the expense of the language of subtitles. Remael (2007, p. 40) summarises the general view amongst her respondents that '[o]verall, a lack of consistent teaching method and measurable standards still plagues the profession and, as a result, the professional prestige and remuneration of subtitlers'. Research into the language of subtitles and the creation of a set of guidelines by which subtitlers could make reductions would develop the linguistic

skills of practitioners, the style of the subtitles and the prestige of the profession more generally. Essentially this study highlights the importance of characterisation through linguistic means in drama, providing insights that we hope may be useful in the future formulation of any such guidelines for subtitling practice. To do this, we analyse three scenes from the HBO drama *The Wire*, focussing principally on those features of dramatic dialogue that contribute to characterisation. In the next section we provide some background information on the series before going on to outline our practical and analytical methodology.

3. *The Wire*

Each season of *The Wire* (Simon, 2002–2008) deals with a different aspect of urban life in Baltimore, Maryland, spanning the streets, the schools, the port, the media, and the politics at city hall, with the drug trade as the central focus. It focuses on the daily struggles of the underclass, drug dealers and junkies, as well as the police, dockers, journalists, teachers, and politicians. *The Wire*'s achievement is the way it portrays the interplay between individual urban Americans and their inextricability from the (often brutal) capitalist system, be that the illicit drug trade or the legitimate institutions, often drawing parallels between both. The series stands out as one that breaks from the ideological norms of other US crime television shows, and does so by foregrounding the relationship between characters and their institutional roles. As Sklansky (2011, p. 479) remarks of *The Wire*, 'instead of stylized dilemmas, we are given characters and situations that are many things at once'. For example, the police are often equally or more aggressive, dysfunctional, and intoxicated than the drug dealers, often even lacking the criminals' moral codes; yet characters on both sides of the law are always portrayed as subject to the systems to which they belong. The constant interplay between the characters' individual struggles, choices, and moral battles and the 'system' at large places characterisation at the heart of what the series does best.

Characterisation is crucial to *The Wire* for several other reasons. Some scholars have noted that the series replaces 'the flat categories of standard police procedurals with a fully realized world populated with morally and emotionally complex characters' (Bandes, 2011, p. 438); that is, 'nuanced, rounded characters' (Sklansky, 2011, p. 475); these authors are lawyers who were inspired by *The Wire* to produce a special issue of the Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law dedicated to the show. Although the binary distinction between 'flat' and 'round' characters has been dismissed by cognitive linguists (e.g. Culpeper, 2001, p. 52), Bandes and Sklansky are clearly struck by the vividness of the characters against their schematic experience of the American criminal justice system and urban society. The producers' decision to include real people from Baltimore in the cast, in addition to professional actors, adds to the sense of realism and the accurate portrayal of the Baltimore dialect, Baltimorese. This dialect is used by characters of different races and classes on both sides of the law, reinforcing the commonality between these groups. It is a marker of identity and, as such, a contributing factor to the characterisation process. However, the Baltimorese accent and dialect has also proved an interpretative hindrance for many hearing viewers of the show. This cognitive demand on the viewer of *The Wire* leads some people to switch off and others to become hooked on decoding what Toolan (2011, p. 161) describes as the 'involvingly incomprehensible' dialogue. Toolan (2011) argues that the show's naturalistic tone is generated in part by the fact that much of the Baltimorese dialogue is difficult to understand for those viewers who speak a different vernacular dialect. This mirrors the fact that we do not necessarily

comprehend every single word in everyday conversation. To the casual viewer, used to clear expository dialogue in drama, this can be off-putting. However, Toolan (2011, p. 179) points out that while some of the dialogue may indeed be difficult to understand, this is compensated for by repetition in the script and by non-linguistic indicators of mood such as sound and camera shots. As a result, viewers who commit to *The Wire* soon find that comprehending what is going on is not nearly as difficult as they may have first imagined.

The format of *The Wire* also has important consequences for the way in which its viewers process the text (Sklansky, 2011). Firstly, HBO is a subscription-only channel and as such does not use advertisement breaks, giving the viewer a more involved and cinematic experience than other television dramas. Secondly, the long multi-season format allows for in-depth and extended character development. Indeed, the writers of *The Wire* make no concessions to those who just want to watch an individual episode, saying ‘Fuck the casual viewer’ (Simon, 2008). So, thirdly, the demand for complete attention from viewers makes *The Wire* more conducive to viewing on DVD, where audiences have access to additional facilities such as rewind, audio commentaries, and, most importantly for us, DHOH subtitles.

Because of the factors described in the preceding paragraph, the writers of *The Wire* were publicly aghast that hearing viewers would rely on the subtitles for comprehensibility, claiming in an interview in *The Independent* that ‘we wrote it so audiences would have to work at it!’ (Akbar 2009). Kozloff has argued that this kind of ‘linguistic opacity’ is characteristic of gangster movie dialogue and that the frustration viewers experience in understanding dialogue in this genre is an integral ‘part of their aesthetic’ (Kozloff, 2000, p. 215). The comments above from *The Wire*’s writers would suggest that such an aesthetic effect may also be behind the deliberate decision to include dialogue that is difficult to comprehend. This in turn would suggest that the subtitling of *The Wire* is relevant to a wider proportion of the viewing population than DHOH subtitles usually are, and that the choices made by the subtitlers affect the characterisation process for a greater number of viewers, both hearing and hearing-impaired.

4. Characterisation: a model from cognitive stylistics

Eder, Jannidis, and Schneider (2010, p. 8) describe the ontological status of character as one in which ‘characters are representations of imaginary beings in the minds of the audience’. From this cognitive linguistic perspective, describing the characterisation process involves explaining how readers and/or viewers build such mental representations as they read or watch drama. Of course, in the case of DHOH viewers, the characterisation process involves a combination of both watching and reading. One of the most influential models in stylistics for explaining the process of characterisation from a cognitive standpoint is that proposed by Culpeper (2001; see McIntyre, 2014, for a summary, and Culpeper & McIntyre, 2010, and McIntyre & Culpeper, 2010, for applications).

Culpeper’s (2001) model sees characterisation as arising from a combination of both top-down and bottom-up processing. Top-down processing involves readers/viewers applying their existing schematic knowledge in the interpretation of character. A schema is a structured pattern of world knowledge derived either from direct or secondary experience and stored in our long-term memory (see Eysenck & Keane, 2010, for a detailed summary of the various formulations of schema theory, and Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010, for an outline of its application in stylistics). We have schemas for people, objects, events, and situations, and our schematic knowledge is triggered by what Schank and

Abelson (1977, p. 49) call *headers*. These are linguistic (and non-linguistic) cues that relate to elements of the schema in question. So, for instance, a character pointing a gun and shouting 'Freeze!' is likely to be enough to invoke the viewer's schema for a US cop (whether or not this actually turns out to be the case). Schemas are dynamic; that is, they are subject to extension by accretion (the addition of new elements), tuning (the modification of existing elements), and restructuring (the wholesale revitalisation of an existing schema to create a wholly new one). Readers/viewers utilise schematic knowledge when they first encounter fictional characters. For example, in the case of *The Wire*, most viewers will approach the series with their schema for a detective already triggered (perhaps as a result of having responded to headers in the blurb on the back of the DVD box). They will then use this schema to help them formulate an initial impression of McNulty's character. For instance, our stereotype for a detective may have been formed from previous crime dramas that we have seen, and may be built around the notion of, say, the maverick cop with a single-minded hatred of criminals. This will form the basis of our interpretation of McNulty, though we are likely to tune this schema as a result of the linguistic and non-linguistic triggers in the text itself (and here we are using *text* in its widest sense to refer to the finished film, incorporating both dialogic, visual, and aural elements as well as all aspects of *mise-en-scene* [e.g. lighting, costumes, set, etc.; see Monaco, 2009]). For instance, scene 1 demonstrates McNulty's capacity for operating outside of a prototypical police interview activity type in order to generate a personal relationship between himself and the witness he is talking to. Levinson (1992, p. 69) defines activity types as 'goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded events with constraints on participants, setting, and so on, but above all on kinds of allowable contributions'. Making sense of activity types thus relies on schematic knowledge. If McNulty's conduct in scene 1 does not match our schematic expectations, then we are likely to tune our schema for detectives on the basis of his verbal and non-verbal behaviour in order to generate a more nuanced impression of his character.

Schematic knowledge, then, is just one contributing factor to the characterisation process. The means by which schemas for characters are tuned and restructured is bottom-up processing. This involves readers/viewers making inferences based on linguistic triggers of characterisation found within the text itself (in the case of reading plays, for example, bottom-up triggers are to be found in the play script; in the case of DHOH subtitled drama, bottom-up characterisation cues are found in the subtitles). According to Culpeper (2001), bottom-up characterisation triggers can be explicit, implicit, and authorial in nature.

Explicit triggers are those in which a character makes specific reference to his or her own character traits, or to those of another character. An example of explicit self-presentation in *The Wire* can be seen in subtitle number 82 (S82; see [Appendix](#)), analysed in full in Section 6. The scene is a courtroom, and in response to a question from the prosecuting attorney, the witness identifies herself by her occupation: 'I'm a security guard'. This is basic social role information that is likely to trigger additional schematic information for the viewer. Other-presentation is not prevalent in our analysis but works on the same principle as self-presentation, the difference being that one character makes explicit reference to the characteristics of a third party character. Of course, one issue in determining the validity of explicit other-presentation is the reliability of the character offering the information. In practice, however, Culpeper (2001, p. 170) suggests that we have a tendency to accept most presentations of character, due to what Ross (1977) has called the fundamental attribution error in social psychology. This explains our inclination to take whatever people tell us at face value.

While explicit triggers convey character information overtly, implicit triggers of characterisation communicate character information indirectly. Culpeper (2001) provides a checklist of implicit triggers, which includes the following linguistic features.

- Conversation structure (e.g. turn-taking, topic control, interruptions, etc.).
- Conversational implicature (i.e. pragmatic implicatures arising from flouting Grice's [1975] Cooperative Principle).
- Lexis (e.g. lexical richness, address forms, 'surge' features [i.e. lexical indicators of affect]).
- Syntactic features (e.g. non-standard syntax).
- Accent and dialect (e.g. lexical and syntactic features indicative of accent and dialect).
- Verse and prose (i.e. text form and type).
- Paralinguistic features (e.g. normal non-fluency, volume, voice quality).
- Visual features (i.e. non-linguistic features, including body language and elements of *mise-en-scene*).
- Context (i.e. a character's company and setting).

In addition, Walker (2012) has suggested other features as being indicative of character, including keywords (i.e. words that are used statistically more frequently by one character than by others). Our analysis in Section 6 demonstrates that implicit triggers are the primary means of bottom-up characterisation in our data. And while Culpeper (2001) only discusses self- and other-presentation in relation to explicit characterisation triggers, it is worth noting that implicit characterisation triggers can cue both self- and other-presentation too.

Finally, authorial characterisation cues are those which, according to Culpeper (2001), characters notionally have no control over. These include character names and stage/screen directions. For example, the victim of the shooting discussed in scene 1, episode 1 of *The Wire* is referred to as *Snotboogie*. This name gives rise to a particular characterisation that would be very different if the victim had been referred to by his first name and surname. Screen directions too can give character information (e.g. by indicating that a character is whispering or singing).

Finally, one other factor worth noting about character information is whether the trigger indicates a permanent characteristic (as might be the case with cues indicating accent and dialect) or a transitory one (such as fleeting anger indicated by a raised voice).

5. Method

We analysed the opening three scenes of episode 1 ('The Target'; Simon & Johnson, 2002), season 1 of *The Wire*. Our rationale for choosing these scenes was that, since this was the beginning of the series, the filmmakers would not be making any assumptions about the amount of prior knowledge the audience would have regarding the characters. Furthermore, since the purpose of the first episode was to draw viewers into the series, the onus was on the filmmakers to convey a substantial amount of character information quickly.

In order to compare the differences between the original dialogue of *The Wire* and the DHOH subtitles, we employed SubRip software to extract the subtitles from the DVD to a text file. As well as granting us access to all of the relevant subtitles in the same format as they appear on screen, this technique has the added benefit of numbering every

subtitle, which proved useful in our analysis. We then viewed the relevant scenes on the DVD and took note of any differences between what we heard in the dialogue and the subtitles in the text file. The text file of subtitles was marked up using square brackets to encode deletions and underlining to indicate added elements (see [Appendix](#)).

We then collated all of the changes in a table format, taking note of the scene, the subtitle number, and which character's dialogue was edited (see [Table 1](#)). Every difference was categorised according to the subtitling strategy used (that is, whether the original text was deleted, condensed, or added to). While one of the aims of subtitlers is to reduce the text, a distinction can be made between two kinds of reduction: total reduction, or 'deletion' of a lexical item, and part reduction, or reducing and replacing, known as 'condensation' (de Linde, 1995; Gottlieb, 1992; Kovačič, 1994). Less commonly, subtitlers might add elements to the text, a strategy we categorised as 'additions'. We also noted if there was a marked difference between the pronunciation and the orthography of any lexical items. As well as categorising the change strategy, we made a note of the exact lexical item or phrase that was deleted, replaced, or added. [Table 1](#) shows some examples of the data and our categorisation method.

As [Table 1](#) also shows, the effect of each change was then labelled according to whether it was an effect on the ideational, interpersonal or textual metafunctions of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Halliday (1976, p. 25) describes the ideational function of language as the 'communication of experience', manifest in those linguistic elements that convey such information, as in verb processes, tense, and lexical content. Previous research into subtitling strategies has shown that ideational content is the kind of meaning that is most preserved in the transfer of spoken dialogue to written subtitles (de Linde, 1995; Gottlieb, 1992; Kovačič, 1992). The interpersonal function of language is the way in which language is used in social and personal interaction, including markers of modality, person, attitude, and expressive lexical items or stylistic organisation of vocabulary. According to Halliday (1976, p. 25), '[t]hese two broad macro-functions of the adult language, the ideational and the interpersonal, together determine a large part of the meaning potential of the clause'. Nevertheless, research has shown that the interpersonal elements are those that suffer the subtitler's editing the most, as they are often considered 'redundant', like 'padding' for the real content (see Section 2.2.). It seems that subtitlers value, and are taught to value, language that conveys ideational meaning over interpersonal meaning. The textual function of language 'create[s] coherent text – text that coheres within itself and with the context of situation' (Halliday & Webster, 2006, p. 17). The elements of language that contribute to textual meaning are conjunctions, anaphoric reference, ellipsis, and lexical cohesion. In their study of omissions in subtitling, de Linde and Kay (1999, p. 28) find that cohesive elements are often omitted, 'as they are non-content bearing'. They use examples to show how the omission of cohesive or repetitious elements can affect a text's 'literary quality' or 'rhetorical function'. However, evaluating literary quality is a contentious (and necessarily subjective) endeavour, which we have tried to avoid in favour of commenting on how particular stylistic choices on the part of subtitlers are likely to impact on viewers. We also contend that determining rhetorical function is of limited value unless such functions are related specifically to clearly defined elements of drama such as characterisation and plot. By avoiding subjective judgements about the literary quality of omissions in our data and instead categorising the omissions as contributing to textual, interpersonal, and/or ideational meaning, we can then go on to explain how these strata of meanings contribute to the style of the text, paying particular attention to their contribution to the characterisation process.

Table 1. Categorisation method for differences between subtitles and audio dialogue.

Scene	Sub. no.	Character	Strategy	Lost	Added	Effect
1. Street, murder scene	9	Witness	Deletion	[short laugh/snort]	–	Interpersonal, loses the empathy between witness and McNulty
1. Street, murder scene	9	McNulty	Deletion	Pronoun ‘he’	–	Textual, loss of coherence, elision gives the impression of spoken language
1. Street, murder scene	14	Witness	Deletion	Adverb ‘though/no’	–	Ideational, subtitler can’t hear but imposes an interpretation
1. Street, murder scene	15	Witness	Deletion	Discourse marker ‘I mean’	–	Interpersonal, stance marker
1. Street, murder scene	15	Witness	Condensation	Verb phrase ‘whip his ass’	Auxiliary verb ‘do’	Ideational, stylistic, the parallelism foregrounds the verb phrase and represents the repetitiveness of cheating one too many times at the game
1. Street, murder scene	16	McNulty	Deletion	Prepositional phrase ‘with you’	–	Interpersonal, prepositional phrase mirrors body language between characters

The subsequent part of our methodology does just that. After labelling the metafunction, we also noted whether the altered text was a characterisation cue, according to the checklist of Culpeper's model. The analysis in the next section describes the effect of the subtitles' changes on the characterisation process.

6. Analysis

To demonstrate the effects on characterisation of subtitling decisions, we analyse the opening three scenes of *The Wire*. Scene 1 of episode 1 ('The Target') occurs before the opening titles and takes place in a street in the immediate aftermath of a murder. Jimmy McNulty, a white detective and one of the central protagonists of the show, is sitting on the kerbside talking to a black witness about the shooting that just occurred. The black victim, a young man nicknamed Snotboogie, was an associate of the witness. Scene 2 takes place in the hallway of the courthouse, where McNulty is regaling his colleague, Bunk, with the story that the witness told him in scene 1. Scene 3 shifts to the courtroom of the courthouse, where McNulty is observing the murder trial of a mid-level drug dealer, D'Angelo Barksdale. Barksdale is acquitted when the prosecution's key witness recants her testimony.

6.1. Scene 1: exterior, street

The subtitling decisions made for scene 1 primarily impact on the interpersonal relationship between McNulty and the witness, which McNulty to a large extent engineers discursively. The first change to the dialogue occurs in subtitle 9 (S9), where the pronoun *he* is omitted:

8: *McNulty*
00:00:52,015 → 00:00:55,530
so his nose starts running,
and some asshole,
9: *McNulty*
00:00:55,575 → 00:00:58,567
instead of giving him a Kleenex,
[he] calls him 'Snot'. [witness laughs/snorts]

The omission of the pronoun is unimportant grammatically and semantically, but its deletion standardises a grammatical feature of McNulty's original dialogue that is characteristic of speech rather than writing. Even this small change, then, has the potential to impact on how we perceive McNulty, since it reduces the degree to which McNulty's dialogue is reminiscent of genuine spoken language. In effect, the removal of the pronoun results in the loss of what Culpeper (2001) terms an implicit characterisation cue pertaining to dialect, a long-term character trait. Culpeper (2001, p. 113) reports that salience is one factor that influences the extent to which readers determine those linguistic behaviours that act as characterisation cues. The pronoun *he* in the audio dialogue for S9 is grammatically non-standard and likely to be salient as a result. The pronoun therefore has the potential to act as a characterisation trigger.

The second deletion in the scene (S14) is more likely the result of a practical decision on the part of the subtitler, in which an unclearly enunciated adverb (which could be *though* or *no*) is omitted entirely. There is no obvious impact on characterisation here.

S15, however, omits a discourse marker (*I mean*) that has an interpersonal metafunction and also marks stance:

15: *Witness*
 00:01:26,375 → 00:01:29,253
 [I mean] He coulda just whipped his ass,
 like we always do [whip his ass].

Fraser (1999) explains that discourse markers ‘signal a relationship between the segment they introduce [...] and the prior segment’ and notes that *I mean* functions as a sub-class of discourse marker, which he terms an elaborative marker. In the case of S15, then, *I mean* is indicative of the witness’ concern for clarity, which itself is indicative of some degree of interpersonal relationship between him and McNulty. In the original dialogue, *I mean* functions partly to scaffold the developing relationship between the witness and McNulty, thereby establishing the cooperativeness of the witness. S15 also contains a condensation, with *do* being substituted for *whip his ass*. The effect of this is that the parallelism of the two verb phrases is lost, which emphasised the regularity with which Snotboogie cheated at cards and with which his friends rebuked him for this. This is plot-rather than character-related, though the poetic effects of the parallelism are likely to impact on our conceptualisation of the witness’ character.

S16 omits an element of McNulty’s turn (the subtitle is *I agree* rather than *I agree with you*), which has an interpersonal function in the original dialogue. Arguably there is a redundancy in the prepositional phrase; since McNulty is talking only to the witness, it is obvious that it must be the witness with whom he agrees. However, this semantic repetition on McNulty’s part has a rapport-building function (Spencer-Oatey, 2002) which is further emphasised by the body language of the two characters: McNulty is at this point mirroring the witness’s seating position, which acts as an implicit paralinguistic trigger of characterisation. While the rapport is not lost as a result of the omission, its salience is reduced.

The success of McNulty’s rapport management can be seen in a subsequent turn (S19–20) from the witness:

19 *Witness*
 00:01:39,695 → 00:01:43,529
 [Look] I’m saying, [I mean] every Friday night
 20 *Witness*
 00:01:43,575 → 00:01:46,533
 in the alley behind the cut-rate,
 we rolling bones [you know].

In the dialogue, the witness’s turn is prefaced by the discourse marker *Look*, which functions to request his interlocutor to assume the same stance as him. The fact that the discourse marker is an imperative is suggestive of an equal balance of discursive power between the two men, despite the fact that there is a clear imbalance of power between them in institutional terms. It would appear that McNulty has successfully engineered a relationship in which the witness feels able to confide in him as an equal. In the subtitle, however, this nuance is lost due to the deletion of both the *Look* discourse marker and the later *I mean*. The extent to which the witness has assumed a close relationship with McNulty is also reflected in the question tag *you know* which he appends to his statement

in S20 (see above). This syntactic feature has an interpersonal function and demonstrates the witness' concern for McNulty's comprehension of the story.

The interpersonal relationship between McNulty and the witness is not only emphasised through discourse markers. S21, below, shows that the original dialogue *round the way* is omitted in favour of the proximal spatial deictic *here*:

21 *Witness/McNulty*

00:01:46,575 → 00:01:50,887

- [I mean,] All the boys from here [round the way], we roll till late.

- Alley crap game, right?

In English, the definite article (the) indicates information that the hearer is assumed already to possess. The definite article in the original phrase *round the way* thus functions to indicate that the space referred to by the witness is information that McNulty is already assumed to have. As a result, McNulty is expected to know the area to which the witness refers. This is implicit characterisation from the witness of the relationship between the two characters. Replacing *round the way* with *here* in the subtitle loses the implication of shared knowledge, since *here* is inherently indicative of proximity to the speaker's deictic centre (that is, the egocentric position from which they view the world). No shared knowledge is necessary for McNulty to be able to interpret the space indicated by the deictic *here* in the way that *round the way* depends on shared knowledge between McNulty and the witness. Again, the DHOH viewer's sense of the developing relationship between the witness and McNulty is hindered by the replacement.

S22 sees an addition in the subtitle. A coordinating conjunction (*and*) is inserted and a discourse marker (*I mean*) is deleted: 'And like every time, [I mean,] Snot, he'd fade a few shooters'). The addition is likely to be for reasons of textual coherence, since the coordination provides an explicit link to the clause in the previous subtitle. The deletion of the discourse marker, however, has the potential to impact again on the portrayal of the witness' developing relationship with McNulty.

S23 also contains additions to the witness's dialogue ('Play it out till the pot's deep. Then he'd snatch and run'). Here the witness is describing Snotboogie's strategy for gambling with the witness and others, which involved playing until the pot had become sizeable and then making off with the money. In this case, the addition of the temporal adverb (*then*), pronoun (*he*), and contracted auxiliary verb (*[woul]d*) make explicit the sequential connection between the verb phrases in the three main clauses, thereby reducing the inferencing needed to comprehend the utterance. Given the additional demands on DHOH viewers (e.g. reading time), this addition may well allow more time for focusing on the image.

In the dialogue, McNulty's response to the witness' description of Snotboogie's stealing is: 'What? Every time?' In S24, *what* is omitted. In the dialogue this has an interpersonal function, signalling McNulty's engagement in the witness' storytelling and to some extent mitigating the force of the question that follows. The deletion of *what* in the subtitle makes the question *Every time?* seem indicative of impersonal police questioning, with the questioner showing no real involvement in the story that the witness is telling. This has a potential impact on the implicit self-characterisation of McNulty, whose strategy in the scene is to affect a close relationship with the witness, downplaying his institutional authority. The deletion from the subtitle means that this nuance of character is lost.

The deletions so far all have a potential negative impact on characterisation since they result in the loss of nuanced information about character. It is important to point out, though, that deletion as a subtitling strategy is not an inherently negative technique. For example, the next deletion occurs in S27, a removal of a pronoun plus cliticised auxiliary verb:

27 McNulty
00:02:13,815 → 00:02:18,525
he'd wait till there was cash on the ground,
then [he'd] grab the money and run away?

This deletion is likely to have been made because the second *he'd* is not necessary in terms of textual coherence, and removing it therefore offers a way of reducing the number of characters to be displayed on screen while not impacting on propositional content. And since it is not a trigger for characterisation, there is no sense in which its removal affects our perception of McNulty. The deletion of the pronoun 'he' has a negligible effect here and yet the deleted pronoun in S9 was shown to be a characterisation trigger, demonstrating the difficulty in providing hard and fast rules for stylistically-sensitive reduction in the subtitling process. Instead, an understanding of stylistic *effects*, rather than simply formal criteria, can be gleaned through the application of a framework such as Culpeper's model of characterisation.

Like the deletion of *he'd* in S27, the deletion in S28 is likely to have been for the purposes of clarity in the absence of prosodic information available in the dialogue. In response to the witness' story about Snotboogie routinely absconding with the gang's gambling money, McNulty asks 'You let him do that?' The witness replies '[I mean] We catch him and beat his ass'. Here, the deletion of *I mean* removes the ambiguity about whether the predicate functions as a discourse marker or a marker of reformulation for the purposes of clarification.

The final deletion of scene 1 is from S29, a continuation of the witness' utterance in S28, in which the witness makes clear that although he and his friends would beat Snotboogie for stealing, 'ain't nobody [n]ever go past that'. Here, the deletion of the initial *n* of *never* removes the triple negative present in the dialogue. This may well have been removed to reduce the need for complex cognitive processing, which would seem likely to slow down reading speed; there is some evidence that negative polarity items such as *never* take readers longer to process than positive polarity items such as *ever*; see, for example, Vasishth, Brussow, Lewis, & Drenhaus (2008). While this may increase the capacity for readers to comprehend the subtitle quickly, it does impact on characterisation, since the triple negative is a clear sociolectal feature that acts as an implicit trigger of a long-term character trait.

6.2. Scene 2: interior, courthouse hallway

Scene 2 comprises a tracking shot in a hallway in the courthouse. McNulty is relaying the conversation from scene 1 to his colleague, Detective 'Bunk' Moreland. It is a short scene of just 10 turns, serving to establish a relationship between McNulty and Bunk. At the end of the scene, Bunk goes off to his office, while McNulty goes to sit in on the murder trial of D'Angelo Barksdale, depicted in scene 3. There are a number of significant deletions in the scene, no doubt in part motivated by the series of fast shot changes between the characters, which would have necessitated overlapping if the dialogue were

to be represented in full. Some of these deletions are of evident characterisation triggers, and their omission in the subtitles is likely to affect the nuance of the characterisation process.

The deletions in scene 2 are arguably more perceptible than in scene 1, involving in some cases the removal of whole turns. For example, in S56 McNulty relays to Bunk the reason the witness gave for why Snotboogie was allowed to join in the dice games when he routinely stole from his friends ('Gotta let him play, this America'). Bunk replies 'No fucking way', and in the dialogue this is followed by McNulty saying 'Did I make that up?' McNulty's turn is omitted entirely from the subtitles. Bunk's laughter (a paralinguistic indicator of a transitory characteristic) is also not indicated. Of course, it is not necessary to do this since it is clear visually that Bunk is laughing, but the absence of McNulty's turn results in it not being clear why. In and of itself, McNulty's omitted turn does not constitute a characterisation cue by the terms of Culpeper's (2001) checklist of textual triggers for character, but as Culpeper (2001) also points out, characterisation can be the cumulative effect of numerous triggers working in tandem. The function of the scene overall is to demonstrate the bantering relationship that McNulty and Bunk have; this element of characterisation therefore arises from the structure and content of their whole conversation. Removing McNulty's additional turn reduces the degree to which his and Bunk's friendship is likely to be interpreted by DHOH viewers.

The second deletion in scene 2 is of another whole turn, albeit a turn comprising just one word. In S59, McNulty asks a security guard in the courthouse for confirmation of which court Barksdale's trial is being held in. The guard replies simply 'Huh?' and this turn is omitted entirely from the subtitles. While not intrinsic to the comprehensibility of the scene, the reply does convey an air of minor incompetence on the part of the guard, which is then lost as a result of the missing subtitle. This is an example of the attention to detail that makes *The Wire* so absorbing: even minor characters have a part to play in conveying the often apathetic relationship between characters and their institutional roles.

6.3. Scene 3: interior, courtroom

Scene 3 begins *in medias res*, with the prosecutor, Assistant State's Attorney Taryn Hansen, addressing the witness, William Gant, saying 'And is that your signature on that photo array card?' In the subtitle, the initial coordinating conjunction is omitted, losing the *in medias res* effect. This is followed in S67 by the deletion of a demonstrative (*those*), copular verb (*are*), and relative clause (*you identified*):

67 Hansen/Gant

00:05:02,095 → 00:05:07,010

(Woman) And [those are] your initials [as well], next to the photo [you identified]?

(Man) Yes.

While no grammatical coherence is lost through the deletion of these items (though the information that the witness identified a photograph is important in terms of plot), we would argue that the cumulative effect of a number of deletions throughout the scene is that the portrayal of courtroom discourse is adversely affected, and that this indirectly affects characterisation. The rest of the analysis in this section demonstrates this point.

S78 subtitles a line of dialogue from a court official to the next witness: 'Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth [so help you God]?' The omitted element is not essential to the propositional content of the address, but it

does act to construct the courtroom discourse. Of course, it may be argued that DHOH viewers are likely to fill this in through schematic knowledge of this discourse type, though for viewers reliant on the subtitles there is no way of knowing whether this is an omission or whether it does not appear in the original dialogue.

In S80, Hansen addresses the new witness, Nakeisha Lyles, asking ‘[M’am] Can you state your name, please?’ The omission of the vocative in the subtitle removes an element of conventional politeness which, in the dialogue, contributes to the courtroom discourse. It is also notable that the vocative constitutes a marker of interpersonal relations and, as we outlined in Section 2.2., it is these elements of dialogue that tend to be most frequently omitted.

Subtitle 86 is part of a sequence of questions to Nakeisha Lyles from Hansen: ‘[And is that] The guard booth in the lobby of the Fremont Avenue high-rise?’ A similar deletion is made in S88: ‘[And you’re] behind bulletproof glass, with a clear view of the lobby?’ While these coordinating conjunctions, subjects, and predicators are not necessary for the coherence of the subtitles, their removal means that the sense of the prosecutor building an argument through the sequencing of information is lost. This is compounded by the deletion of the proximal deictic *now* in S90: ‘[Now] Ms Lyles, I know this may be difficult [for you], but can you tell us what you saw?’ The function of the deictic *now* is to indicate that this is the culmination of the argument that Hansen has been building through Lyles’s responses. Its deletion means that this pragmatic effect is lost on DHOH viewers. Furthermore, the removal of *for you* removes the implication of empathy from Hansen towards her witness. The cumulative effect of these deletions is that a number of characterisation triggers are lost from Hansen’s subtitles. The deletion of elements of courtroom register may cause DHOH viewers to conceptualise her as less professional than the prototypical lawyer, while the interpersonal elements omitted may well affect the degree to which Hansen is viewed as an empathetic character.

The subtitles for Lyles’s dialogue are also likely to have an effect on the way in which her character is processed. While Hansen’s deletions often involve the removal of elements of courtroom register, the deletions from Lyles’s dialogue are often of discourse markers or normal non-fluency features of spoken discourse, such as the following from S91 and S108, respectively: ‘Erm, a man, [you know] he was waiting for the elevator’; ‘See, [the-] the one that did it, I saw him come in the building a week later’. These features implicitly characterise Lyles as perhaps nervous and unsure of herself in the courtroom setting. They are likely to be transitory rather than permanent character traits, but their deletion fails to acknowledge the importance of character behaviour in specific contexts, and this is a substantial loss to the characterisation process that DHOH viewers are likely to engage in.

7. Conclusion

Our analysis of the opening three scenes of *The Wire* indicates that valuable character information is often lost when elements of the audio dialogue are omitted. In our data, this was predominantly information pertaining to interpersonal relationships between characters, often conveyed by discourse markers such as *Look* and *I mean*. The prevalence of discourse markers in the audio dialogue is perhaps explained by the need to reinforce character relationships in the absence of clearly enunciated dialogue, i.e. we may not always know what characters are saying but often the propositional content is of less importance than conveying the interpersonal relationship between the speaking characters. The omission of such interpersonal markers in the subtitles reverses the

problem: this time, we know the propositional content of the characters' speech but we are less clear about how they relate to each other. The subtitlers' retention of ideational information may be right and relevant for most texts, but for *The Wire*, where characters' relationships to one another and to the system in which they operate is an essential component of the overall narrative, interpersonal information is key. In fact, listening viewers have a hard time understanding the informational content of the dialogue (e.g. Toolan, 2011), yet the repetition, discourse, and stance markers at least make the interpersonal meaning clear. If the DHOH subtitles are to replicate the listening viewers' experience for DHOH viewers of *The Wire*, we would argue that markers of interpersonal meaning should be upheld as far as is possible. Of course, practical constraints of the kind described in Section 2 impact on the subtitler's ability to convey all interpersonal information. Nonetheless, we would argue that there are needless omissions in the extracts we analyse, in which the spatio-temporal constraints that would usually require text reduction were not present (e.g. the omissions in S16, S24, and S80). We would argue that in cases where there is no spatio-temporal reason to delete triggers for interpersonal character information, such triggers should be retained.

Another substantial omission in our data was of long-term character traits such as dialectal features. Sometimes this was done to increase coherence and improve the likelihood of successful processing on the part of the reader/viewer (e.g. S29), but on other occasions the removal of such features was not necessitated either by these factors or by spatio-temporal issues. In such cases, we would advocate retaining such information in the subtitles, since it has the capacity to act as a valuable characterisation trigger.

The importance of context for characterisation is emphasised by Culpeper (2001) through his inclusion of context as a feature in his checklist of bottom-up textual triggers of characterisation. We also found context to be important as a means of indirect characterisation, particularly in scene 3. Here, the deletion of register-specific courtroom language impacted on the functional stylistic effect of the whole scene and its constituent characters. The deletion of register-specific formulaic language in the Court Official's dialogue (e.g. 'so help you God') and the removal of coordinating conjunctions from the prosecuting attorney's subtitles had a diluting effect on the depiction of the courtroom context, potentially suggesting a lack of professionalism on the part of the institutional figures in this scene.

As a result of our research, we have been able to explain the potential effects on characterisation of particular stylistic choices in *The Wire's* subtitles. Consequently, we have demonstrated the value of linguistic stylistic knowledge for subtitlers, validating Luyken's (1991) supposition that linguistics is likely to be of value to the subtitling profession. Of course, it should be noted that insights from linguistics are not a panacea and there is no 'one size fits all' approach that will resolve all the potential problems that can arise in intralingual DHOH subtitling (or, indeed, in any other type of subtitling). Some of the deletions we identified in our data were removed due to spatio-temporal constraints so could not have been retained. And some practices that we have advocated in relation to *The Wire* may not be applicable to other dramas. Toolan (2011), for instance, explains that lexical repetition is a key feature of a scene that he analyses from *The Wire*, noting that this helps viewers comprehend the dialogue in the absence of subtitles. Given that this is the function of the repetition, it may be redundant in the associated DHOH subtitles. Of course, in another drama, retaining such repetition may be key to preserving the integrity of the scene.

There are, then, many factors to consider when making stylistic decisions about omitting and amending dialogue for DHOH subtitles. What stylistics offers is a systematic

and linguistically-grounded way of reflecting on professional practice. In regard to *The Wire*, the cognitive model of characterisation which we used in our analysis proved beneficial in determining which omissions are likely to impact negatively on characterisation. As a result, we suggest that the model might be used practically as a guide to determining characterisation triggers when reducing dialogue for subtitling purposes.

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Appendix. DHOH subtitles for the first three scenes of *The Wire*, season 1, episode 1, 'The Target'

Underlining = addition

[Square brackets] = deletion/amendments

1

00:00:11,015 → 00:00:13,210

(Radio chatter, sirens)

2 *McNulty / Witness*

00:00:26,415 → 00:00:29,452

- So, your boy's name is what?

- Snot.

3 *McNulty / Witness*

00:00:30,295 → 00:00:34,083

- You called the guy Snot?

- Snotboogie, yeah.

4 *McNulty*

00:00:34,135 → 00:00:37,332

'Snotboogie'? He like the name?

5 *Witness / McNulty*

00:00:37,375 → 00:00:40,014

- What?

- Snotboogie.

6 *McNulty*

00:00:42,375 → 00:00:47,290

This kid whose mama went to the trouble of christening him Omar Isaiah Betts?

7 *McNulty*

00:00:47,335 → 00:00:50,372

You know, he forgets his jacket...

8 *McNulty*

00:00:52,015 → 00:00:55,530

so his nose starts running,

and some asshole,

9 *McNulty*

00:00:55,575 → 00:00:58,567

instead of giving him a Kleenex,

[he] calls him 'Snot'. [Witness laughs/snorts]

10 McNulty

00:00:59,615 → 00:01:01,606

So, he's 'Snot' forever.

11 McNulty / Witness

00:01:03,695 → 00:01:07,290

- Doesn't seem fair.

- Life just be that way, I guess.

12 McNulty

00:01:09,135 → 00:01:12,491

So, [...] who shot Snot?

13 Witness

00:01:12,535 → 00:01:14,526

I ain't going in no court.

14 Witness / McNulty

00:01:22,735 → 00:01:26,330

- Motherfucker ain't have to put no cap in him [though/no].

- Definitely not.

15 Witness

00:01:26,375 → 00:01:29,253

[I mean] He coulda just whipped his ass,
like we always do [whip his ass].

16 McNulty / Witness

00:01:29,295 → 00:01:31,286

- I agree [with you].

- He gonna kill Snot.

17 Witness

00:01:31,335 → 00:01:34,611

Snot been doing the same shit
since I don't know how long.

18 Witness

00:01:34,655 → 00:01:37,123

Kill a man over some bullshit.

19 Witness

00:01:39,695 → 00:01:43,529

[Look] I'm saying, [I mean] every Friday night

20 Witness

00:01:43,575 → 00:01:46,533

in the alley behind the cut-rate,
we rolling bones [you know].

21 Witness / McNulty

00:01:46,575 → 00:01:50,887

- [I mean,] All the boys from here [round the way], we roll till late.

- Alley crap game, right?

22 Witness

00:01:50,935 → 00:01:56,055

And like every time,
[I mean,] Snot, he'd fade a few shooters.

23 *Witness*

00:01:56,095 → 00:02:00,168
Play it out till the pot's deep.
Then he'd snatch and run.

24 *McNulty / Witness*

00:02:01,935 → 00:02:04,768
- [What?] Every time?
- Couldn't help hisself.

25 *McNulty*

00:02:05,815 → 00:02:10,935
Let me understand you. Every Friday night,
you and your boys would shoot crap, right?

26 *McNulty*

00:02:10,975 → 00:02:13,773
And every Friday night,
your pal Snotboogie...

27 *McNulty*

00:02:13,815 → 00:02:18,525
he'd wait till there was cash on the ground,
then [he'd] grab the money and run away?

28 *McNulty / Witness*

00:02:18,575 → 00:02:21,408
- You let him do that?
- [I mean] We catch him and beat his ass.

29 *Witness*

00:02:21,455 → 00:02:23,844
But ain't nobody [n]ever go past that.

30 *McNulty*

00:02:25,775 → 00:02:28,050
I gotta ask you.

31 *McNulty*

00:02:28,095 → 00:02:32,134
If every time Snotboogie
would grab the money and run away...

32 *McNulty / Witness*

00:02:33,855 → 00:02:36,733
- why'd you even let him in the game?
- What?

33 *McNulty*

00:02:36,775 → 00:02:40,848
If Snotboogie always stole the money,
why'd you let him play?

34 Witness

00:02:41,935 → 00:02:44,733

Got to. This America, man.

35

00:02:47,495 → 00:02:51,454

(Man yelling, dog barking in distance)

N.B S36-S55 subtitle the lyrics to the song 'Way down in the hole', played over the opening credits.

These subtitles are not included in this transcript.

56 McNulty / Bunk

00:04:29,615 → 00:04:31,287

- Guess what he said.

- What?

57 McNulty / Bunk

00:04:31,335 → 00:04:36,648

- 'Gotta let him play, this America.'

- [Bunk laughs] No fucking way. [McNulty: Did I make that up?] He give you the shooter?

58 McNulty

00:04:36,695 → 00:04:40,165

Three Newports and a Grape Nehi

he's grand juried. It's down, Bunk.

59 McNulty

00:04:40,215 → 00:04:42,092

Barksdale's in Part 12, right?

[Security guard: Huh?]

60 McNulty

00:04:42,135 → 00:04:43,807

Project murder, Westside.

61 Bunk / McNulty

00:04:43,855 → 00:04:46,130

- Which one, now?

- Never mind.

62 Bunk / McNulty

00:04:46,175 → 00:04:49,611

- Let's sit in on it for a bit.

- Where you gonna be?

63 Bunk

00:04:49,655 → 00:04:52,613

I'm gonna drop this off on Nathan,

then I'm going to the office.

64 McNulty / Bunk

00:04:52,655 → 00:04:55,453

- Don't answer no phones, Bunk.

- (Grunts)

65 Hansen

00:04:57,575 → 00:05:00,726

(Woman) [And] Is that your signature

on that photo array card?

66 Gant

00:05:00,775 → 00:05:02,049

(Man) Yes.

67 Hansen / Gant

00:05:02,095 → 00:05:07,010

(Woman) And [those are] your initials [as well], next to the photo [you identified]?

(Man) Yes.

68 Hansen

00:05:07,055 → 00:05:12,652

(Woman) Mr Gant, do you see the man

you identified from that photo array card...

69 Hansen

00:05:12,695 → 00:05:14,811

sitting in the courtroom today?

70 Gant

00:05:28,095 → 00:05:29,972

He's right there.

73 Hansen

00:05:39,175 → 00:05:41,405

Just one question, Mr Gant.

74 Hansen

00:05:41,455 → 00:05:45,164

Had you ever seen this young man

before the day in question?

75 Gant / Hansen

00:05:47,735 → 00:05:52,604

- No, no.

- No further questions, your honour.

76 Judge

00:05:54,055 → 00:05:58,651

You're excused, Mr Gant.

Call your next witness.

77 Hansen

00:05:58,695 → 00:06:01,414

(Woman) State calls Nakeisha Lyles,

your honour.

78 Court Official

00:06:14,775 → 00:06:19,053

Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth
and nothing but the truth [so help you God]?

79 Lyles

00:06:19,095 → 00:06:20,892

I do.

80 Hansen / Lyles

00:06:23,535 → 00:06:27,323

- (Woman) [M'am] Can you state your name, please?
- Nakeisha Lyles.

81 Hansen / Lyles

00:06:27,375 → 00:06:30,208

- (Woman) And are you employed?
- Yes, I am.

82 Hansen / Lyles

00:06:30,255 → 00:06:34,407

- And what is your occupation, Ms Lyles?
- I'm a security guard.

83 Hansen

00:06:34,455 → 00:06:38,846

And were you employed as a security guard
on May 4th, the day of the shooting?

84 Lyles

00:06:38,895 → 00:06:40,487

(Lyles) Uh-huh.

85 Hansen / Lyles

00:06:40,535 → 00:06:44,847

(Woman) What were your duties on that date?
(Lyles) I was in the booth of 221.

86 Hansen

00:06:44,895 → 00:06:49,491

(Woman) [And is that] The guard booth in the lobby
of the Fremont Avenue high-rise?

87 Lyles

00:06:49,535 → 00:06:51,446

(Lyles) Yes.

88 Hansen

00:06:51,495 → 00:06:54,965

[And you're] Behind bulletproof glass,
with a clear view of the lobby?

89 Lyles / Hansen

00:06:55,015 → 00:06:57,813

- Yeah.
- Good.

90 Hansen

00:06:57,855 → 00:07:02,371

[Now] Ms Lyles, I know this may be difficult [for you],
but can you tell us what you saw?

91 Lyles

00:07:02,415 → 00:07:05,566

Erm, a man, [you know] he was waiting for the elevator,

92 Lyles

00:07:05,615 → 00:07:08,687

[And] when another man just starts beating on him...

93 Lyles

00:07:08,735 → 00:07:11,727

and like, the one man,
he got knocked down...

94 Hansen / Lyles

00:07:11,775 → 00:07:15,404

(Woman) The victim [got knocked down]?

(Lyles) No, the man with the gun.

95 Hansen

00:07:15,455 → 00:07:18,891

(Woman) The man
who was knocked down had a gun.

96 Hansen

00:07:18,935 → 00:07:22,450

And do you see that man
in the courtroom today?

97 Lyles

00:07:28,095 → 00:07:29,528

Nope.

98 Hansen

00:07:31,655 → 00:07:33,646

Excuse me?

99 Lyles

00:07:35,855 → 00:07:38,415

He ain't here.

100 Hansen

00:07:40,335 → 00:07:44,806

(Woman) You don't...? You testified.

101 Hansen

00:07:47,095 → 00:07:50,724

[Ms Lyles] Do you remember when
Detective Barlow showed you this photo array?

102 Lyles

00:07:50,775 → 00:07:52,367

Yeah.

103 Hansen

00:07:52,415 → 00:07:57,535

Good. I call your attention to your initials
which identify this photo

104 Hansen

00:07:57,575 → 00:08:00,328

as the man who shot Mr Blanchard.

105 Hansen

00:08:01,375 → 00:08:05,050

Did you write your initials
above that photograph?

106 Lyles / Hansen

00:08:07,735 → 00:08:12,251

- He ain't the one that did the shooting.

- But you identified him.

107 Lyles

00:08:12,295 → 00:08:14,763

(Lyles) [Well that's cause] He looked like the boy that did it.

108 Lyles

00:08:14,815 → 00:08:18,603

See, [the-] the one that did it,

I saw him come in the building a week later.

109 Hansen

00:08:19,975 → 00:08:23,684

(Woman) You saw someone else
you thought did the shooting?

110 Lyles

00:08:23,735 → 00:08:25,885

(Lyles) Right, a week later.

111 Hansen

00:08:25,935 → 00:08:29,928

(Woman) Hm. Ms Lyles, when you spoke
with the detectives

112 Hansen / Lyles

00:08:29,975 → 00:08:35,174

- you never said anything about...

- I tried. I called Detective...

113 Lyles

00:08:35,215 → 00:08:42,690

erm... Yeah, Detective Barlow
[on um] on May 13th at 2pm.

114 Lyles / McNulty

00:08:44,135 → 00:08:47,093

- But he didn't call me back.

- Nicely done.

115 Hansen / Lyles

00:08:47,135 → 00:08:51,174

(Woman) You called Detective Barlow?

(Lyles) Yeah, twice.