

# An Experiment on Amateur and Professional Subtitling Reception in Iran

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## ***Abstract***

*Over the past decade, audiovisual translation has welcomed the swift shift towards experimental reception studies, and interdisciplinary approaches which draw on media psychology theories, such as immersion are becoming the new trend in audiovisual translation. Nonetheless, studies on amateur subtitling reception are recent and scarce, notably in dubbing countries like Iran, where both dubbing and amateur subtitling are co-existing. This paper reports the results of an experiment examining whether a select group of Iranian viewers may report different reception and immersion when watching a professionally subtitled vs. non-professionally subtitled audiovisual material. To this end, around sixty Iranian viewers attended the experiment and reported their reception and immersion through a questionnaire. Overall, the results suggested that amateur subtitling did not negatively affect the viewers' immersion in the program. Viewers' comprehension and some subtitling reception variables (subtitling reading difficulty, duration, and subtitling overall quality) were nevertheless challenged by the amateur subtitles since the participants had a better comprehension and reception when watching the program with professionally produced subtitles. Other findings indicated that (constant) exposure to foreign cinematic programs and (un)familiarity with subtitling had no significant effect on the viewers' reception and immersion.*

***Keywords:*** *amateur subtitling, professional subtitling, reception, audience, immersion*

## **Introduction**

There is a consensus among audiovisual translation (AVT) researchers that translations by non-professionals, which are readily available on the Internet, are of poor linguistic and technical quality (Bogucki, 2009; Diaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez, 2006; Khoshsaligheh and Ameri, 2017). In his recent interview, Jan Pedersen mentioned that fan-made subtitles have substantially low quality, which may not only “damage the foreign audience’s general view of the subtitling craft” but also “ruin their opinion of the movie” (Pedersen, 2019, March). Such subjective statements may sound reasonable yet obviously need to be empirically substantiated since there is little empirical proof to indicate how audiences react to fan-made products, given that quality may mean differently for researchers, practitioners and audiences (Baños Piñero and Díaz-Cintas, 2015: 2). Many scholars have recommended empirical research on the reception of audiences as they can “have the potential of yielding results of a much-applied nature that the industry can easily factor into their modus operandi” (Díaz Cintas, 2020: 222).

The few studies, mainly based in the Spanish and Italian contexts, appear to suggest that viewers have expressed positive appreciations for subtitles produced by amateurs, when compared to their professional counterparts (Di Giovanni, 2018; Orrego-Carmona, 2016). This should not, however, be overlooked that the non-professional subtitling apparatus seemingly varies in each country. In addition, the way people understand translation and its quality tends to rely on their background knowledge and their familiarity with and exposure to subtitling. The absence of incontrovertible evidence reminds us to be skeptical about the erratic and hearsay opinions stated about amateur subtitling reception. This emphasizes the need for further empirical culture-specific research to offer more insights into fan and amateur subtitles in various contexts, especially in dominantly dubbing societies like Iran, where the popularity of subtitling has been growing exponentially (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2019; Ameri and Ghodrati, 2019; Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020).

Within this background, the current experimental study examines how Iranian viewers with different levels of familiarity with subtitling and varied exposure to foreign cinematic content perceive programs subtitled by amateur and professional subtitlers. The research questions explored in this study are:

- Are there any significant differences between Iranian viewers watching professional subtitling and amateur subtitling in terms of comprehension, reception and immersion?
- Does Iranian viewers' prior experience with subtitling and foreign cinematic programs have any significant effect on their comprehension, reception and immersion?

## **Literature review**

### *Subtitling*

Briefly, subtitling is a written translation of dialogues as well as any meaningful visual information, including letters or inserts that could be found within a program, which is synchronized with images and audio and the output is typically projected at the bottom of screen for an acceptable amount of time so that viewers could grasp the content (Guillot, 2019; Díaz-Cintas, 2019). Subtitling like dubbing and voice-over has its own rules and particularities. For example, the number of characters in each subtitle line, otherwise known as line length, is generally 36–40 maximum, which includes spaces and punctuation marks, and the maximum number of lines allowed is two (Guillot, 2019; Díaz-Cintas, 2019). Subtitles tend to divert viewers' attention from actions on screen to themselves (Kruger et al., 2016), and research has it that viewers automatically look at the subtitles appearing on screen, no matter how well they understand the spoken content. This is mainly because of the dynamic and noticeable nature of captions (Bisson et al., 2014; d'ydewalle et al., 1991). Subtitles, therefore, “compete for visual as well as cognitive attentional resources with the visuals” (Kruger et al., 2016: 174; Kruger et al., 2015) which may result in a higher cognitive load. The fact is that there is a high interplay between the multiple information channels, including the auditory and visual channels that present verbal and non-verbal information (Zabalbeascoa, 2008; Gottlieb, 2018) and the translated caption at the bottom of screen is an added channel here; therefore, the viewer has to process the program and simultaneously read the translation to grasp the verbal situation being presented to them through the audio channel, arguably not understandable to them. This processing appears to be complex as the audience's cognitive demands may get overwhelmed (Kruger et al., 2018). This is because the viewer has to combine a wide array of information coming from diverse channels to be able to

build a consistent mental model that would facilitate the understanding of the given program (Lång, 2016). Processing an additional source of information—visual and verbal—likely, on paper at least, increases the level of cognitive load and may impede viewers’ immersion into the program (Kruger et al., 2017).

### *Amateur subtitling*

The norm-breaking features of amateur subtitling, which are translation and technical errors at times, have been evidenced by some publications in Iran (e.g. Jalili, 2001; Hassankhani, 2011; Motamedi, 2011; Khoshsaligheh and Fazeli Haghpanah, 2016; Shahba, 2020) and outside Iran (Bogucki, 2009; Diaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez, 2006; Massidda, 2015; Nornes, 1999). This should be admitted that the conditions in which amateur subtitles are created are drastically different from those of professional ones (Massidda, 2015; Orrego-Carmona, 2019) and that here we are discussing subtitling quality from the perspective of viewers’ appreciation (see Pedersen, 2017). Therefore, we think that faulty subtitles can likely lead to cognitive load increase as audience have to “overcome the error in order to comprehend and integrate the presented information” (Doherty and Kruger, 2018: 189), and consequently, this situation ruins their reception of and immersion in the video. Along the same line, Gerber-Morón et al. (2018: 3) maintain that the complex processes of understanding subtitles could be hampered by subtitles of questionable quality. Although amateur subtitling practices differ from country to country, contemporary practices appear to provide a translation of comparable quality to that of professional and official subtitles (Dwyer, 2012; Hatcher, 2005). This is because contemporary non-professional subtitlers have been accommodating commercial conventions and rules in their subtitles and they do not experiment with them (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017; Massidda and Casarini, 2017). Despite this, the Iranian case seemingly follows a different path as amateur subtitles do not adhere to professional norms and standards due to the lack of any professional subtitling traditions in Iran (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020; Ameri and Khoshsaligheh, 2019). Although Iranians are now consuming non-standard subtitles, Ameri and Khoshsaligheh (2022) found that their experiment’s participants reported a higher degree of satisfaction with amateur subtitles of a single TV show episode they watched in an experiment with no control group. In other words, only a small group of them were not satisfied with the subtitles. Similar to these findings, the recent scholarship on amateur subtitling reception audience has demonstrated a positive appreciation for amateur subtitles on part of audience (Di Giovanni, 2018; Orrego-Carmona, 2016). Such satisfaction should be interpreted from expectancy norms theory (Chesterman, 2016 [1997]) as viewers of these subtitles have developed a differing set of expectancy norms (Orrego-Carmona, 2019). Baños Piñero and Díaz-Cintas (2015), for example, argue that audiences are restlessly impatient for the immediate release of their favorite AV programs; therefore, it is not unlikely to see viewers who sacrifice quality over anything less.

Before moving on, another relevant issue should be discussed here. Given the fact that subtitling exists in Iran for roughly two decades and that it has been by no means professional, some viewers may have become accustomed to such faulty and erroneous subtitles and they hardly ever notice any sort of deviations from commercial guidelines as they have never been exposed to any professional subtitling to build some habits around it (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2019). It is assumed that “thresholds of acceptability” (Chaume, 2012) or “tolerance thresholds” (Romero Fresco, 2019) should be the reasons. As indicted by Ameri and Khoshsaligheh (2022), Iranian audiences are seemingly more tolerant toward faulty subtitles. Following “suspension of linguistic

disbelief” (Romero Fresco, 2019), this can be concluded that viewers take no notice of low-quality subtitles to enjoy the video and lose themselves in video’s fictional world. Thus, they “have already internalised how to watch it [the subtitled program] without questioning it” (Romero Fresco, 2019: 50). The hypothesis, therefore, is that the viewers tend to turn a blind eye to erroneous subtitles to make themselves more immersed in the program.

### *Psychological immersion*

A small number of reception studies have benefited from psychological immersion, which contributed to a better understanding of AVT reception (Kruger et al., 2017; Kruger et al., 2016; Fryer et al., 2013; Weibel et al., 2010b; Walczak and Fryer, 2017). The reason for including immersion as a variable in studying audience is that films and TV shows have an immersive nature (Kruger and Doherty, 2018). There are several aspects related to media and psychological immersion, deserving separate discussions here. These are transportation, character identification, presence, perceived realism and flow. A defining element of media enjoyment is “transportation” which can take individuals—who could be readers, listeners or viewers—“away from their mundane reality and into a story world” (Green et al., 2004: 311). Transportation is the feeling and emotion of being transported or immersed in a narrative world or story in such a way that the individual feels they have been absorbed or lost in a new world, which is the situation and context the story presents to them, and consequently, transported viewers simply forget their immediate surrounding world and fail to stay aware of the time (Green and Fitzgerald, 2017; Green, 2008; Green and Sestir, 2017).

Transportation is closely linked to “character identification” because identifying or affinity with media characters is boosted or facilitated by being transported and immersed in the media narrative. In other words, transported individuals feel a high affinity with characters in the media in question. This, in turn, contributes to a higher degree of enjoyment of the program (Tal-Or and Cohen, 2010). Closely connected to immersion is “telepresence” (hereafter, presence). Specifically, this concept means the feeling and sense or the subjective experience of being at a place or condition (Kim and Biocca, 1997), suggesting that the individual forgets and leaves aside the immediate environment and is mentally involved in the fictional world of the program (Kruger et al., 2017; Kruger et al., 2016). Often related to both immersion and presence is “perceived realism”. By definition, realism points to the perceptual experience of the imaginary environment created by the media as real or plausible; put simply, the individual perceives that whatever happening in the program can also take place in the present real world (Lee, 2004). Likewise, Hall (2017) and Cho and Friley (2015) define it as how individuals perceive and judge the constructed narrative world as a portrayal of real life. Given the complexity and multidimensionality of the realism concept, Hall (2017) introduces factuality, plausibility, typicality, narrative consistency, and visual persuasiveness. “Perceive plausibility” refers to what extent the event portrayed in the program is likely to happen in the present world. When a narrative event, deemed plausible yet hardly typical, extends far beyond individuals’ daily experiences but may have occurred at some point to the individual, it is called “perceived typicality”. “Perceived factuality” is to what extent a narrative is capable of presenting and portraying a particular event and character in reality. When the narrative event does not contain any contradictions, and its components and content are coherently consistent, we are talking about “perceived narrative consistency”. “Perceived perceptual quality” refers to what degree the auditory and visual components of the media narrative element convincingly and compellingly reflect the real world (Cho et al., 2014).

## *Cognitive load theory*

The very fundamental principle of cognitive load theory rests on this concern that the mental processes involved in learning are limited by our working memory, that has a limited capacity, and is incapable of processing a large amount of information at a certain time. Cognitive overload, therefore, is likely to happen when the amount of information presented at a time far exceeds the working memory capacity, and consequently, learning the task is challenged (Sweller et al., 2019; Paas et al., 2016). The application of this theory to AVT has been prevalent because of the interest in understanding cognitive demands, if any, placed on viewers, especially those watching subtitled programs. According to Kruger et al. (2016), the addition of subtitles to a program results in an increase in the extraneous load, and as a result, the capacity remained for the germane load to process the receiving information becomes low. This process may get more complicated when the subtitles suffer from low quality as the viewing process is obstructed. Nonetheless, people watch subtitled multimedia programs because subtitles permit the possibility of experiencing immersion in a new world. This pleasing experience of immersion and engagement is probably enhanced by the multimedia nature of films and TV shows when the sound and image go hand in hand to create meaningful content. This interconnectedness between immersion and cognitive effort is straightforward, the less cognitive load or effort is increased, the more the viewer is immersed in the multimedia program, and consequently, the more enjoyment (Doherty and Kruger, 2018; Kruger and Kruger, 2017).

## **Methods**

### *Purpose and design*

Given the immersive nature of audiovisual programs, this article tries to understand how the subtitles made by professionals and amateurs could affect the way viewers experience immersion in an audiovisual program. Because the quality of amateur subtitling is assumed low, when compared with the professional subtitles, it is hypothesized that individuals probably report a low immersion and their understanding of the video content is hampered. As for the design, the paper follows an experimental design wherein the researchers attempt to understand the related causes and effects of associations. Such studies are conducted in a controlled environment and are made up of control and treatment groups (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2013). The present experiment uses a between-subjects design as different participants attended the control and treatment groups.

### *Participants*

Sixty-nine university students from three undergraduate programs at a university in Iran agreed to join the experiment. At the time of the experiment, the participants were first-year students and Persian native speakers with no knowledge of German (the language of the stimuli). The participants were randomly assigned to two groups of amateur subtitling and professional subtitling ( $n1 = 34$  and  $n2 = 35$ ). Two participants from group one and one participant from group two could not attend the viewing sessions. In addition, the data for two participants from the amateur group and one from the other group were discarded, as they were incomplete. Finally, there were 30 participants in the first group and 33 in the other group (42 females, 21 males), and they aged between 18 to 22 ( $M = 19.09$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ). These figures are pretty in line with the guidelines of doing experimental studies in AVT, requiring ideally 30 participants for each group (Orero et al., 2018: 110-111).

**Table 1.** AVT habits of the respondents

Scale Options	Frequency/Subtitling	Frequency/Dubbing
Always	21	5
Usually	22	17
Sometimes	11	15
Barely	7	16
Never	2	10
Total	63	

As far as the AVT habit of the participants was concerned, they were mainly users of subtitling, and the descriptive information of their AVT habits can be seen in Table 1. As can be seen, 68.3% of participants watch subtitled programs from usually to always, and 34.9% reported the same for dubbed programs. They were also asked how many hours they weekly watch foreign programs, which is reported in Table 2. More than half of the participants watch foreign programs for more than one hour per week.

**Table 2.** Foreign program watching habits of the respondents

Scale Options	Frequency
Less than 1	23
2 up to 4	21
5 up to 6	13
7 up to 8	2
9 up to 11	1
More than 11	3
Total	63

### *Stimuli*

The video for the experiment included the first episode of the first season of the American sitcom TV show *Young Sheldon* which tells adventures of a 9-year-old genius, Sheldon Copper. It is a

twenty-minute episode and none of the participants had watched it before. Although the main language of the show is English, its German dubbing was deliberately chosen and shown to the participants—unknown to them—so that they would only rely on the subtitles to understand the program. Two sets of subtitles were used in this experiment. The amateur subtitles of the TV show were downloaded from <https://subscene.com>, which is the major website for amateur subtitling in Iran, and no manipulation was applied to them. Given the lack of any professional Persian subtitling for the TV shows, the subtitles were created and crafted by the researchers. The subtitles were created in *Subtitle Edit* (v. 3.5.9.) and they comply with subtitling standards and guidelines (Pedersen, 2017; Netflix, 2018). Each subtitle line contained no more than 40 characters and the maximum reading speed was 15 characters per second. Also, long subtitles were carefully segmented and the translations were according to the Persian language norms. The subtitles were proofread by two AVT colleagues to ensure that they meet the standards. The key features of both sets of subtitles can be seen in Table 3, analyzed by *Subtitle Edit* (v. 3.5.9.) and *Black Box* (v. 1.0).

**Table 3.** Overall information of the professional and amateur subtitles

Features	Amateur	Professional
Number of subtitles	442	334
Total words in subtitles	2,430	1,900
Number of one-line subtitles	333	201
Number of two-line subtitles	107	133
Number of subtitles with more than two lines of subtitles	2	0
Number of fast subtitles (exceeded 15 CPS)	130	0
Number of long subtitles (exceeded 40 characters per line)	35	0
Total characters per second	13.01	12.34
Total duration of subtitles	00:14:34	00:12:23

### *Instruments*

The instrument is made up of seven sections, namely, demographic information (five items), immersive tendency (nine items), comprehension (11 items), subtitling (seven items), immersion (22 items), perceived realism (21 items), and enjoyment (one item). The instrument, except for the subtitling and comprehension items, was inspired by Kruger et al. (2016). The details are as follows:

- demographic information
  - age and gender (two items)
  - dubbing and subtitling habits (three items)
- immersive tendency adapted from Weibel et al. (2010b)
  - absorption (four items)
  - emotional involvement (five items)
- comprehension (11 items)
- immersion
  - transportation (ten items) adapted from Green and Brock (2013)
  - character identification (four items) adapted from Tal-Or and Cohen (2010)
  - presence (eight items) adapted from Kim and Biocca (1997)
- perceived realism adapted from Cho et al. (2014)
  - plausibility (five items)
  - typicality (three items)
  - factuality (three items)
  - narrative consistency (five items)
  - perceptual quality (five items)
  - enjoyment (one item)

Immersive tendency, immersion and perceived reality scales were translated into Persian given that they were developed for individuals who are familiar with English. The importance of a proper translation for an original scale lies in the fact that the translated version should be semantically close and similar to the original version, follow and respect the target language norms, and the format of the questions and the measurement properties should remain unchanged (Harkness et al., 2010). To translate the questionnaires mentioned above, the researchers followed the “Translation, Review, Adjudication, Pretesting, and Documentation” model (Harkness, 2003). To begin with, two skilled translators with Persian as their mother tongue were invited. The translators had an MA in translation, and have been translating texts for several years. The translators were, to some extent, familiar with the field of AVT since their master’s theses were written in this area. They were briefed to deliver a high-quality translation, which is semantically close to the original, but respects the Persian language norms and conventions. They were also paid for their translations. After the translators submitted their translations, an online meeting, using Skype, was run by the authors. The meeting included the translators and one evaluator who was a doctoral candidate of translation studies and was well-familiar with the area of reception and AVT. The one-hour online meeting resulted in resolving the discrepancies in translations and choosing the best translation for each item. To pilot the fine-tuned version of the questionnaire and flag difficulties and ambiguities in understanding items, focus group interviews and face-to-face interviews were carried out. The last version of the questionnaire was fine-tuned to incorporate the comments collected from the preceding stage. The overall reliability of the whole questionnaire was very good with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.89. The reliability of immersive tendency, subtitling



reception, transportation, character identification, presence, and perceived realism was 0.68, 0.83, 0.70, 0.81, 0.89, and 0.87, respectively.

#### *Data collection and analysis*

The participants were randomly assigned to two groups; one watched the video with amateur subtitles and the other with professional subtitles. A brief description of the research general ground rules and guidelines was presented to the participants. They were, however, not told about the exact objective of the experiment, the AVT mode, language and genre of the video and they were asked not to work with their mobile phones and not to talk during the viewing session. Once the participants watched the TV show, they completed the post-questionnaires. The questionnaire data were analyzed in SPSS (v. 22) and descriptive and inferential statistics were used to report the findings.

## **Results**

#### *Data screening and comparability of the groups*

Data screening and clearing were performed to make the data prepared for the analysis. After flagging the outliers in the dataset using box plots and z-scores, three cases were accordingly excluded. The final sample, therefore, contains 60 participants (amateur  $n = 29$ ; professional  $n = 31$ ). Comparability in experimental studies indicates that participants of each group are virtually equal in every aspect (Saint-Mont, 2015). Although the present literature admits that the audiences of films and TV shows are not generally a homogenous group (Fox, 2016: 14), it was of paramount importance to create comparable groups when it comes to measuring immersion so as to avoid the unwanted effect of any moderator variable. This is because individuals may display different engagement levels with the multimedia content due to the subjectivity of immersion and individuals' personality differences (Weibel et al., 2010a). The immersion tendency test (Weibel et al., 2010b) was administered prior to the experiment and the result of an independent samples  $t$ -test showed that the participants in the amateur and professional groups were not significantly different in their engagement tendency: absorption ( $M = 4.23$  &  $M = 3.91$ ,  $p > .05$ , respectively) and emotional involvement ( $M = 3.77$  &  $M = 4.17$ ,  $p > .05$ , respectively).

#### *Reception across the groups of amateur and professional subtitling*

To answer the first research question, the descriptive statistics for the dependent variables between the two groups of amateur and professional subtitling are offered in Table 4. The respondents' responses range on a seven-point scale for eleven dependent variables. As can be seen, there seem to be some differences between the two groups. Nonetheless, the difference must be significantly meaningful. To find the results of manipulation checks, an independent-samples  $t$ -test was used. This is reminded that higher means here indicate larger and positive reception, and consequently, better immersion.

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics of the groups

	Subtitling Type	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Subtitling reception	Amateur	29	5.67	.90
	Professional	31	6.14	.68
Transportation	Amateur	29	4.30	.73
	Professional	31	4.28	.74
Character identification with Sheldon	Amateur	29	3.67	1.43
	Professional	31	3.74	1.42
Presence	Amateur	29	4.55	1.27
	Professional	31	3.84	1.48
Plausibility	Amateur	29	5.31	1.12
	Professional	31	4.97	1.08
Typicality	Amateur	29	2.95	1.34
	Professional	31	2.80	1.38
Factuality	Amateur	29	4.22	1.61
	Professional	31	4.38	1.65
Narrative consistency	Amateur	29	5.37	.98
	Professional	31	5.07	.98
Perceptual Quality	Amateur	29	4.83	1.06
	Professional	31	4.80	1.42
Enjoyment	Amateur	29	6.31	1.07
	Professional	31	6.32	.83
Comprehension	Amateur	29	7.93	1.51
	Professional	31	8.67	1.16

The independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare amateur and professional groups in terms of the dependent variables. As seen in Table 5, no statistically significant difference between those who watched the TV show with amateur subtitles and those who watched it with professional ones can be observed. A significant difference was, however, found between the

amateur subtitling group and professional subtitling group in terms of only subtitling reception and comprehension. This suggests the individuals who attended the professional subtitling group reported a higher subtitling reception ( $M = 8.67$  &  $M = 7.93$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and comprehension ( $M = 6.14$  &  $M = 5.67$ ,  $p < .05$ ), when compared to those in the amateur subtitling group. However, the effect size was moderate for both variables (Cohen's  $d = .58$  &  $= .55$ ) (Cohen et al., 2018).

**Table 5.** Independent samples *t*-test

		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig
Subtitling Reception	Equal variances assumed	-2.263	58	<b>.03</b>
	Equal variances not assumed	-2.242	52.193	<b>.03</b>
Transportation	Equal variances assumed	.137	58	.89
	Equal variances not assumed	.137	57.796	.89
Character Identification with Sheldon	Equal variances assumed	-.188	58	.85
	Equal variances not assumed	-.188	57.715	.85
Presence	Equal variances assumed	1.980	58	.05
	Equal variances not assumed	1.990	57.597	.05
Plausibility	Equal variances assumed	1.200	58	.24
	Equal variances not assumed	1.199	57.376	.24
Typicality	Equal variances assumed	.418	58	.68
	Equal variances not assumed	.418	57.913	.68
Factuality	Equal variances assumed	-.372	58	.71
	Equal variances not assumed	-.372	57.904	.71
Narrative Consistency	Equal variances assumed	1.183	58	.24
	Equal variances not assumed	1.183	57.734	.24
Perceptual Quality	Equal variances assumed	.086	58	.93
	Equal variances not assumed	.087	55.399	.93
Enjoyment	Equal variances assumed	-.050	58	.96
	Equal variances not assumed	-.049	52.791	.96
Comprehension	Equal variances assumed	-2.151	58	<b>.04</b>

	Equal variances not assumed	-2.133	52.649	<b>.04</b>
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To have a more accurate and detailed analysis of the subtitling reception, which turned out to be significantly different across the groups, an item-by-item analysis was run on this variable using an Independent samples *t*-test. This variable contains seven sub-variables addressing cognitive effort, frustration, enjoyment and so forth. The analysis revealed a significant difference between the two groups in terms of subtitling reading difficulty, subtitling duration, and the overall quality of subtitles, and the other variables did not reach a significant level. More specifically, those who watched the TV shows with professional subtitles found that the duration (i.e., reading speed) of the subtitles enough, as opposed to those who watched it with amateur subtitles ( $M = 6.52$  &  $M = 5.21$ ,  $p < .05$ , respectively). In addition, the individuals who attended the amateur subtitling group reported that the subtitles were difficult to read and follow, while those attending the professional subtitling group had a differing opinion ( $M = 6.03$  &  $M = 6.61$ ,  $p < .05$ , respectively). The overall quality of subtitles was also rated higher by those in the professional subtitling group (professional:  $M = 6.06$  & amateur:  $M = 5.44$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The effect size also suggests medium ( $d = .60$ ), strong ( $d = 1.02$ ) and medium ( $d = .53$ ) effects for subtitling reading difficulty, duration, and subtitling overall quality, respectively.

#### *Reception across viewers' audiovisual habits*

The second research question of the article was to examine the effects of participants' subtitling habits as well as their constant exposure to foreign programs (see Tables 1 and 2). It was decided to create three categories for the frequency variable by combining the categories that contained a small number of participants. The analysis was therefore performed on three categories. Those who watched less than one hour per week are called the uncommitted group ( $n = 22$ ) and those who watched more than five hours are called the enthusiast group ( $n = 19$ ). There is also another group, placed between these two and is called the average group ( $n = 19$ ). When it comes to subtitling habits, the categories were mixed to form two groups; those who are more interested in watching foreign programs with Persian subtitles ( $n = 42$ ) and those who are not ( $n = 18$ ). The first group is called enthusiast subtitling users and the other one is named uncommitted subtitling users.

A two-way ANOVA (subtitling habit X subtitling group types) was conducted to measure differences across groups in the dependent variables. There were not any statistically significant interactions between the effects of subtitling habits and subtitling group types on subtitling reception ( $F(1, 56) = .069$ ,  $p = .79$ ), comprehension ( $F(1, 56) = 2.381$ ,  $p = .13$ ), transportation ( $F(1, 56) = .032$ ,  $p = .86$ ), character identification ( $F(1, 56) = .130$ ,  $p = .72$ ), presence ( $F(1, 56) = 2.169$ ,  $p = .15$ ), plausibility ( $F(1, 56) = .781$ ,  $p = .38$ ), typicality ( $F(1, 56) = .183$ ,  $p = .67$ ), factuality ( $F(1, 56) = .038$ ,  $p = .85$ ), narrative consistency ( $F(1, 56) = .262$ ,  $p = .61$ ), perceptual quality ( $F(1, 56) = .484$ ,  $p = .49$ ) and enjoyment ( $F(1, 56) = .810$ ,  $p = .37$ ). Besides this, there were no significant interactions between the effects of constant exposure to foreign cinematic programs and subtitling group types on subtitling reception ( $F(2, 54) = 1.849$ ,  $p = .17$ ), comprehension ( $F(2, 54) = .076$ ,  $p = .93$ ), character identification ( $F(2, 54) = .751$ ,  $p = .48$ ), presence ( $F(2, 54) = 3.225$ ,  $p = .05$ ), plausibility ( $F(2, 54) = .743$ ,  $p = .48$ ), factuality ( $F(2, 54) = 3.025$ ,  $p = .06$ ), narrative consistency ( $F(2, 54) = 1.238$ ,  $p = .30$ ), perceptual quality ( $F(2, 54) = 3.180$ ,  $p = .05$ ) and enjoyment ( $F(2, 54) = .228$ ,  $p = .78$ ). Notwithstanding this, an ANOVA on transportation ( $F(2, 54) = 4.324$ ,  $p = .02$ ) and typicality ( $F(2, 54) = 3.948$ ,  $p = .03$ ) yielded significant interactions between the effects of constant exposure to foreign cinematic programs and subtitling group types.

Overall, the viewers had a similar reception of and immersion in the subtitled programs, regardless of their (constant) exposure to foreign cinematic programs and (un)familiarity with subtitling.

## **Discussions and conclusion**

This experiment aimed to contribute to the strand of amateur subtitling reception research. As for the research question, which addressed if different forms of subtitles affect viewers' reception of, immersion in and comprehension of the programs, the results showed that those who watched the program with professional subtitles did not show any significant higher immersion in the TV show when compared with those who watched the program with amateur subtitles. Further analyses, however, revealed that the viewers in the professional subtitling group reported a significantly higher subtitling reception and comprehension scores. Indeed, a close analysis of the subtitling reception variable suggested that the viewers of the professional subtitles found the duration (i.e., reading speed) of the subtitling adequate, and it was easy for them to follow the subtitles, and they were generally satisfied with overall quality. The overall results, to a large extent, corroborated the findings of the previous studies indicating that amateur subtitling was not associated with a negative reception on the part of viewers (Di Giovanni, 2018; Orrego-Carmona, 2016). The lack of significant differences observed in terms of many of the variables in the study could be justified on several grounds. First, the results came to emphasize that the lack of any experience with professional subtitling has not created a baseline for Iranian viewers for a possible comparison (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2019). The other reason could be ascribed to the assumption that the Iranian viewers have accepted and come to terms with amateur subtitling features in the absence of any professional subtitling over time. According to Perego et al. (2016: 270), users may have already "adapted to the cognitive demands of subtitles" and in the case of Iranian situation, subtitles are far from perfect. The third relevant factor is the quality of professional and amateur subtitles. Despite the claims by Jiménez-Crespo (2017) and Orrego-Carmona (2019) that the present translations made fansubbers aim at achieving professional and commercial subtitling conventions, Persian subtitles barely respect the technical aspects, such as temporal and spatial constraints (Ameri and Khoshsaligheh, 2019; Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020). Therefore, translations made by Iranian amateurs are barely perfect and comparable with commercial subtitles; however, the participants enjoyed both amateur and professional subtitles alike. This leads us to believe that users probably conceive quality from another perspective, at least different from what is understood in the industry and academia (Baños Piñero and Díaz-Cintas, 2015; Orrego-Carmona, 2019). The last reason, as discussed in the literature review, can be ascribed to "thresholds of acceptability" (Chaume, 2012) or "tolerance thresholds" (Romero Fresco, 2019). Iranian viewers have the tendency to ignore incorrect subtitles to immerse themselves in the program and enjoy it.

Some exceptions should be discussed too. The participants in the amateur group had problems with the duration of the subtitles, as the reading speed of some subtitles far exceeded the recommended figure. For Pedersen (2019), when the subtitling reading speed is much higher than expected, subtitles become quite unreadable since the viewer needs adequate time for "cognitive processing of the information [within the subtitle] to understand it" (Tamayo, 2016: 276). Despite all these, a recent study revealed that individuals are capable of keeping up with the subtitles with higher reading speed even though they spend less time watching on-screen actions (Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón, 2018). This should not be overlooked that the participants of our study were from a dubbing country and they had grown up accustomed to dubbing—although they may now be subtitling users—therefore their unfamiliarity with professional subtitling may cause them to

become slower readers. Thus, “the more you watch subtitled products, the more proficient you become” (Massidda, 2015: 54).

Amateur subtitling, however, resulted in comprehension losses, while professional subtitling boosted the comprehension. Poor comprehension scores in the amateur subtitling group can be well ascribed to the linguistic inaccuracies and higher reading speeds in Persian non-professional subtitling (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020). This finding is in sharp contrast with the findings of Künzli and Ehrensberger-Dow (2011) and Orrego-Carmona (2016) who reported no significant comprehension loss.

The other results suggested that individuals’ level of exposure to foreign cinematic programs and subtitling did not affect their reception. This is not in line with the findings of Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón (2018) who found that those who are more exposed to subtitles might show less cognitive efforts and frustrations. There is one possible explanation; the participants of Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón (2018) were from three different countries with diverse AVT traditions, whereas our participants were Iranians with different degrees of experiences with subtitles and foreign cinematic programs. In addition, Orrego-Carmona (2015) showed that individuals with a varying degree of familiarity with subtitling presented significantly different reception, especially in terms of comprehension, fixation, and reading effort. To sum up, the findings suggest that audience’s immersion and engagement into the program were not significantly affected by amateur subtitles as the reception of the viewers remained the same across the two groups, except for subtitling reception and comprehension.

Despite in need for further studies with different samples, diverse stimuli and varying language pairs, this article has offered some fruitful insights, yet, with the consideration of some limitations, which could contribute to the existing research on amateur subtitling. The use of self-report questionnaires, as “offline measures” leaves room for “online measures” such as eye trackers and electroencephalograms (see Kruger and Doherty, 2018). In view of the relationship between subtitling reception and age (Perego et al., 2015), interested researchers could examine how amateur subtitling is differently received by the young and the elderly. The language of the stimuli used in this study was German dubbing due to methodological considerations. To maximize the credibility of findings, future reception studies are recommended to incorporate a stimulus with original language and the language competency of the participants could be assessed prior to the experiment to understand how people with varying levels of English react to the subtitled programs (see Orrego-Carmona, 2015). More importantly, the present study analyzed amateur subtitling reception from a broad perspective. It is known that Persian amateur subtitling encompasses some specific features, as discussed in Ameri and Khoshsaligheh (2019). These specific features, say higher reading speed, poor segmentation, literal translation, and frequent commentaries, could be examined as a separate variable. Previous research, for instance, has examined poor segmentation and its reception (Gerber-Morón et al., 2018; Perego et al., 2010). The TV show used for this study was dialogue-based but not fast-paced. Given the possible effect of the subtitles of fast-paced dialogues on users’ comprehension (Szarkowska and Bogucka, 2019), future research is suggested to replicate this research with a sample of fast-paced content. Non-professional and amateur subtitling has registered splendid research achievements over its lifetime; it is hoped this study has advanced our current knowledge of this phenomenon.

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# ***Skopos* and musical audiovisual products in the XXI century: a theoretical review**

Belén Cruz Durán

## *Abstract*

*In recent years, more and more scholars have started to explore the importance of connections among text, music and image. Authors like Peter Low and Johan Franzon started the journey towards a yet uncharted field, laying the foundations of song translation using functionalist approaches. Based on their ground-breaking work, other researchers have dared to step into a field in need of scholarly contributions. Therefore, the main goal of the present article is to collect and analyse the latest and most important studies in the translation of musical audiovisual products during the XXI century.*

*Key words: skopos, musical audiovisual products, dubbing, subtitling, musical texts, functionalist approach, audiovisual translation, song translation, music, strategies*

## **1. Introduction**

The translation of musical texts has received little attention from scholars until recently. According to Mateo (2012: 115), this could be due to ‘the methodological challenges that its study entails’ and the issues that appear when concepts such as “translation”, “adaptation” or “rewrite” are redrawn. In addition, ‘[the study of the translation of musical texts] questions essential concepts such as “authorship” or “source-text” and it clearly calls for a multidisciplinary approach’ (2012: 115). However, in the last decades authors such as Gorlée (2005), Franzon (2005, 2008 and 2015), Low (2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2008, 2013 and 2017), Desblache (2013, 2019a and 2019b), García, R. (2013 and 2017), Mateo (2008 and 2012), Bosseaux (2008 and 2011) or Kaindl (2005), have produced research that has gone some way to redressing the lack of publications.

Before proceeding to examine the different publications related to the translation of musical audiovisual products *per se*, it is important to define first what the term ‘musical text’ has really referred to for scholars in the last decades. The translation of musical texts or ‘vocal translation’, as Gorlée (2005: 7) calls it, is conceived as the union between poetic and musical texts. Similarly, Golomb presents the term *Music-Linked Translation* ‘[that] refers here to an instance of verbal text “set to” [...] or synchronised with [...] an instance of music, whether this setting [...] is made *a priori* by original design [...] or *a posteriori*’ (2005: 122). On the other hand, Kaindl points out the importance of understanding the connection between text and music as an interdisciplinary study, in which the semiotic and social relationships play a crucial role especially in the translation of popular songs. In fact, Kaindl states that popular songs are communication channels by which cultures and information are transferred to different people everywhere (2005: 235-236).

Most prior studies mostly defined the translation of musical texts as a union between musical notes and message and were based on the fact that lyrics need to be aligned with the melody, not only in the original text but also in their translation into a foreign language. However, popular songs are not the only songs to take into account. Audiovisual productions, such as the ones analysed in the present study, claim to be worthy of these connections too.

The appearance of new audiovisual translation modes in the last decades (subtitling, dubbing, audiodescription, etc.) has brought up other elements to discuss, such as the relationship among text, music and image. For that reason, specialists such as Low (2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2008, 2013 and 2017) and Franzon (2005, 2008 and 2015) apply functionalist approaches to this translation field (Nord 1997, 2009 and 2016; Reiss and Vermeer 1996; Vermeer 2012): song translation should be revolved around the translation *skopos* and the audience of the target text. Therefore, image is a factor to have in mind in the translation of musical texts. This is evident in the case, for instance, of musical films or series, where music and lyrics are always connected to what is happening on screen.

Having defined how translation of musical texts has been conceived by scholars in the last decades, I will now move on to discuss at length the main works in the field of song translation, starting by the two main authors who have been looking into the relationship among music, text and image in audiovisual products applying functionalist approaches (Peter Low and Johan Franzon) and concluding with the latest studies about song translation in the XXI century.

## **2. Song translation according to Low**

### *2. 1. Logocentric versus músico-centric songs<sup>1</sup>*

Low believes that a song is a whole based on three main elements: words, music and performance. Every culture has traditional songs which show their own values and beliefs. Therefore, songs imply people of all ages, backgrounds and places, as well as take part in most cultural and linguistic identities of human beings. Song lyrics usually depict emotions, tell personal life lessons or create fictional stories with the main goal of entertainment. Unfortunately, verbal elements are not able to cross borders as easily and successfully as musical or even performance components are. That is why song translators must understand a musical text as a complete product and try to make it work into a new communicative context (Low 2017: 1-7).

Song translation differs greatly from general translation and it is ‘an unusually complex one, involving a hybrid genre which belongs in the performing arts. Song-texts [...] pose problems resembling sometimes those of poetry and sometimes those of drama’ (Low 2003a: 87). However, song translation to be sung is not something new: operas, musical plays, hymns and thousands of songs have been translated through the years with acceptable results, ‘at least sometimes’ (2003a: 87). For that reason, the author finds song translation, especially those related to comedy, drama or even narrative, highly interesting since they must be immediately understood by their recipients. As Low alleges (2017: 40):

When a song will be performed in a language unfamiliar to most of the audience, some kind of translation must occur, because otherwise the verbal elements of the song will be lost. They may not be totally lost, since a good performance can communicate something of the song’s mood, but they will be largely lost: those who say: ‘I don’t understand Spanish, but I understand that song’ are mistaken.

Low assumes that every song must be translated, although it is accompanied by instruments and/or visual elements: ‘songs need voices singing words’ (Low 2017: 4). Even though music can be seen in general as the most important part in a song, the truth is that

translators must focus on the lyrics of every song in which they are working on and draw their own conclusions. It would be too simplistic to affirm that all vocal music would be logocentric and the rest, musico-centric: ‘Instead we can apply the term “logocentric” to actual songs where the words matter more, and “musico-centric” to the others’ (2017: 10). What is more, Low acknowledges that even ‘a single song may shift between logocentric and musico-centric sections’ (2017: 13).

For all those reasons, the author concludes that translators should ask themselves the right questions in order to understand if the songs they are translating are mainly logocentric or musico-centric. With the main goal of analysing the factors which make a song logocentric or musico-centric, Low presents a variety of questions which would guide a translator to differ logocentric songs, whose translation is key for their context, from musico-centric songs (see Table 1 and Table 2).

<i>Key factors of the translated song</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
1. The song tells a story	
2. The song tells verbal jokes	
3. The song uses rich vocabulary	
4. The song has been written by a famous poet	
5. There are a lot of different verses	
6. The words are sung with sincerity, as if the singer believed them	
7. Lyrics are audible over the percussion and other instruments	
8. Lyrics are clear enough to transcribe	
9. The song was originally sung in the language of the audience	
10. Song’s target audience would be interested in the combined musico-verbal effect	
Conclusion	Mostly ‘Yes’: Logocentric Mostly ‘No’: Musico-centric

*Table 1 Key factors to differ logocentric from musico-centric songs (Low 2017: 14-16)*

<i>Types of logocentric songs</i>	<i>Why are they considered logocentric songs?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Narrative songs</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lyrics tell the story</li> <li>○ Characters are depicted by songs and without the lyrics, the plot of the story would not make any sense</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Comic songs</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Music and/or image could set the mood for a joke, but they could</li> </ul>

	not properly tell it
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dramatic songs</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ They describe or present events that are happening</li> <li>○ <i>First-person character songs</i>: dramatic monologues which describe feelings or situations of the characters</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Protest songs</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Music cannot state a message by its own</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dialogue songs</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ One singer sings the words for one or even two characters.</li> <li>○ There is a message to translate, no matter its music</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Satirical songs</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The message cannot be understood unless the lyrics are translated using a proper strategy in order to render the satire of the song, even at the expense of its musical integrity</li> </ul>

*Table 2 Types of logocentric songs (Low 2017: 10-14)*

The author states that it can be found an equivalent for every song in a target language, either translating it, adapting the lyrics into the target language culture or even replacing the original text for a different one that works better with the original music. Therefore, in order to fulfil with the translation *skopos*, translator should take into account several key components before facing a song translation as Low (2005: 186) points out:

According to Vermeer, translation methods and strategies should be determined by *skopos* [...]. In his view, the *skopos* may even ‘help to determine whether the source text needs to be “translated”, “paraphrased”, or completely “re-edited”’ [...]. In the case of song, this means consideration and re-consideration of the prospective listeners to the translated song, of their situation in a different cultural polysystem and of their ability to comprehend and appreciate the song in the limited time (perhaps less than three minutes) during which they are hearing it. The result may be a choice to paraphrase rather than simply translate.

Consequently, Low establishes a general classification (see Table 3) of the main components that must be taken into account when translating song-lyrics, since they ‘are expressive texts channelling feelings such as joy and despair on subjects like love or death’ (Low 2017: 25). As the author states, the language used in songs is merely subjective, containing sometimes even subtleties and nuances similar to those used in poetical texts.

<i>Problems</i>	<i>Components</i>
Main problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjective language (autobiographical details and drama)</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaning, content and intent (sense of the text)</li> <li>• Non-standard language (dialects, sociolects, slangs, colloquialisms)</li> <li>• Cultural issues (allusions, local culture)</li> <li>• Peculiarities of the source language (word order, synonyms, syntactic structures)</li> </ul>
Other problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambiguity</li> <li>• Archaisms</li> <li>• Euphemisms and indirect language</li> <li>• Fixed expressions</li> <li>• Foreign phrases</li> <li>• Incomplete sentences</li> <li>• Irony, humour and vulgar language</li> <li>• Metaphors and similes</li> <li>• Neologisms</li> <li>• Repetitions and rhymes</li> </ul>

*Table 3 General classification of the main components that must be taken into account when translating song lyrics (Low 2017: 25-37)*

## 2. 2. Song translation to be read in audiovisual products

Low states that the functionalist view by Vermeer (Reiss and Vermeer 1996) and the *skopos* theory can be applied to song translation in general in the same way it has been applied to specific types of songs conceived mainly to persuade customers in advertisement campaigns (Low 2017: 40). Since musical texts are apparently expressive texts, the concept of functionality can seem little convention in this sense. However, Low suggests a model which reflects the two main parts involved in the process of translating a song, that is, its translator and its recipients: ‘The standard will not be intertextual coherence but adequacy or appropriateness with regard to the *skopos*’ (Nord 1997: 33).

Under a functionalist approach, Low indicates the various translation strategies according to purpose, that is, according to the *skopos* of a translation and in which song translations to be read and song translation to be sung must be treated accordingly. Table 4 shows a classification of the *skopos* in song translation to be read according to the author.

<i>Skopos</i>	<i>Kind of translation</i>
• Translation study	• Word-for-word
• Printed programme	• Communicative
• CD insert	• Semantic
• Surtitle and subtitles	• Communicative and/or gist
• Spoken intro	• Gist

*Table 4 Kinds of translations according to skopos in song translation to be read (Low 2003b: 101-106 and 2017: 41-61)*

Regarding song translation to be read on screen, either opera recitals (surtitles) or on television and DVD (subtitles), Low claims that subtitles and surtitles, even having different *skopoi*, share their essence: a communicative translation is needed, fully and immediately understandable by its recipients in the target culture. For that reason, a more semantic translation with the same linguistic level of the original author would not be needed in here, either aspects such as rhyme or rhythm (Low 2008: 1 and 2017: 48, 56-57).

### *2. 3. Song translation to be sung in audiovisual products<sup>2</sup>*

Low states that a song translation is comparable to a pentathlon: ‘this image links the five criteria to the five events in which athletes must compete to maximise their points, events as different as a shot-put and a 100-metre sprint’ (Low 2017: 79) and presents the ‘Pentathlon Principle’, conceived as a practical *skopos*-based approach for song translation to be sung (Low 2005: 191):

The Pentathlon Principle states that the evaluation of such translations should be done not in terms of one or two criteria but as an aggregate of all five. More fundamentally, it contends that this notion of balancing five different criteria can assist translators both in their overall strategic thinking and also in their microlevel decisions — in the practical task of choosing which of several possible words or phrases is the best option overall. Now to speak of a pentathlon is merely a metaphor. But it is a more illuminating choice of metaphor than other metaphors, even that of ‘juggling’ (though this better captures the sense of simultaneity).

In addition to this five criteria, Low adds a sixth one, what he called ‘dramatic effectiveness’, transforming this pentathlon into a hexathlon (Low 2005, 211), as Table 5 shows.

<i>1. Singability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relative singability in physical and phonetic texts: is it easy to sing?</li> </ul>
<i>2. Sense</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semantic accuracy: are the meaning, content and intent well transferred?</li> </ul>
<i>3. Naturalness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceiving style and register: how natural is the style of the target text?</li> </ul>
<i>4. Rhythm</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree of respect for the pre-existing musical rhythm of the source text: how well does it fit to the music?</li> </ul>
<i>5. Rhyme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree of importance: how well does the target text rhyming match the rhyming found in the source text? Does the target text need to</li> </ul>

	rhyme at all?
6. <i>Dramatic effectiveness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performability: does it transfer the same effect of the source text?</li> </ul>

*Table 5 Hexathlon Principle for song translation of musical audiovisual products (Low (2003a, 2005, 2008 and 2017))*

### 3. Song translation according to Franzon

#### 3. 1. Fidelity and format

Franzon understands a song as ‘a piece of music and lyrics –in which one has been adapted to the other, or both to one another– designed for a singing performance’ (2008: 376). He agrees with Low (2017: 40) on the fact that song translation is linked to the *skopos* of the translated text, that is, a functional translation should take into account its purpose in the first place, which is the main goal to achieve (Franzon 2005: 263): ‘[A] song lyric translation [...] [is] a text that is similar to its source text in aspects relevant to its target culture presentation as a staged narrative to music’.

Franzon also shares Low’s opinion on the fact that song translation cannot be defined as a general translation has been traditionally defined, since a general translation basically consists of replacing the textual material of the source language into the equivalent material of the target language (Franzon 2005: 264). However, Franzon conceives song translation closer to a *creative transposition*, using Jakobson’s term (Apter and Herman 2016: 58; Franzon 2005: 264), or even as an adaptation<sup>3</sup>: ‘In song translation, adaptation may well be the only possible choice’ (Franzon 2005: 265).

In his proposal, Franzon considers the understanding of the concepts of *fidelity*<sup>4</sup> and *format* as a great help in the translation process due to the difficulties which often arise when translating a text. The author understands *fidelity* as everything that distinguishes a translated song from other translations, and *format* as everything that can transform a literal translation (useless in its function) into a singable and performable translation (Franzon 2005: 266-268).

Franzon states that both fidelity and format are intrinsic elements that shape the *skopos* of the translated text. For that reason, according to Franzon (2005: 267), song translation format is similar to what Nord suggested in her distinction between documentary and instrumental translation<sup>5</sup>. The main purpose of the translated text is being a communication tool in the target culture, in which the original text serves as a model example to follow, rather than an entire document containing all the original information: ‘In a musical, the staged narrative is presented in the form of a series of distinct songs. The mere fact that a theatrical situation is presented in the song form implies a special dramatic significance’ (Franzon 2005: 270).

Apart from fidelity and format, Franzon also differentiates between the two ways in which songs are presented in a musical product: non-diegetic and diegetic songs.<sup>6</sup> Regarding the latter, Franzon (2005: 271) adds that it can contain inner monologues of the characters, either if they think they are talking or they know they are singing.<sup>7</sup>

#### 3. 2. Choices in song translation

Taking into account the concepts of *skopos*, *finality* and *format* previously mentioned, an ideal song translation is understood as a version of a song which reproduces the exact same values, the essence of the original text, that is, music, lyrics and performability in a target language. Nevertheless, '[i]n practice, this is an impossible ideal' (Franzon 2008: 376). In order to avoid a right or wrong classification, the author modifies somehow the definition of song translation, implying that a 'a song might be recognized as a translation if it is a second version of a source song that allows some essential values of the source's music and/or its lyrics and/or its sung performance to be reproduced in a target language' (2008: 376). For that reason, Franzon (2008: 376-389) presents a classification of song translation that would help translator to choose which option or options would be the right ones when dealing with their translation briefs:

- Leaving the song untranslated: Franzon quotes Holz-Manttari (Franzon 2008: 377) when considering this option as a translational action *per se* since translators are the ones who decide what a translation really needs.<sup>8</sup> According to Franzon, most of the time translators are required to strictly follow a translation brief, where sometimes it is indicated that dialogues should be translated but not songs. This might be due to the fact that lyrics are not considered important for the plot (for example, background music in films, which are not often translated) or because original lyrics may enhance authenticity or because simply translators do not have enough time to translate song lyrics (2008: 378). According to Aleksandrowicz (2019, p. 175), this option is the preferred one when translating audiovisual products.
- Translating the lyrics but not taking the music into account: song lyrics are translated only paying attention to their meaning, that is, 'semantically close prose renderings [...]. [I]n short, translations as a supplement to the original' (Franzon 2008: 378). It is often used in subtitled products in cinema and television (Franzon 2008: 378-379 and 2015: 335-336).
- Writing new lyrics to the original music with no overt relation to the original lyrics: 'This would be the case when the music is the most important part of the package' and 'as a result of importation and marketing of musico-verbal material between languages and cultures' (Franzon 2008: 380). As far as Franzon is concerned, this option would be the most spread when exporting popular and international hits. However, Franzon suggests a model contrary to the one proposed by Low, who states that a translation is the one which transfer all the meaning of the source text. Low would consider it, therefore, as a replacement text rather than a proper translation (Low 2013 and 2017: 116).
- Translating the lyrics and adapting the music accordingly: depending on the translation brief, there are some products in which their lyrics are more important than their music and, consequently, the latter must be changed (for example, religious musical texts) (Franzon 2008: 381-386).
- Adapting the translation to the original music: this option is chosen when translator cannot change the original music of a song and should create a functional equivalent to the original song. A translation to be sung must match with the music and with what is happening on stage. This translation choice is frequent in dubbed films, where visual or musical elements cannot be altered (Franzon 2008: 386-388).

#### **4. Recent studies on song translation strategies in the XXI century**

This section briefly addresses the latest studies based on Low and Franzon's research, since in the recent years numerous studies have been trying to keep defining the different translation strategies around musical products (musical plays, musical films and series, modern songs, etc.), so far lacking in the scientific literature.

Although the first studies on translation and music revolved around opera (Franzon 2008: 374), more and more scholars are starting to conceive the relationship between music and text in a multidisciplinary way. Publications such as *The Translator* (Susam-Sarajeva 2008), *Song and Significance* (Gorlée 2005), *Music, Text and Translation* (Minors 2014) and *Music and Translation: new mediations in the digital age* (Desblache 2019a), among others, are the most important studies in the field.

In addition, due to the lack of previous research on song translation, there has been a higher interest in this field especially by researchers who are finishing their bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree studies and who are highly contributing to improve the scientific literature in the field of translation of musical audiovisual products (Costa 2015; García, A. 2013; García, R. 2013, García, S. 2016; Morales 2016; Rodríguez 2008; Tido 2014; Vargas 2015).

In order to show the latest discoveries in the field, a selection of the three best studies is going to be analysed below:

- Di Giovanni (2008: 300-306): Undoubtedly, her research is a clear example of a deep understanding in the field of song translation and the relationship among music, text and image. After having examined the translation of fifteen American film musicals into Italian,<sup>9</sup> she could survey and analyse a large sample of translation strategies, concluding that song translation strategies could be narrowed down to four translation choices: *partial translation* (where dialogues are dubbed, but songs are left untranslated), *mixed translation* (where dialogues are dubbed, but songs are subtitled into the target language), *full translation I* (where dialogues and lyrics are dubbed, translating song lyrics into the target language) and *full translation II* (where both dialogues and songs are subtitled, translating song lyrics into the target language). The author finally concludes that economic reasons were probably the most important factor behind the choice of translation strategies.
- Comes (Costa 2015: 21): starting on the premise that choosing a strategy is only possible when the translation brief and client's intentions are clear, Comes also classifies song translation strategies into four categories: original lyrics are untranslated; original lyrics are subtitled into the target language; original lyrics are untranslated, but redubbed using the original lyrics in order to avoid a change in the voice of characters in the target version; and original lyrics are dubbed into the target language.
- García, R. (2017: 208-210): García simplifies the choices in song translation suggested by Franzon (2008) and states that lyrics should be dubbed, subtitled or left untranslated in the original version. The author shares Comes's opinion regarding the latter strategy stating that either it is used the original track of the song or it is redubbed keeping the original lyrics. In this way, the author believes that '[o]nly the voices will be dubbed in order to keep auditive continuity and uniformity. That way the receptor will not be surprised when listening to a voice he or she is not used to' (García, R. 2017: 208). The author states that the reasons not to translate the lyrics into the target language are based mainly on musico-centric factors, being the music

the most important element to take into account and, therefore, the lyrics are not seen as a part of the plot. However, García (2017: 208-209) acknowledges that other elements (such as economic factors or target language recipients) could be the cause of preferring one or another translation choice in audiovisual musical products, although the real reasons are still unknown.

With the only purpose of summarising and illustrating the main strategies which have been previously enunciated in the present article, Table 6 and Table 7 have been created.

<i>Translation strategies</i>		<i>Spoken dialogues</i>		<i>Songs</i>		
		Dubbed	Subtitled	Dubbed	Subtitled	Untranslated
Partial translation		x				x
Full translation	Mixed	x			x	
	Subtitled		x		x	
	Dubbed	x		x		

*Table 5 Classification of strategies in translation of musical audiovisual products*

<i>Songs</i>	<i>Translation strategies</i>
Original version	Left untranslated
Subtitled	Subtitling
Dubbed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intralinguistic dubbing: Character voice dubbed, but keeping the original lyrics</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interlinguistic dubbing: Character voice dubbed, translating the lyrics into the target language</li> </ul>

*Table 6 Classification of strategies in song translation in audiovisual products*

## 5. Conclusion

Although song translation studies seem to have been neglected specially during the XX century, in recent years more and more scholars have started to explore the importance of connections among text, music and image.

Authors like Peter Low and Johan Franzon started the journey towards a yet uncharted field, laying the foundations of song translation. Based on their ground-breaking work, other researchers have dared to step into a field in need of scholarly contributions. Therefore, the main goal of all the literature reviewed taken place in the present article is to collect and analyse the latest and more important contributions in song translation, mainly focusing on translation strategies used in musical audiovisual products, in order to keep reflecting about the work that has been done in the field and bringing into contention all the work that still must be done in the future.

It cannot be denied that translators are just the initial links of a so-called translation chain (Cruz, 2017) in which their work is indeed the first step, but not the last one. Rendering finished products needs a big coordination effort, where the translator is therefore only part involved in the final outcome. Translation briefs, final clients, economical factor, tight deadlines or even potential viewers can be the ones to blame when one wrong translation strategy is chosen over another that could be considered better. For that reason, a wider scope needs to be taken in order to really analyse translation strategies in musical audiovisual products. Future studies should aim to replicate results in larger databases using more varied samples, which could help to draw more concrete conclusions to their analysis. And last but not least, future research should be conducted taking into account more realistic settings and should go straight to the source: a deep research into how translators and companies really work is highly required in order to fully understand chosen translation strategies in musical audiovisual products.

## Notes:

1 As far as Low is concerned (2017: 4-5): ‘Besides, although the term “song” is not used for extended vocal performances like musicals or operas, [...] [it] is applicable to those musical-verbal hybrids’.

2 Low knows that the different translation criteria can differ among the different sources and languages: ‘[M]any of [...] [these] ideas are relevant to other European languages; and [...] that every language and language pair will possess specific problems’ (Low 2003a: 88).

3 Authors such as Low (2013) or Apter and Herman (2016) deeply discuss about the differences between translation and adaptation.

4 Franzon bases his theory on Low’s theory, *the Fidelity Paradigm*, and his concept of *loyalty*, which in turn are based on the functionalist theory of Nord (Low 2013: 241; Nord 1997: 125).

5 Nord acknowledges two different types of translation processes and, therefore, two different kinds of translations: the documentary translation process (‘producing in the target language a kind of document of (certain aspects of) a communicative interaction in which a source-culture sender communicates with a source-culture audience via the source text under source-culture conditions’) and the instrumental translation process (‘producing in the target language an instrument for a new communicative interaction between the source-culture sender and a target-culture audience, using (certain aspects of) the source text as a model’) (Nord 1997: 47).

6 According to Desblache (2019 b: 288), songs ‘can have a diegetic (if a singer/singers perform in the film) or a non-diegetic role, which is independent from the impact of the song on the meaning of the film’.

7 Franzon refers here to the songs which Low denominates *first-person character songs* (Low 2017: 12).

8 In fact, translators are not often the agents in charge of taking the decision of what should be or not translated (Franzon 2015: 345; García, R. 2013: 89; Nord 1997: 21; Vermeer 2012: 192).

9 The fifteen American film musicals studied in Di Giovanni’s research are: ‘An American in Paris (1951), Singin’ in the Rain (1952), A Star is Born (1954), Seven Brides for Seven Brothers (1954), Guys and Dolls (1956), Some Like it Hot (1959), West Side Story (1961), My Fair Lady (1964), The Sound of Music (1965), Hello Dolly (1969), Cabaret (1972), Jesus Christ Superstar (1973), Nashville (1975), New York, New York (1977) and Grease (1978)’ (Di Giovanni 2008: 300).

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# **A Comparative Study of Cultural References between the Spanish and Chinese Versions of Seville's Travel Guidebook as a case study**

Chi-lien Lin

## *Abstract*

*This study aimed to analyse cultural references (CRs) of Seville's travel guidebook and its Chinese translation. This general aim was broken down into two specific aims: to identify the CRs from which writer derives the source text, and to determine which techniques prevail in the translation of these CRs. To fulfill the specified aims, we established categories to classify the CRs, and selected translation techniques to identify how the translator deals with them when facing peculiarities of the terminology and culture of Spanish tourism. We studied the current situation in the publishing market regarding the translations of travel guidebooks about Spain in Taiwan.*

*Keywords: travel guidebook, cultural reference, proper name, translation technique, Spanish-Chinese translation*

## **1. Introduction: current situation in the publishing market regarding the translations of Spain's travel guidebook in Taiwan**

We wished to study the translation of Seville's travel guidebook primarily because Taiwan's current publishing market has no Spanish tourist guidebook that has been translated directly from Spanish into Chinese. We collected information on translated travel guidebooks relating to Spain for two decades (from 1997 to 2020) and found a total of 25 copies that have been translated from 6 foreign languages in Taiwan.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the data shows that twelve travel guidebooks have been translated from English and another seven from Japanese. Additionally, two copies of travel literature have been translated from French and Korean, respectively; one has been from Italian and another from German. The data, shown in Table 1, reveals a striking phenomenon in the publishing market of Taiwan regarding the translation of guidebooks related to Spain, which is that both English and Japanese are dominant languages compared to Spanish. This means that, regarding the translation of travel literature related to Spain, not even one of the versions has been translated directly from Spanish during these two decades in Taiwan.

SL/TL	1997~2007	2008~2020	Number of books	Percentage
English- Chinese	5	7	12	48%
Japanese-Chinese	3	4	7	28%
French- Chinese	1	1	2	8%
Korean- Chinese	0	2	2	8%
Italian- Chinese	1	0	1	4%
German- Chinese	1	0	1	4%
Total	11	14	25	100%

Table 1 *Numbers of translated travel guidebooks related to Spain that were published in Taiwan from 1997 to 2020*

## 2. The translation of CRs<sup>2</sup> in Spanish-Chinese travel guidebooks

### 2.1 *Definition of cultural references*

The term ‘culture’ could be defined from different perspectives: social, antropologic, linguistic, literary and so on. Regarding translation studies, ‘culture’ is defined by Newmark (1988a: 94~95) to refer to ‘the way of life and its manifestations peculiar to one speech community’, whereas he uses the term ‘cultural words’ to denominate that ‘they are associated with a particular language and cannot be literally translated’. In opinion of Franco Aixelá (1996: 58) ‘cultural-specific item’ is defined as the items ‘whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text’. The translation problem could occur in the term of nonexistence or the distinct intertextual status. For the limitation of above mentioned constraints Kelly (1997: 35-36) suggested that the best solution could be to “produce specific texts for each target culture” and the technique of adaptation seems to be the suitable way to reach reader expectations regarding the difference of content and style between ST and TT. The primary interest of this study lies in detecting which techniques of translation prevail in the TT to find out if the Chinese translator tends to maintain *literalist fidelity*<sup>3</sup> rather than others when facing the cultural gap.

## 2.2 Classification of cultural categories

Based on theories proposed by Newmark (1988a: 94-103), Rovira (2007: 25-27; 2014: 140), and Santamaria (2010: 522), we established a pattern to facilitate classification of the CRs we detected from our corpus. The parameters used to classify the CRs in our corpus are shown in Table 2.

Main category	Subcategories
1. History	Place names
	Historical figures
2. Social culture	Social class
3. Cultural Institution	Fine arts
	Literature

Table 2 *Classification of cultural categories for the analysis of a travel guidebook*

## 2.3 Translation techniques for cultural references

Regarding the translation techniques, we established a paradigm that was suitable for the analysis of the translation of CRs from the travel guidebook, focusing especially on Spanish to Chinese. Our proposal, related to the parameters of the translation techniques, was primarily based on suggestions by Newmark (1988a), Olk (2013), Marco (2004, 2018), Franco Aixelá (1996), Davies (2003) and Liang (2007, 2016). We focused on nine translation techniques ‘naturalisation’, ‘modulation’, ‘functional equivalent’, ‘literal translation’, ‘recognised translation’, ‘omission’, ‘intercultural adaptation’, ‘amplification’, and ‘couplet or triplet’. We defined each CR treatment technique contained in the travel guidebook and its most representative example. These were as follows:

### 2.3.1 Naturalisation

Based on Newmark (1988a: 82) naturalisation is a technique that involves using the source language (henceforward SL) word to the normal pronunciation, then using the normal morphology of the target language (TL). However, Chinese and Spanish are two languages that do not come from the same language family. That is to say, the normal morphology could not be obtained in the current study because there is no alphabetic transliteration between Spanish and Chinese, instead there is a phonemic transfer through the official transcription system for Chinese called *pinyin*. Liang (2017: 45-46) described this kind of phonetic translation as ‘transliteration’. Two examples of naturalisation in our case study are translating ‘Sevilla’ by

‘塞維亞’ [Saiweiya, Seville] as well as ‘doña María de Padilla’ by ‘唐娜·瑪麗亞·德·帕迪亞’ [Tangna·Maliya·De·Padiya, Dona Maria De Padilla].

### 2.3.2 Modulation

This refers to changing the point of view or the category of thought as well as restructuring the statement. For Newmark (1988a: 89), modulation can be ‘part for the whole’ or ‘abstract for concrete’. In our study, modulation consists of changing the viewpoint, using a distinct perspective to transfer the culture-specific item of source text (ST) into another cultural image of the target text (TT). This can be a form of particularisation or generalisation. An example is: Tabla → 畫像 [huaxiang, portrait]

### 2.3.3 Literal translation

This involves preserving the formal peculiarities of ST with the purpose of producing a grammatically correct TT and accordingly maintaining the uses of the TL. The examples we detected in the TT were as follows: Rey Sabio → 博學國王 [boxue guowang, King the Wise]; cuadro de la Virgen de los Mareantes → 畫作《航海人的聖母》 [huazuo Hanghairende Shengmu, Painting of The Virgin of the Navigators]. In our study, the application of literal translation may have reflected a certain degree of faithfulness to the linguistic peculiarity of the original work; as such, it is a technique that leans towards the meaning intended by the original author.

### 2.3.4 Functional equivalent

This technique refers to instance where the TL word is the same as the SL word, but the grammatical structure or cultural image of the TL word may differ from that of the SL word. Newmark (1988a: 83) states that a functional equivalent ‘neutralises or generalises the SL word’ and ‘is the most accurate way of translating and deculturalising a cultural word’. In Chinese, translating ‘cenador’ by 涼亭 [liangting, pavilion] is an example of the functional equivalent.

### 2.3.5 Recognised translation

Based on the definition provided by Newmark (1988a: 89), recognised translation is a

technique whereby ‘the official and generally accepted translation of any institutional term’ is transferred into the TT. Furthermore, Liang (2016: 47) suggests that this technique ‘is often used in translating particular historical or literary characters and geographical names’. For our purposes, adopting the conventional term into the TT is a neutral technique that neither leans to the original author nor to the receptors of TL. Examples of recognised translation in our study are translating both ‘Colón’ and ‘Magallanes’ by 哥倫布 [*Gelunbu*, Columbus] as well as 麥哲倫 [*Maizhelun*, Magellan], respectively.

### 2.3.6 Omission

Omission involves eliminating the cultural elements of the ST that may not be needed either in legibility or in understanding. The same term for this technique has been adopted by translation theorists such as Davies (2003: 79), Olk (2013: 350), Liang (2016: 50) and Marco (2018: 4); whereas Newmark (1988a: 90) used the term reduction and Franco Aixelá (1996: 64) referred to it as deletion. Both Marco and Liang have claimed that omission is a domesticating technique. Regarding the translation of the travel guidebook, translating ‘una fuente de mármol de Carrara’ by 大理石噴泉 [*dalishi penquan*, marble fountain] can be regarded as omission because the translator deleted the source of culture specificity ‘de Carrara’ [from Carrara].<sup>4</sup>

### 2.3.7 Amplification

To facilitate readability and understanding among target readers, this involves adding linguistic or cultural words that were missing in the source text. This technique implies a certain degree of intervention by the translator, as he/she had to decide what information to add and how to expand it. Marco (2018: 4) uses the same term to imply that ‘a certain amount of information is added in the TT’. However, other theorists employ a different denomination; for example, Newmark (1988a: 91) and Davies (2003: 77) use ‘addition’, Franco Aixelá (1996: 62) uses ‘intratextual gloss’ and Liang (2016: 48) uses ‘intratextual addition’. All these suggestions refer to the same idea; namely, that this procedure involves making the ambiguity of the CR more explicit. For instance, ‘Rey Sabio’ is translated to ‘博學國王阿爾方索十世’ [*boxue guowang A’erfangsuo shishi*, King the Wise, Alfonso X] which the translator chose to add the connotative meaning of the CR ‘Alfonso X’ to make the cultural ambiguity explicit.

### 2.3.8 Intercultural adaptation

The technique involves a formally or semantically unrelated name being substituted in the TT. The technique is employed when the designated reality does not exist in the culture of the TL; therefore, the translator must create a new appropriate situation so that the effect on the reader is the same as in the SL. Marco (2018: 4) proposes this term as a target cultural item that is substituted for the ST item, whereas Liang (2016: 47) terms this procedure ‘substitution’.

Translating ‘retablo’ by ‘裝飾屏’ [*zhuangshiping*, decorative folding screen] is an example of intercultural adaptation in our study. This technique implies a high degree of intervention by the translator and brings ‘the text closer to the target reader’ (Marco, 2018: 4).

### 2.3.9 Couplet or triplet

Couplet and triplet refer to the combination of two and three techniques for one unit, respectively. In our case study, translating ‘naves del Apeadero’ by ‘阿貝阿德羅倉庫’ [*Abei’adeluo cangku*, Apeadero naves] is a couplet because it combines the literal translation with naturalisation.

## 3. Aims and methods

### 3.1 Aims

Due to limitations of space, this study focused on analysing the CRs contained in Real Alcazar and its corresponding Chinese translation. The main aim was divided into two objectives. The first was to identify the CRs contained in the ST. We established a model of classification of cultural categories to rank all the culture-specific items identified from the ST. Attempts were also made to analyse all the selected CRs, especially in onomastic words that contain geographical terms as well as person’s name. We strongly believe that these two intratextual factors play an important role from the perspective of the idiosyncratic features of the original author. The second objective was to determine which techniques prevail in the translation of these culture-specific items. To conduct a qualitative as well as a quantitative analysis, we also developed an analytical model of the techniques the translator used to deal with these Spanish cultural elements.

### 3.2 Methods of analysis



The main analytical model established for this study consisted of two parts: the categorisation of the cultural references and the framework for the translation techniques used for the CRs of the travel guidebook. We focus on the analysis of CRs in the chapter on Real Alcazar, which forms one part of the sections that contain Seville's travel guidebook, the capital of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia. We chose the chapter of *Real Alcazar* as our ST because it is one of the most visited sightseeing spots in the city of Seville.

#### **4. Sociocultural Context of *Seville's* Travel Guidebook and its Chinese translation**

Our ST was written by Fernando Olmedo Granados who has been classified as a geohistorian and architect. He has had more than 10 books published that have circulated in the travel book market related to Andalusia.<sup>5</sup> The first edition of our ST came out in 2004 and its second impression appeared ten years later, in 2014. The book has been translated into seven foreign languages: French, German, Italian, Russian, English, Japanese, and Chinese.

The translator of our ST is Tang Liying [唐丽颖]. She grew up in Beijing and from 1999 has lived in Valencia, one of the autonomous communities of Spain, teaching Mandarin with a particular emphasis on Chinese calligraphy. Apart from Seville's travel guidebook, Tan Liying has also carried out two other translations into Chinese: one related to Barcelona, and the other to the architecture of Antoni Gaudí.<sup>6</sup> It is especially worth noting that Daniel Ibáñez Gómez is the co-translator of our TT. The Chinese version of our ST was published in 2006 by the publishing house 'Ediciones Aldeasa' and was targeted at the readers who speak Chinese and are interested in visiting Seville.<sup>7</sup>

#### **5. A Case Study of the CRs of a travel guidebook from Spanish to Chinese**

Following the pattern of the cultural categories we established, we divided our qualitative analysis into four parameters: name of scenic spots, person's name, social culture, and cultural institution.

##### *5. 1 Name of scenic spots*

In the 'Real Alcazar' chapter we detected 26 cultural references. The translator adopted three kinds of translation techniques to transmit the cultural-specific items with regard to place names. These were studied by analysing the preferred techniques adopted by the translator.

### 5.1.1 Literal translation

Literal translation was the most commonly adopted technique, occurring 19 times in 26 CRs, a percentage of 73%. This shows that the translator preferred to directly transfer the meaning of these place names for her readers. For instance, in the example of ‘patio Banderas’, the translator preferred to translate the words literally rather than transliterate the sound. It is worth noting that there is a Hispanic actor whose name is Antonio Banderas. Both in China and in Taiwan we opted to transliterate his surname as ‘班德拉斯’ [*Bandelasi*, Banderas]. Thus, in the world of sinology, it is possible to either transliterate the phonetic sound or literally translate the meaning of the word. In our analysis, the translator tended to translate the meaning of the word with regard to the place name.

### 5.1.2 Functional equivalent

In Spanish, ‘Cenador’ is a fenced space, normally round, that can be found in gardens; it is commonly dressed with climbing plants, vines or trees.<sup>8</sup> The CR refers to the Pavilion of Charles V which is a rectangular Arab construction with a double-roof and embossed with ceramic tiles. The translator chose to use a technique similar to the literal translation in order to transfer the meaning of *cenador* directly into TT. Nevertheless, when her readers see the word 凉亭 [*liangting*, cooling kiosk] the image that emerges in their mind may be a traditional Chinese style pavilion that contains columns to support the roof but no walls. Chinese pavilions are built ‘on slopes to command the panorama or on a lakeside to create intriguing images in the water’. They also ‘provide weary wayfarers with a place for a rest and a shelter in summer from the sun’.<sup>9</sup> In our opinion, the image of TT related to the Chinese style pavilion is different from the one the original author wanted to transfer. Therefore, we think this is an example of what Newmark (1988a: 91) called a *functional equivalent* instead of literal translation.

### 5.1.3 Couplets

#### *I. naturalisation + literal translation*

The translator also drew on a variety of techniques to resolve the *cultural lacuna* in TT that Newmark (1988a: 91) called *couplets*. She translated ‘palacio del Rey don Pedro’ as ‘唐·彼得王宫’ [*tang Bider wanggong*, Don Peter Palace], combining the naturalisation by transliterating ‘don Pedro’ with the literal translation by transferring the meaning of ‘palacio

del Rey' into *Palace*. The same happened in the cases of 'baños de doña María de Padilla', 'galería de los Grutescos' and 'naves del Apeadero'.

The translator chose to transliterate the word 'Grutescos', which in the Spanish dictionary means a kind of construction with ornaments of bugs, vermin, chimeras, or foliages.<sup>10</sup> The same occurs in the case of 'Apeadero', which refers to 'a place where travelers can get off from the vehicle and feel comfortable to rest'.<sup>11</sup> Both 'Grutescos' and 'Apeadero' are common nouns rather than proper names. These are two exceptions where the translator adopted naturalisation, instead of literal translation, to transliterate these two geographic names.

## *II. Modulation (particularisation) + amplification*

The place name 'casa de la contratación', has also been named *House of Trade of the Indies* in English. The House of Trade was established in 1503 in the port of Seville as a crown agency for the Spanish Empire; historically, it had broad powers over overseas matters (Serrera Contreras, 2008: 134). The translator chose to change the perspective simply translating House of Trade by '美洲交易所' [*Meizhou jiaoyisuo*, House of Trade of America]. We tried to input 美洲交易所[House of Trade of America] as a keyword into the internet search engine; nevertheless, we could not find any usage of this place name in Chinese. Normally '西印度交易所' [*Xiyindu jiaoyisuo*, House of Trade of the Occidental Indies] is used in mainland China as the translation of 'Casa de la contratación'. The translator preferred to use a special geographical name rather than the conventional place name because the institution was created as a response to the increase in naval traffic to the New World (León Guerrero, 2003), which referred to the territory of America. This suggests the translator intended to vary the viewpoint by adopting the word 'America' instead of 'Occidental Indies' to avoid any potential confusion among her readers.

### *5.1.4 Triplets (literal translation+ naturalisation+ amplification)*

In the case of 'Real Alcázar', the translator combined three techniques to transfer the image of the Muslim Palace, which was built during fourteen century. It is characterised by a mixture of Muslim and Christian stylistic construction, resulting in a unique design in Seville. In our example the translator uses '皇家' [*huangjia*, royal] to translate the Spanish word 'real' which, is ostensibly a literal translation. With respect to 'Alcázar', the translator opted to

combine the naturalisation with the amplification. Thus, she transliterated the phonetic of ‘Alcázar’ while expanding information on the place name adding the Chinese word ‘城堡’ [*chengbao*, castle] to explain that Alcazar is a fortress. This makes the cultural reference more explicit in the TT.

## 5.2 *Person’s names*

In respect of person’s names, we detected seven CRs. The translator used four kinds of technique to treat the cultural-specific elements.

### 5.2.1 *Naturalisation*

The first CR is Abderramán III (912-961), who was the Emir and Caliph of Córdoba of the Umayyad dynasty in al-Andalus. The second CR is Alejo Fernandez, who was a Spanish painter in the 16th century. His paintings belong to the period of the Renaissance. One of his most representative paintings is ‘The Virgin of the Navigators’, which will be referred to later in the study. The third CR is ‘Carlos V’, who was a Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain. It is especially worth noting that while he was King of Spain, from 1516 to 1556, he was named ‘Carlos I’; whereas when he was named as the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire from 1520 to 1558, he was given the name of ‘Charles V’. This suggests that in the ancient occidental history there was no emperor who was named ‘Carlos V’. Our CR therefore refers to King Carlos I of the Kingdom of Spain as well as emperor Charles V of Holy Roman Empire. The translator chose to transliterate the Spanish phonetic into ‘卡洛斯五世’ [*Kaluosi wushi*, Carlos V] instead of the English pronunciation ‘查理五世’ [*Chali wushi*, Charles V] which is the conventional use of the emperor’s title in Chinese.

### 5.2.2 *Recognised translation*

Regarding people’s names, we found another two examples that were considered recognised translation. The first was the great explorer, navigator and colonist ‘Cristóbal Colón’, who finished four voyages across the Atlantic Ocean and discovered a viable sailing route to the Americas. With regard to the second CR, we detected the great Portuguese explorer and navigator ‘Fernando de Magallanes’, who organised the Spanish expedition to the East Indies in the 16th century. Compared with the previous example relating to the Holy Roman

Emperor, the translator adopted recognised translation to transfer the names of these two historical figures. The Spanish name of Christopher Columbus is Cristóbal Colón whose transliteration would not be ‘哥倫布’ [Gelunbu, Colombus]; similarly, the pronunciation of Magallanes would not be ‘麥哲倫’ [Maizhelun, Magellan]. It is reasonable to conclude that the translator adopted conventional names rather than naturalisation because she did not want to confuse her readers.

### 5.2.3 Couplets

Among the examples of people’s names, the translator also opted to use couplets, combining two techniques to make the cultural ambiguity more explicit.

#### *I. Literal translation+ amplification*

In the first example, the translator adopted literal translation to transfer the meaning of ‘Rey Sabio’ into 博學國王 [boxue guowang, King of the Wise]; at the same time, she took advantage of the amplification to convey in detail the identity of the Spanish King Alfonso X of Castile to her readers.

#### *II. Naturalisation + amplification*

In the second example, we detected a reference to ‘Isabella of Portugal’, who was not only the eldest daughter of King Manuel I of Portugal, she was also the Queen of Spain and the Holy Roman Empress because of her marriage to Emperor Charles V. The translator first transliterated the Spanish phonetic of the Queen’s name as 伊莎貝爾[Yishabei’er, Isabella] and the place name 葡萄牙 [Putaoaya, Portugal], while adding information related to the title of the royal family 公主 [gongzhu, princess] to clarify the identity of Isabel de Portugal as a princess from Portugal.

### 5.3 Social Culture (Social Conditions)

With regard to the category of social culture, we detected four CRs relating to the subcategory of social conditions. The translator adopted two kinds of translation technique to

deal with these culture-specific elements.

### 5.3.1 Naturalisation

For nouns related to the Arabic culture, the translator preferred to adopt naturalisation to transliterate the Spanish phonetic of the corresponding CRs. For instance, there was the example of ‘emir’ which means ‘Arabic prince or leader’ in English.<sup>12</sup> The translator opted to transliterate the word ‘emir’ by 埃米爾 [*aimier*, emir] instead of transferring the meaning of the word into 酋長 [*qiuzhang*, emirate] which attracted our attention because, through transliteration of the Spanish word emir, the readers of TT definitely cannot understand what the original author wanted to convey. In summary, it is difficult for readers to associate the Chinese word 埃米爾 *aimier* with the real meaning of the Spanish word. Regarding the second CR, Cordova is a city located in Andalusia, south of Spain. In the 10th and 11th centuries during the apogee of the caliphate, Cordova was one of the most advanced cities in the world and could boast a great cultural, political, financial, and economic center. The translator opted to adopt naturalisation to transliterate the adjective of Cordova ‘cordobés’ into 科爾多瓦 [*Ke’erduowa*, Cordova]. Compared with the previous example ‘emir’, the transliteration of Cordova is more comprehensible, insomuch as the readers of TT would be likely to know the three largest cities of Andalusia: Seville, Cordova and Granada. Concerning the third CR, the translation of ‘sultan’ is an example of naturalisation instead of the recognised translation because according to 《明史》 [*Mingshi, History of Ming*], there are miscellaneous translations in Chinese such as 蘇丹 [*sudan*, Sultan], 素檀 [*sutan*, Sultan], 速檀 [*sutan*, Sultan], 速魯檀 [*sulutan*, Sultan], 鎖魯檀 [*suolutan*, Sultan] and so on, even though the first one is more popular and acceptable than the others. Because there is no conventional translation of this word, we classified this example under the category of naturalisation.

### 5.3.2 Recognised translation

Compared with the last example ‘sultan’, the translator who transferred the Islamic ruler ‘califa’ into 哈里發 [*halifa*, caliph] adopted the technique of recognised translation. The

reason is that neither the Spanish pronunciation of *califa* nor the English pronunciation *caliph* (/kalifa/ and /keɪlɪf/, respectively) are the same as the Arabic pronunciation (/hailifa/). If the translator had adopted naturalisation, the translation of the word *califa* would have been 卡里發[kalifa]. 哈里發[halifa, caliph] is a conventional and popular usage in Chinese that refers to humans as God's executive in a Muslim community. They transliterated directly from the Arabic خَلِيفَة *khalīfah* into the Chinese word.

#### 5.4 Cultural Institution (Fine Arts)

Regarding cultural institution, we discovered four CRs where the translator opted to employ various techniques to deal with cross-cultural differences.

##### 5.4.1 Literal translation & intercultural adaptation

Regarding *The Virgin of the Navigators*, which was painted by Spanish artist Alejo Fernández, the translator chose to translate the name of the painting literally. The word 'retablo' refers to the retable which is normally placed above the altar of a church and painted with religious images such as Christy or the Virgin Mother. A retable that incorporates sculptures or paintings is often referred to as an altarpiece (Chisholm, 1990: 201). The Chinese translation captured our attention because the translator transferred the word 'retablo' into 裝飾屏 [zhuangshiping, decorative folding screen]. However, in Chinese culture a folding screen is often decorated with art and encompasses a variety of themes, including mythology, scenes of palace life, and nature (Handler, 2007: 268-271). Compared with the retable painted with religious images, a Chinese folding screen always embodies themes of legendary tales, heroic merits and natural life. This means that the image of a decorative folding screen captured by the readers of TT could be totally different from the retable that the original author wanted to convey. The translator adopted the intercultural adaptation to make the TT more legible and comprehensible.

##### 5.4.2 Couplets (Naturalisation+ literal translation) & modulation

The connotation of 'Virgen de la Antigua' is Virgin Maria. Unlike the example of 'la Virgen de los Mareantes', the translator opted to use naturalisation to transliterate the phonetic of the words 'de la Antigua' and also translate the denotative meaning of the Virgin. Readers who are familiar with the catholic religion would easily associate the 'Virgin de la Antigua'

with the Virgin Maria. Nevertheless, for most Chinese readers, who have little acquaintance with the occidental religious culture, it would be hard to establish the connection between ‘Virgin de la Antigua’ and the Virgin Maria.

Concerning the second CR, the translator translated the word ‘tabla’ to ‘畫像’ (*huaxiang*, painting). This is a kind of modulation because the Spanish word ‘tabla’ originally referred to a kind of painting made on a flat panel of wood. Nevertheless, ‘畫像’ (*huaxiang*, painting) is a generalised Chinese word that refers to a painting of the figures or an object on any kinds of material, rather than specialising in a certain kind of flat panel.

### 5.5 Cultural Institutions (Literature)

Regarding the cultural institution, we detected one CR belonging to the subcategory of literature.

#### 5.5.1 Functional equivalent

The final example of CR consists of a well-known work of Spanish Literature, the so-called *Cantigas de Santa María* [Canticles of Holy Mary] which contains 420 poems with musical notation, written during the reign of Alfonso X of Castile. It is one of the largest collections of monophonic songs and is characterized by the mention of the Virgin Mary in every song; furthermore, every tenth song is a hymn (Katz & Keller, 1987). This CR has been translated as ‘詩歌集《聖母瑪麗亞之歌》’ [*Shigeji Shengmu Maliyazhige, Collection of*

*Poetry. Songs of Holy Mary*] that reminds us of the Chinese classical Literature 《詩經》

[*Shijing, Classic of Poetry*.] which was also known as *Three Hundred Songs* (Hawkes, 2011: 25). The themes of *Classic of Poetry* not only consist of ancient folk songs related to the topics of love or courtship, they also contain ritual songs in the forms of courtly panegyric and dynastic hymns (Kern, 2010: 20).

The difference between ‘poetry’ and ‘canticle’ lies in the religious issue. It is clear that poetry is in the form of metrical writing; whereas a canticle consists of several liturgical songs taken from the *Bible*.<sup>13</sup> The translator therefore intended to neutralise the SL word, thus reducing the religious connotation, an example of ‘deculturalising a cultural word’ (Newmark, 1988a: 83).



## 6. Results and discussion

Following the qualitative analysis of all the CRs we detected in the travel guidebook of Real Alcazar, we then counted the results extracted from the data regarding the translation techniques adopted by the translator. First, according to each cultural category in our TT, we analysed the number of occurrences displayed in Table 3. Second, we studied the translation techniques by analysing the percentage of each technique adopted by the translator, the results of which are shown in Table 4. Third, we determined the frequency of techniques used in the TT according to the categories of cultural references in Real Alcazar's travel guidebook, the data for which are displayed in Table 5. Finally, we discussed the correlation between four cultural categories and translation techniques.

Cultural category	Number of occurrences
Place name	26
Person's name	7
Social culture- social class	4
Cultural institution- Fine Arts	4
Cultural institution- Literature	1
Total	42

Table 3 *Number of occurrences of CRs by cultural category*

We detected 42 cultural-specific items that are the most representative and significant in the travel guidebook of Real Alcazar to compare the CRs in our corpus. Among these CRs, we found 26 instances that belong to the category of place name; while another seven instances are personal names. Another four CRs were classified as being in the social culture category. We also found five examples of the cultural institution: four related to fine arts, and the final one to ancient Spanish literature.

Techniques		Number of occurrences	Frequency
Literal translation		20	47.6%
Naturalisation		6	14.2%
Recognised translation		3	7.1%
Functional equivalent		2	4.8%
Couplets	naturalisation+literal translation	5	11.9%
	modulation+amplification	1	2.4%

	literal translation +amplification	1	2.4%
	naturalisation+amplification	1	2.4%
Modulation		1	2.4%
Intercultural adaptation		1	2.4%
Triplets	literal translation + naturalisation +amplification	1	2.4%
<b>Total</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 *Adoption of translation techniques in the TT*

As shown in Table 4, the most frequently adopted translation technique is literal translation, which was used on 20 occasions and accounts for 47.6% of all adopted techniques in our TT. The second most frequently adopted technique is naturalisation (14.2%) followed couplets (11.9%), among which the combination of literal translation with naturalisation appears most frequently. Foreignising techniques, such as naturalisation and literal translation, account for 74% of the cases under critical examination, almost three quarters of all occurrences. The data we obtained suggests that the translator tended to foreignise the TT, retaining the exotic characteristics of the culture-specific items of the source language. The fourth and the fifth most employed techniques were recognised translation and functional equivalent, accounting for 7.1% and 4.8%, respectively. The rest of the techniques were employed only marginally or not at all, such as omission.

Both the qualitative and quantitative analysis will now be compared and we will determine the correlation between the four cultural categories and translation techniques.

Category of the CR	techniques	Frequenc y of adoption in the TT	Number of occurrences in the TT	Relative frequency
Place name	Literal translation	19	26	73.1%
	Couplet	4		15.4%
Person's name	Naturalisation	3	7	42.8%
	Recognised translation	2		28.6%
	Couplet	2		28.6%
Social culture	Naturalisation	3	4	75%
Cultural	Literal	1		25%

Institution (Fine Arts)	translation		4	
	Intercultural Adaptation	1		25%
	Modulación	1		25%
	Couplet	1		25%
Cultural Institution (Literature)	Functional equivalent	1	1	100%

Table 5 *Frequency of techniques in the TT according to the categories of CRs*

### 6.1. Geographical names

Literal translation was the most frequently employed technique by the translator and was used in particular to translate geographical names. This happened on 19 occasions, almost three quarters of the total (73.1%). This implies that the translator of our corpus tended to keep close to the peculiar expressions of the author of the SL. The second most commonly used technique for the translation of place name was the couplet, which was used on four occasions and accounted for fifteen percent (15.4%) of the total. The translator preferred to combine the literal translation with naturalisation to transfer the Spanish geographical names into Chinese. Based on the data obtained, we address three issues relating to the treatment of the geographical name adopted by the translator.

#### 6.1.1 *Literal translation was the most frequently employed technique regarding the translation of place names*

The first observation demonstrates that when encountering a non-equivalent cultural reference, the translator of the travel guidebook tends to use literal translation to solve the difficulties related to geographical names. This differs from the suggestions of other translation theorists regarding the translation of place name. For instance, Newmark (1988a: 216) recommended transliteration while Franco Aixelá (1996: 75) proposed the strategy of naturalisation of proper names. Liang (2016: 52), however, suggested that both transliteration and rendition could be appropriate procedures for dealing with English-Chinese proper names. For Marcos (2018: 17) the strong correlation between intracultural adaptation and proper noun was one of his findings regarding Catalan-English food terminology.

It is widely known that both Spanish and English belong to the Indo-European language family; while Chinese pertains to the Sino-Tibetan language family. Among both societies the heterogeneity exists in both linguistic aspects and cultural criteria (Wong & Shen, 1999: 82-

84). For instance, for ‘patio de Banderas’, the most frequent translation in Chinese would be 旗園 [*qiyuan*, Flags Courtyard]. Translated literally, the place name reminds us of a square with thousands of flags flying in the air. Instead, transliterating the phonetics of Banderas into 班德拉斯園 [*Bandelasiyuan*, Banderas Courtyard] loses linguistic and cultural value of SL because the readers of TT cannot associate the transliteration of word with the flags.

Another example is that of ‘salón de Embajadores’ [Hall of Ambassador], the translation to Chinese of which is 大使廳 [*Dashiting*, Hall of Ambassador]. The translator of the TT (as others have opted to transfer not only the denotation of the word but also its connotation) reminds us of the place where the royal family received ambassadors from foreign countries and the public court ceremonial also took place. It is rare that a translator would choose to transliterate this CR as 恩巴哈多勒斯廳 [*Enbahaduolesiting*, Embajadores Hall] because the receptors of the TT could neither catch the denotative nor the connotative meaning of the word ‘Embajadores’.

Regarding the translation of the geographical name from Spanish to Chinese, in the case of common nouns such as ‘banderas’, ‘embajadores’, ‘estanque’, and ‘danza’, the translator tends to adopt the literal translation to transfer the denotative and connotative meanings of the word.

#### *6.1.2 Combination of literal translation with naturalisation as a secondary technique adopted by the translator*

There were four examples of the combination of two techniques, naturalisation and literal translation. These four can be divided into two aspects: the proper name of the historic figure and the common noun. The previous example was ‘palacio del Rey don Pedro’, where the translator chose to transliterate ‘don Pedro’ [don Peter] by mixing it with the literal translation of ‘palacio’ [palace]. The second example was ‘baños de doña María de Padilla’, where the translator opted to transliterate ‘doña María de Padilla’ [dona Maria de Padilla] by mixing it with the literal translation of ‘baño’ [bath]. The translator preferred to transliterate the words ‘don’ [sir] as well as ‘doña’ [maiden]. These differ from titles such as ‘señor’ [Mr.] or ‘señora’ [Mrs.] because ‘don’ and ‘doña’ are normally used in reference to noblemen or the upper class persons. Without any knowledge of the Spanish culture, the receptors of the TT would not capture the idea that both ‘don’ and ‘doña’ are not part of the given name but social titles with respect awarded by Spanish communities.

Regarding the examples of common nouns, ‘galería de los Grutescos’ and ‘naves del Apeadero’ are two exceptions where the translator did not literally translate both the noun ‘grutescos’ and ‘apeadero’. This incongruence of the technique denotes that, when it involves a non-equivalent cultural word in TL, or it is too difficult to transmit the connotative meaning of ST, the translator prefers to transliterate the common nouns to avoid misleading the receptors of TL.

#### *6.1.3 Pure naturalisation rarely exists in the translation of toponym from Spanish to Chinese*

With respect to our case study, the translator did not adopt simple naturalisation to transliterate the geographic name. This might be because most of our place names contained denominator or modifier such as ‘patio’ [courtyard] or ‘jardín’ [garden] and it was not appropriate to simply transliterate their phonetics. Unlike the translation from Spanish to English, using loan word or naturalisation is a common technique because both share the same language root. Nevertheless, it is odd that the translator opts to transliterate from Spanish to Chinese the geographic name that contains the common noun, because in so doing this will surely cause confusion or misunderstanding among the receptors of TT. Pure naturalisation may not completely transfer the information on place name in our case study.

### *6. 2 Anthroponym*

The translator of the TT adopted three types of techniques to transmit a person’s name: naturalisation, recognised translation and couplet.

#### *6.2.1 Naturalisation is the technique that occurred most often in the translation of a person’s name*

Unlike geographical names, the translator of TT employed pure naturalization three times to deal with a person’s name, accounting for 42% of all anthroponyms. These three historic figures were not closely acquainted with the society of TL, therefore the translator opted to transliterate the name of Abderramán III, Alejo Fernández, and Carlos V. This observation coincides with the suggestions proposed by Newmark (1988a: 215), Liang (2016: 52), and Franco Aixelá (1996: 75).

#### *6.2.2 Recognised translation was the second most adopted technique for the translation of a person’s name*

Compared with naturalisation, we found that, when encountering the name of a well-known person, the translator tended to adopt the recognised translation using the institutional

form of the person rather than transliterating it. The instances we detected are ‘Colón’ and ‘Magallanes’. If the translator had followed the Spanish pronunciation, it could be 柯隆 [Kelong] as well as 馬嘎雅內斯 [Magayaneisi]. Nevertheless, seeing these two personal names the readers of TT might not only associate them with two well-known historical navigators, they could also be misled into thinking about two different historical figures.

#### *6.2.3 Amplification within the text was adopted for the translation of appellation*

The translator also adopted the couplet to translate the person’s name. We found two instances, ‘Rey Sabio’ and ‘Isabel de Portugal’. She combined literal translation with amplification for the translation of previous CRs and employed naturalisation alone with the amplification for the second one. We noticed that, compared with the naturalisation for the personal name, she usually adopted the literal translation for the appellation, such as the example of ‘King the Wise’ to explicitly transmit the meaning of ‘Rey Sabio’. Conversely, in the translation of the travel guidebook, it was common to use an additional supplement to amplify the information on the anthroponym within the text instead of using notes or a glossary.

### *6.3 Social culture*

With regard to the category of social culture, we detected four cultural references in relation to the subcategory of social conditions. The translator adopted both naturalisation and recognised translation to handle these culture specific elements.

#### *6.3.1 Naturalisation was the predominant technique for the translation of the appellation*

The translator of our TT preferred to transliterate the social conditions such as ‘emir cordobés’ as well as ‘sultan’. As mentioned previously, the Spanish word ‘emir’ is a common noun; therefore, it seems natural to translate the meaning as Arabic prince or leader rather than, like the translator of the TT, transliterating the phonetics of the word. With regard to Cordova, the city located in Andalusia, it is by no means strange that naturalisation has been used to transfer this proper name. We also consider the translation of Sultan by 蘇丹 [sultan] to be naturalisation.

#### *6.3.2 Recognised translation was the secondary technique for the translation of social conditions*

On one occasion the translator also adopted recognised translation to transfer the Spanish word ‘califa’ by 哈里發 [*halifa*, caliph]. We do not classify this under the category of naturalisation because this is a conventional and popular name in Chinese society. Furthermore, the Chinese translation did not follow the rule of pronunciation of Spanish phonetics.

#### *6.4 Cultural Institution*

In the category of cultural institution we detected five CRs which we divided into two subcategories: four for the fine arts and one for the literature. For these, the translator preferred to adopt a variety of techniques to deal with the non-equivalent cultural words in the TT.

##### *6.4.1 Adoption of a variety of translation technique to treat the ‘lacuna’ of cultural specific items*

The translator adopted four different techniques to handle the cultural elements that lacked equivalent words in the TL: literal translation for ‘cuadro de la *Virgen de los Mareantes*’, intercultural adaptation for ‘retablo’, couplet of both literal translation and naturalisation for ‘*Virgen de la Antigua*’ and finally, modulation for ‘tabla’. With regard to the masterpieces of fine arts, there is a cultural lacuna between the SL and TL. The translator needs to employ various techniques to resolve these non-equivalent cultural elements to make the TT more readable and comprehensible.

##### *6.4.2 Literal translation was the technique most commonly adopted by the translator to resolve the difficulty of the non-equivalent cultural element*

In the category of social institution we detected five CRs. In our study, literal translation was the technique most commonly adopted by the translator to resolve the difficulty of the non-equivalent cultural lexicon. For instance, for ‘cuadro de la *Virgen de los Mareantes*’ and ‘tabla de la *Virgen de la Antigua*’, there is a lack of equivalence between SL and TL. In terms of translating the travel guidebook, literal translation was the most acceptable and common way to treat the lacuna in the culture of TL.

## **7. Conclusion**

The objective of this research was to analyse the cultural references in Seville’s travel guidebook as well as its Chinese translation. To fulfill the aims, we first studied the current

situation in the publishing market regarding the translations of travel guidebooks about Spain in Taiwan. Moreover, through identification of the CRs, we conducted both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the techniques adopted by the translator to deal with these culture-specific items. The contribution of our study is twofold: first, we established frameworks suitable for analysing the CRs extracted from a travel guidebook from Spanish to Chinese. Second, through quantitative analysis of the data obtained from the qualitative study, we determined the techniques used when the translator of the travel guidebook encountered CRs, especially proper names.

With respect to the first contribution, we established a framework for the categories of CRs that was appropriate for the classification of the culture-bound elements contained in the Spanish-Chinese travel guidebook. Second, we established a paradigm of the translation technique that was suitable for an analysis of the techniques the translator used to handle culture-specific items.

We detected 42 of the most representative and significant culture-specific items in the travel guidebook of Real Alcazar to carry out a comparison of our corpus. Among all CRs, we found 26 that belonged to the category of place name; seven examples that were classified as personal names, four that belonged to the category of social culture, and five that were examples of cultural institutions, four of which were related to fine arts and the other to ancient Spanish literature.

In respect of the second contribution, from the data analysed we found that, first, literal translation was the most commonly employed technique regarding the translation of geographical names. We also found that, in the case of common nouns, the translator tended to adopt the literal translation to transfer the denotative and connotative meanings of the word. Second, for place names, the translator preferred to employ the couplet, mixing naturalisation with literal translation to handle the combination of a denominator and the proper name, as in the example of ‘palacio del Rey don Pedro’. Compared with the translation between English and Spanish, we observed that pure naturalisation was difficult to use without combining it with other techniques when the place name owned the classifier as well as the proper name. Thus, the receptors of the TT could not capture the meaning of a classifier such as ‘palacio’ or ‘baño’ if the translator had transliterated the words.

Regarding personal names, transliteration was the technique most commonly adopted in the translation from Spanish to Chinese. In contrast to the place name, literal translation was not the predominant technique for the translation of a person’s name. However, recognised translation was the second most preferred technique. We also noticed that, in the case of an appellation such as ‘Rey Sabio’, amplification within the text was the best option for the translation of the Spanish-Chinese tourist guidebook. With respect to social culture,



transliteration was the predominant technique used for translation of the appellation. Recognised translation was a secondary option for the translation of social conditions.

In respect of cultural institutions, we observed a notable phenomenon in that, where there is no equivalent in the TL culture, the methods used to resolve the ‘lacuna’ in culture can be diverse. Intercultural adaptation, modulation, literal translation, or functional equivalent could all be used. In this study literal translation was the technique most commonly adopted by the translator to transfer the name of the painting to the literary work.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The numbers are based on information extracted primarily from the websites of on-line bookstores as well as the collections of books held in the libraries of various Taiwanese universities.

<sup>2</sup> We would like to clarify the abbreviation that we adopted in the whole study: ST= source text; TT= target text; SL= source language; TL= target language; CR= cultural reference; CRs= cultural references and BT= back translation.

<sup>3</sup> In broad term, “literalist fidelity” can be defined as a person who is faithful to translate text literally. (see Kelly 1997, 2000: 158; Pym 1991: 287)

<sup>4</sup> Here the culture-specific item “mármol de Carrara” denotes a kind of precious white marble that originates from the region of Alpes mountain, situated in the province of Massa e Carrara, in Italy. “Mármol de Carrara” is distinguished from current marble stone and generally has been used in the house of noblemen or scenic spots. More information can be found on the following website: <https://www.conociendoitalia.com/conociendo-el-marmol-de-carrara-toscana-el-marmol-mas-prestigioso-del-mundo/> [Retrieved 2020/01/30]

<sup>5</sup> From 1998 to 2014, Olmedo published more than 10 books. More details about these publications can be found on the following website : <http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-no2007009389/> [Retrieved 2020/2/20]

<sup>6</sup> The author of these two travel guidebooks is Enric Balasch i Blanch. [https://www.amazon.es/s/ref=dp\\_byline\\_sr\\_book\\_1?ie=UTF8&field-author=Enric+Balasch+i+Blanch&search-alias=stripbooks](https://www.amazon.es/s/ref=dp_byline_sr_book_1?ie=UTF8&field-author=Enric+Balasch+i+Blanch&search-alias=stripbooks) [Retrieved 2020/2/20]

<sup>7</sup> Regarding the extratextual factors of our corpus, we wrote an article in Chinese that was published in the *Providence Forum* Vol. 11, No. 2. The complete article can be found in the on-line journal: <http://ir.lib.pu.edu.tw/cpInfo.action?xmlId=0000309048&dtdId=000063> [Retrieved 2018/2/25]

<sup>8</sup> In the dictionary of *Real Academia Española*, ‘Cenador’ is ‘Espacio, comúnmente redondo, que suele haber en los jardines, cercado y vestido de plantas trepadoras, parras o árboles’. More information can be found on: <http://dle.rae.es/?id=8C7U2aL>. [Retrieved 2020/03/05]

<sup>9</sup> In the dictionary of *Real Academia Española* ‘grutesco’ is ‘un adorno de bichos, sabandijas, quimeras y follajes’. More information can be found on <https://dle.rae.es/?id=JaxsQ82>. (Retrieved 2020/03/20)

<sup>10</sup> In the dictionary of *Real Academia Española* ‘grutesco’ is ‘un adorno de bichos, sabandijas, quimeras y follajes’. More information can be found on <https://dle.rae.es/?id=JaxsQ82>. (Retrieved 2019/05/20)

<sup>11</sup> In the dictionary of *Real Academia Española* ‘apeadero’ is ‘sitio en que los viajeros pueden apearse y es cómodo para descansar’. It takes his local name where there was a stop for the occupants of cars entering the Fortress. More information can be found on <https://dle.rae.es/?id=371HyZR>. (Retrieved 2020/03/30)

<sup>12</sup> In the dictionary *Real Academia Española*, related to ‘emir’, it says ‘príncipe o caudillo árabe’.

<sup>13</sup> The definition of the words ‘poetry’ and ‘canticle’ is mainly based on those in the Merriam-Webster dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/poetry> & <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/canticle>. (Retrieved 2020/03/30)

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# **Audiovisual accessibility and translation practices in Spanish cinema and theatre: From regulations to screen and stage**

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## ***Abstract***

*In the last decade, very specific regulations have been developed in Spain regarding media accessibility. Public institutions and academic initiatives are also working to promote media accessibility. Regulative pillars for the implementation of accessibility practices in the audiovisual media are a reality in Spain. There comes the time to analyse if the practices correspond to their demands.*

*This paper presents the results derived from the study of audiovisual accessibility and translation practices implemented in the cinemas and theatres of Malaga (Spain), Mediterranean paradigm of multilingual cultural offer, during the first quarter of 2019. The audiovisual offer, the accessibility and translation practices used, the technical means applied for the display of the final products and the languages involved in the process are studied consequently. The final results may contribute to foster social inclusion and fill in a theoretical gap in academic research.*

## ***Keywords***

*Audiovisual translation, media accessibility, regulations on media accessibility, cinema, theatre, social inclusion.*

## 1. Audiovisual accessibility and translation in Spain: regulations and research

### 1.1. Regulations and public initiatives

Over the past years, universal accessibility to communication and cultural contents has become more important. An increasing sensitivity has led cultural offer to be considered a good that has to be within the reach of all members of society. Therefore, most of the cultural contents have been adapted to different disabilities in order to guarantee universal accessibility.

Although it could seem that people with some type of disability constitute a minority of the population, according to the latest official census carried out by the Spanish Statistical Office (Spanish acronym INE) in 2008 in Spain there were approximately 3.85 million people with some sort of disability, which represented 8.5 per cent of the overall Spanish population (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2008: online; Observatorio Estatal de la Discapacidad 2017: online). If we consider the data in the European context, the figure reaches out 80 million people, which represents nearly 18 per cent of the European population (European Disability Forum 2020: online). Transitory disabilities or acquired disabilities due to age are not included in these figures though.

‘Accessibility’, understood as “a set of characteristics that an environment, a product or a service must have in order to be usable in conditions of comfort, safety and equality by all people and especially by those who have a disability” (Tercedor Sánchez, Lara Burgos, Herrador Molina, Márquez Linares, Márquez Alhambra 2007: 83; our translation) is based on the notions of freedom and equality, which provide every individual with the right to freely develop their personality, a *sine qua non* condition to enjoy a dignified human life (Asís Roig 2007: 33). ‘Universal accessibility’ then extends the scope of accessibility to the “activity by which environments, processes, goods, products, services, objects, devices or tools are conceived or designed, from the outset and whenever possible, in such a way that they can be used by all people, to the greatest extent possible” (Comité Español de Representantes de Personas con Discapacidad 2020: online; our translation).

Moving from the general to the particular, within the framework of international law, the concept of disability gets its first legal relevance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations 2006: online), adopted in 2006 and part of the Spanish legal system since 2008 (Boletín Oficial del Estado 2008: online).

With regard to European legislation, the European Social Charter of Fundamental Rights (Directorate-General for Internal Policies 2016: online) as well as other directives from the European Union have tried to protect rights of people with disabilities. That is the case of the Directive 2010/13/EU (European Parliament 2010: online), where it is stated that “Member States shall encourage media service providers under their jurisdiction to ensure that their services are gradually made accessible to people with a visual or hearing disability,” or the Directive 2019/882 (European Parliament 2019: online), which is believed to be a key directive in order to improve and implement universal accessibility.

As for the Spanish legal framework on disability, media accessibility is protected by various regulations. The Constitution (Boletín Oficial del Estado 1978: online) establishes in its article 10.2 that every principle relating to the fundamental rights and liberties recognised by the Constitution shall be interpreted in conformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948: online). In addition, in its article 49, it states that “[P]ublic authorities shall carry out a policy of preventive care, treatment, rehabilitation and integration of the physically, sensorially and mentally handicapped who shall be given the specialised care

that they require, and be afforded them special protection in order that they may enjoy the rights conferred by this Title upon all citizens”. Thus, the Spanish Constitution considers that an individual with a disability has two distinct roles: as a person and a citizen he/she is the holder of rights inherent to every person, and as a member of a group he/she must receive special protection and particular benefits.

In 2003, the Spanish Government enacted the Law 51/2003 on equality, non-discrimination and universal accessibility. It defines accessibility of people with disabilities as “the conditions that environments, processes, goods, products and services, as well as objects or instruments, tools and devices, must meet in order to be understandable, usable and feasible by all people in conditions of safety and comfort and in the most autonomous and natural way possible” (Boletín Oficial del Estado 2003: online; our translation).

Later on other Spanish regulations developed such as the Royal Decree Act 1494/2007 (Boletín Oficial del Estado 2007b: online) on the basic conditions to access technology, products and services related to the information society and the media by people with disabilities, or the more recent Royal Decree Act 1/2013 (Boletín Oficial del Estado 2013b: online), which approved the revised text of the general law on the rights of people with disabilities and their social inclusion and is meant to guarantee their full exercise of rights and equal opportunities through personal autonomy, access to the labour market and universal accessibility. The Law 2/2013 (Boletín Oficial del Estado 2013a: online) on equal opportunities for people with disabilities, although passed before the former, should be interpreted as its complement as far as it deepens in the exercise of rights and in universal accessibility more generally.

In addition, a specific general Law on audiovisual communication (Boletín Oficial del Estado 2010: online) was passed in 2010. In reference to disabled people, it ensures that 90 per cent of the audiovisual content in public TV channels and 75 per cent in private TV channels must be accessible and therefore adapted to the aforementioned European directives. Actually, at present that seems to be the case according to the report on accessibility for digital terrestrial television in 2019 by the Spanish Centre for Subtitling and Audiodescription (Spanish acronym CESyA) (2020: online).

Finally, the Royal Decree Act 1709/2011 (Boletín Oficial del Estado 2011: online) allowed the creation of the Foro de Cultura Inclusiva (Inclusive Culture Forum), aiming at monitoring the implementation of the integral national strategy Cultura para Todos (Culture for All) for inclusive culture. Its purpose is the application of the article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations 2006: online), which entitles the right of people with disabilities to participate, in equality of conditions, in cultural life. It specifically states the aim of achieving accessible theatres and cinemas, not only referring to the absence of architectural barriers, but also to the possibility of enjoying the audiovisual content they may offer.

On the regional level, the Andalusian Law 10/2018 (Boletín Oficial de la Junta de Andalucía 2018: online) on audiovisual communication underlines the need for audiovisual contents in radio and television stations to be accessible. However, no mention is made to cinemas or any other cultural areas from the private sector dealing with audiovisual material.

Advances in the offer of accessible content have been partially achieved by pressure groups that watch over interests of people with disabilities. In this sense, associations are calling on public institutions to make information universally accessible. Together with the requests of disabled people themselves and a greater awareness in society, initiatives,

legislation and studies, at both national and international levels, which seek equal opportunities in the access to audiovisual media, have arisen.

The work carried out by organisations such as the Spanish National Organization of Blind People (Spanish acronym ONCE), the Spanish Confederation of Families of Deaf People (Spanish acronym FIAPAS), CESyA, the State Confederation of Deaf People (Spanish acronym CNSE), the Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities (Spanish acronym CERMI), the Spanish Association for Standardization and Certification (Spanish acronym AENOR), and the National Centre for Accessibility Technologies should also be highlighted (Díaz Cintas and Anderman 2009: 6).

Projects in media accessibility have also flourished. One of the most remarkable projects on accessibility to the cinemas is Cine Accesible (Accessible Cinema) developed by the Fundación Orange (2016: online). Between 2007 and 2016 it offered subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing and audio description for the visually impaired. Cine Accesible worked with cinemas in more than 30 different Spanish cities like Bilbao, Madrid, Pamplona and Valencia. In the case of theatres, the accessibility project Teatro Accesible (Accessible Theatre) promoted by the Vodafone Foundation España, CRL Nueva Vida and Aptent (Teatro Accesible 2020: online), beginning in 2011, had the aim of achieving inclusion and accessibility in all Spanish theatres. The Universal Access System, developed in 2011 at the Autonomous University of Barcelona in order to provide accessible cultural media content is also relevant (Oncins, Lopes, Orero, Serrano, Carrabina 2013: online).

### *1.2. Academic research*

In the very same line of public and regulative awareness-raising, academic research on media accessibility has flourished in recent years.

Moving from the particular to the general, on the regional level the Andalusian research group Aula de investigación del texto multimedia: la traducción audiovisual (Research Classroom on Multimedia Text: Audiovisual Translation), led by Jiménez Hurtado in the University of Granada (2021: online), is developing from 2003 to the present many projects on the evaluation and management of accessible audiovisual resources. Their last project was focused on the access to leisure and cultural activities, paying special attention to audio description and accessible translation in museums.

In the rest of Spain, three research hubs on media accessibility and audiovisual translation stand out.

In the first place, it is worth mentioning the Autonomous University of Barcelona (2021: online), where Orero created the research group TransMedia Catalonia in 2005. Its research line approaches media accessibility from various perspectives (psychological, communicative, linguistic, etc.) and its main research interests delve into audio description, audio subtitling and subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing. They have accomplished research on accessible opera and, more recently, on subtitles in cinematic virtual reality. They actively participate in knowledge transfer activities related to the professional market.

In the second place, the Spanish National Distance Education University (2021: online) welcomes the research group Didactic Audiovisual Translation (TRADIT), coordinated by Talaván Zanón. They specialise in media accessibility mainly from a didactic perspective.

In the third place, from the University of Vigo (2021: online) the Galician Observatory for Media Accessibility (GALMA) offers special care to the quality in media accessibility and its integration as part of the audiovisual production process.



Some researchers belonging to GALMA and Transmedia Catalonia research groups have developed the Media Accessibility Platform (MAP), described as “a unified atlas charting the worldwide landscape of research, policies, training and practices in this field” (Greco, Matamala, Orero, Romero Fresco 2021: online). A partir de esta plataforma, se pueden rastrear los proyectos investigadores que en el resto del mundo y, de modo sobresaliente, en Europa se vienen desarrollando sobre la accesibilidad a los medios.

However, it should be noted that to present date no research work has been located, carried out either within projects or autonomously by researchers (Richart-Marset, Calamita 2020: online), that addresses the issue of accessibility and translation practices in cinemas and theatres as it is specifically approached in this work through an empirical case study.

## **2. Practices of audiovisual accessibility and translation in Spain: a case study located in Malaga**

### *2.1. Research context*

The context of our research is located in the city of Malaga, capital of the province of Malaga (Andalusia, Spain).

According to the data provided by the INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2019: online) in its statistics of the continuous census, Malaga is the sixth largest city in terms of population in Spain, only surpassed by Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Seville and Zaragoza. The population report of the regional government Junta de Andalucía (2018: online) states that in the province of Malaga the Spanish population increased by 0.3 per cent while the foreign population increased by 5.8 per cent in 2019, in relation to the 2018 data, what makes it gather almost 40 per cent of the foreign residents in Andalusia. Malaga is at the top of the list of municipalities with the highest number of foreign residents, whose nationalities, throughout Andalusia, are mainly Moroccan, Romanian and British, with the latter predominating in Malaga.

Furthermore, Spain is known for being one of the most popular tourist destinations in Europe. United Kingdom (27.1 per cent), Germany (20.4 per cent) and France (8.2 per cent) are the origin countries the tourists with longer stays within Spanish boundaries. The Costa del Sol, whose capital is Malaga, is in third place of tourist arrivals, just behind Tenerife and Gran Canaria (General State Administration 2018: 47-49).

Spanish population, national and foreign, consider reading books and going to the cinema to be the most widespread cultural activities (62.2 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively for the years 2014-2015) while attending concerts or theatre performances (43.5 per cent), visiting monuments and sites of interest (42.8 per cent), and visiting museums, exhibitions and art galleries (39.4 per cent) are less practiced cultural activities (General State Administration, 2018: 16).

In addition, according to the annual report of the Fundación Contemporánea (2019, 6-7) on culture in Spain in 2018, Malaga (40.9 per cent) is the fifth cultural capital of Spain, after Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao and Valencia. The ranking is based on the quality and innovation of Malaga's cultural offer, and has improved in comparison to previous years. Gastronomy becomes consolidated as the main field of culture, while plastic arts, theatre, cinema, dance, classical and contemporary music, video art and popular music are placed, in that order, from the seventh position on (Fundación Contemporánea 2019: 8). Museo Picasso Málaga is placed

in the sixteenth position of the national ranking of the Spanish cultural panorama (museums and art centres, cultural centres, theatres, festivals and fairs of music, cinema and art). Malaga Spanish Film Festival (31st place), Centre Pompidou Málaga (42nd place) and La Térmica (60th place) also have their mentions among the 72 institutions and activities highlighted by the panelists surveyed (Fundación Contemporánea 2019, 9-13). In the Andalusian ranking, consisting of twenty elements, Malaga includes four other activities apart from the previous ones: Colección del Museo Ruso, CAC (Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga), Museo Carmen Thyssen de Málaga and Teatro Cervantes de Málaga. Malaga thus ranks first on the cultural offer in Andalusia (Fundación Contemporánea, 2019: 9-15).

The Area of Culture of the City Council of Malaga, as the main body managing the heritage of the town, offers an important diffusion and promotion of the arts, sciences, music, reading and historical-artistic heritage of the city. It is no stranger to the consideration of Malaga as a Mediterranean paradigm of multilingual cultural offer, as proved by the free audio guides developed in nine languages and easily accessible online.

## *2.2. Research framework*

### *2.2.1. Hypothesis*

As stated before, the right to social inclusion of people with disabilities is a reality objectified and reflected in recent years in Spanish and European regulations. Audiovisual accessibility, in the words of CESyA (2020: online; our translation), is “the condition that must be met by audiovisual media to be understandable and usable by people with sensory disabilities.” It can be done mainly through subtitling and audio description as basic tools to guarantee “the right of users to access leisure, culture and information that are offered in society in different ways and places” (television, internet, cinema, museums, theatre, DVD). Now, if we analyse the cultural offer that CESyA shows in its Accessible Cultural Agenda, we locate few accessible events in the city of Malaga in relation to the four areas that are advertised, namely, cinema, theatre, museums and other events.

Our research is based then on a main directional hypothesis (Mellinger and Hanson 2016: 5): in spite of regulations regarding the accessibility to the media of people with disabilities and despite the multilingual cultural nature of the city of Malaga, film listings and theatre guides do not offer enough audiovisual products available to all potential recipients, both in Spanish and in other languages used in the city by residents or tourists (e.g. English, German or French).

### *2.2.2. Research objectives*

From this working hypothesis, our research proposes as its main objective the elaboration of a state-of-the-art on the situation of accessibility to the media in the city of Malaga. It focuses, on the one hand, on the media that by their own nature are audiovisual, i.e. cinema and theatre, and, on the other hand, on the study of the showing and staging phase of films and plays originally written in Spanish but also translated into Spanish from other languages.

In a later stage we intend to delve into the production of the former audiovisual products and the demands of the prospective recipients in order to complete a technical report that suggests actions to imbricate norm and academic theory with professional practice in favour of social inclusion.

### 2.2.3. Research methodology

This research is mainly observational (Mellinger and Hanson 2016: 6-8). Contextual information was collected from open electronic sources where the state of audiovisual accessibility and translation in cinema and theatre in Malaga is synthesized (audiovisual offer, accessibility and translation practices, technical means and languages).

Although the information was processed using a statistical study tool (Excel), its usefulness was assessed qualitatively. In this sense, we did not believe that the integration of other specific quantitative analysis software such as SPSS was justified.

We used the investigator triangulation as proposed by Denzin (2006). The analysis of the collected data was carried out by each of the researchers independently, and in a later phase both analyses were compared using consensus to validate the specific findings.

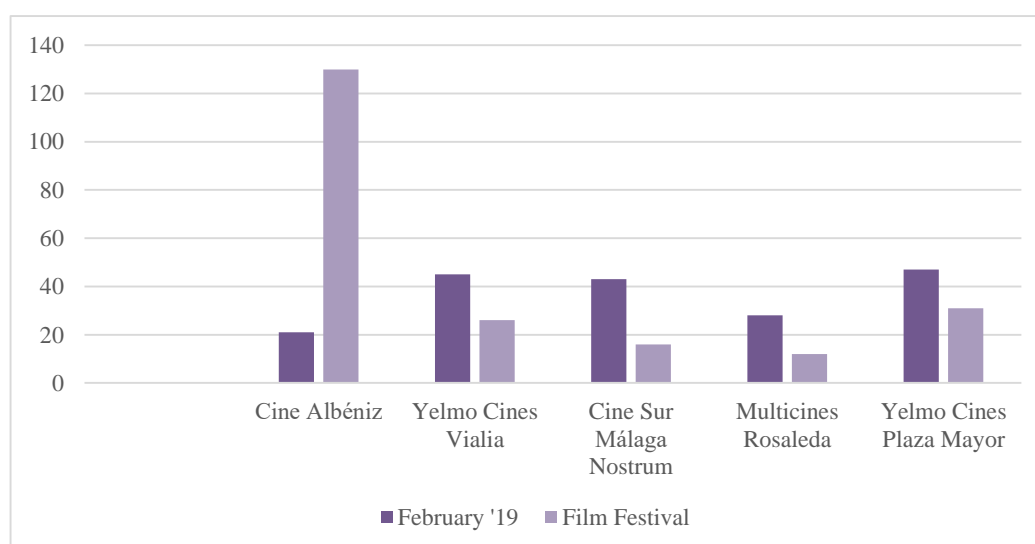
We conducted the empirical study in a period of three months, from January to March 2019. In the case of cinema, we collected information about its ordinary audiovisual offer in the month of February and about its extraordinary audiovisual offer through the 22nd Malaga Spanish Film Festival from March 15 to 24, 2019. In the case of theatre, we collected ordinary data in March and extraordinary data at the 36th Malaga Theatre Festival from January 6 to February 13, 2019.

## 3. Audiovisual accessibility and translation in cinema

### 3.1. Audiovisual offer

The city of Malaga has five cinemas with different capacities, that vary from 21 screens in the biggest one to 4 screens in the smallest one: Cine Albéniz (Malaga municipality, 4 screens), Yelmo Cines Vialia (Cinépolis, 13 screens), Cine Sur Málaga Nostrum (MK2, 21 screens), Multicines Rosaleda (Unión Cine Ciudad, 12 screens) and Yelmo Cines Plaza Mayor (Cinépolis, 14 screens).

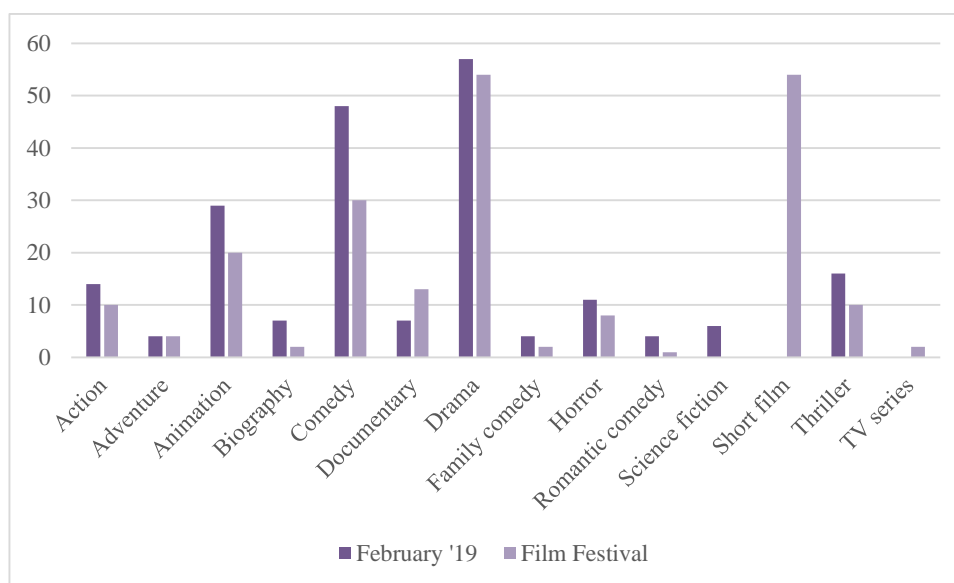
Their audiovisual offer during the month of February 2019 as well as during the 22nd Malaga Spanish Film Festival held from March 15 to 24, 2019 is shown as follows:



Graph 1 Number of works shown in the cinemas of Malaga

Most of the films, 130 out of 215 films (60.5 per cent), shown in March 2019 are held in the centrally located Cine Albéniz because the 22nd Malaga Spanish Film Festival takes place in it. Due to the interest in that event, many of the cinemagoers concentrate during some weeks in the Cine Albéniz, which makes the film offer at the rest of the cinemas decrease. In February 2019 a total of 184 films are displayed, with percentages ranging from 24 to 25.5 per cent in the case of the bigger cinemas to 11 and 15 per cent in the smaller ones.

As for the genres of the films, drama excels as the most shown in Malaga in both temporal spans (57 in the general ordinary programme and 54 films in the Festival), only followed closely by comedy (48 and 30, respectively).



Graph 2 *Genre of the works shown in the cinemas of Malaga*

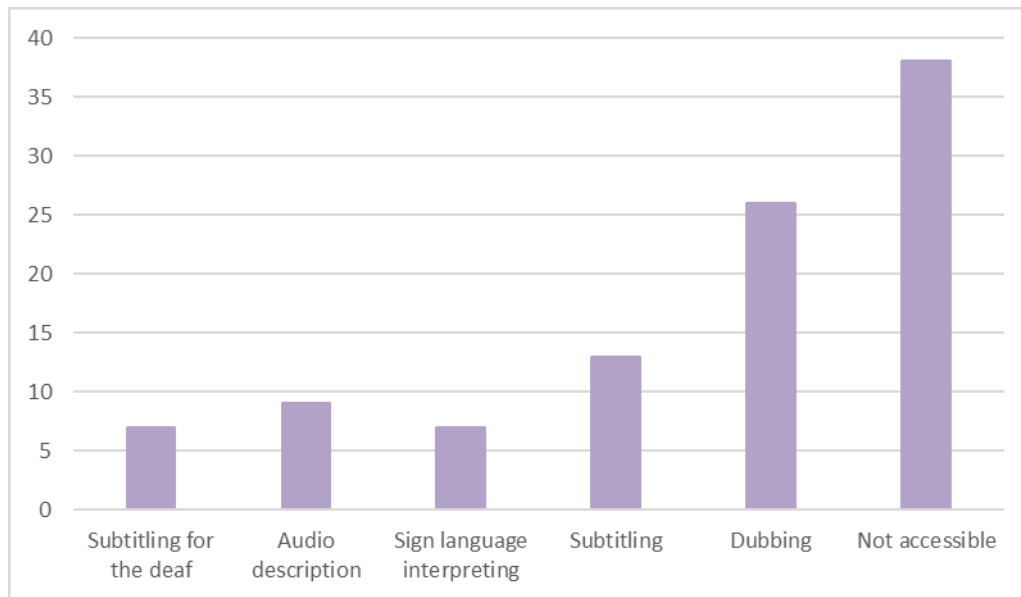
There is an age rating for the films shown in the cinemas, published by the Spanish Ministry of Culture and Sports (Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte 2020: online). Advertising this rating is mandatory for commercial cinemas and places with public screenings. However, there is one exception to it according to the Spanish Law 55/2007 (Boletín Oficial del Estado 2007a: online): film festivals, like the one held in Malaga. This is the reason why only 2 films are pending the rating in the February cinema programme, whereas among those of the 22nd Malaga Spanish Film Festival there are 6 of them pending the rating and 78 without any information at all.

### 3.2. *Accessibility and translation practices*

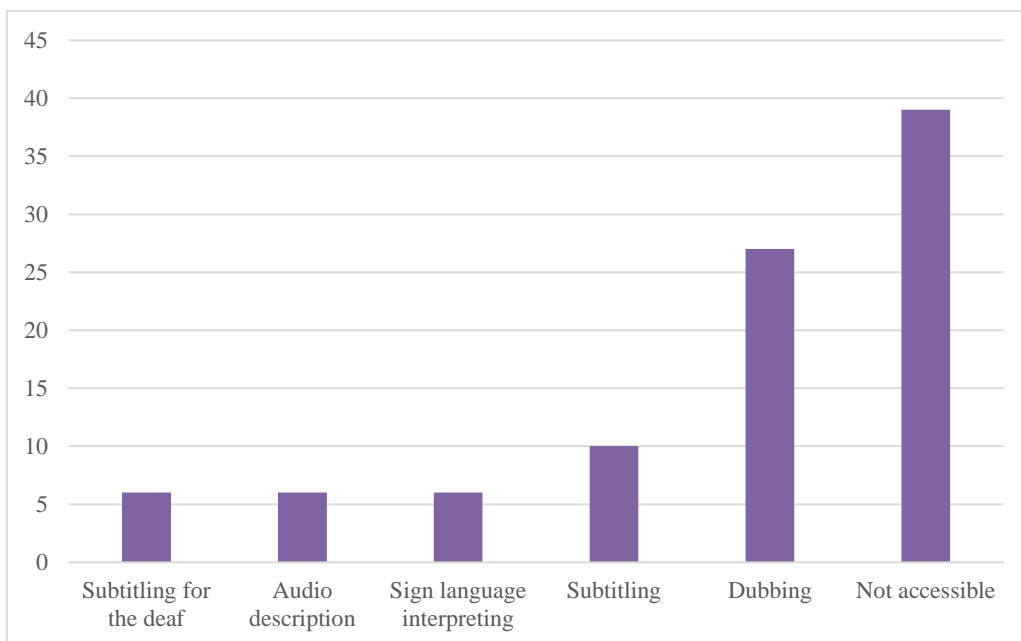
Within this broad offer, only 15 films in February and 8 films during the 22nd Malaga Spanish Film Festival are accessible.

Namely, the films in February are shown in two cinemas belonging to the same chain, Cinépolis. Yelmo Cines Plaza Mayor and Yelmo Cines Vialia offer subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing (SDH) as well as sign language interpreting (SLI) and audio description (AD) for 13 films, and only AD for 2. However, there is only a variety of 10 films, some of them shown in both cinemas and one of them shown in both a dubbed version and a subtitled

one into Spanish. The other cinemas do not have any offer of accessible films, even though the Cine Albéniz and Cine Sur Málaga Nostrum offer Spanish subtitles for 18 and 7 films each.

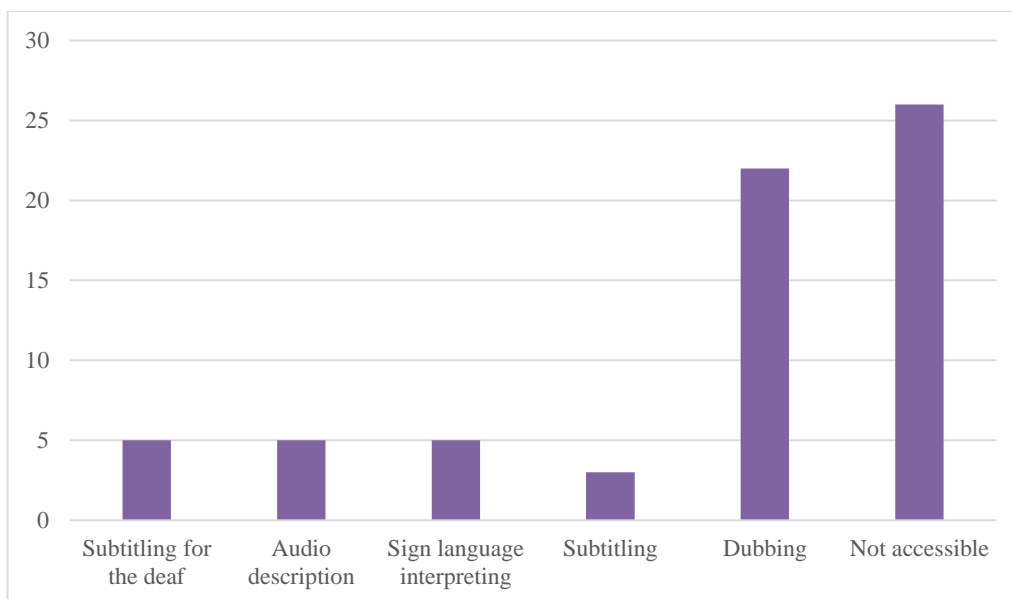


Graph 3 Accessibility and translation practices at Yelmo Cines Plaza Mayor (February '19)

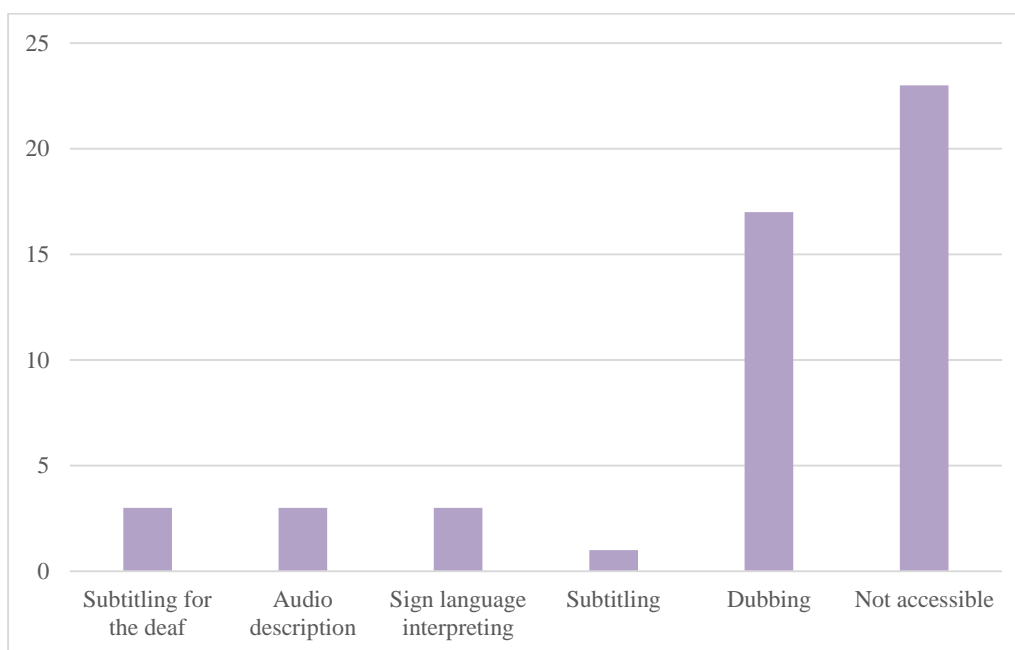


Graph 4 Accessibility and translation practices at Yelmo Cines Vialia (February '19)

During the 22nd Malaga Spanish Film Festival, the offer in accessible films decreases: Yelmo Cines Plaza Mayor offers 5 films with SDH, AD and SLI while Yelmo Cine Vialia offers 3 films with SDH, AD and SLI.

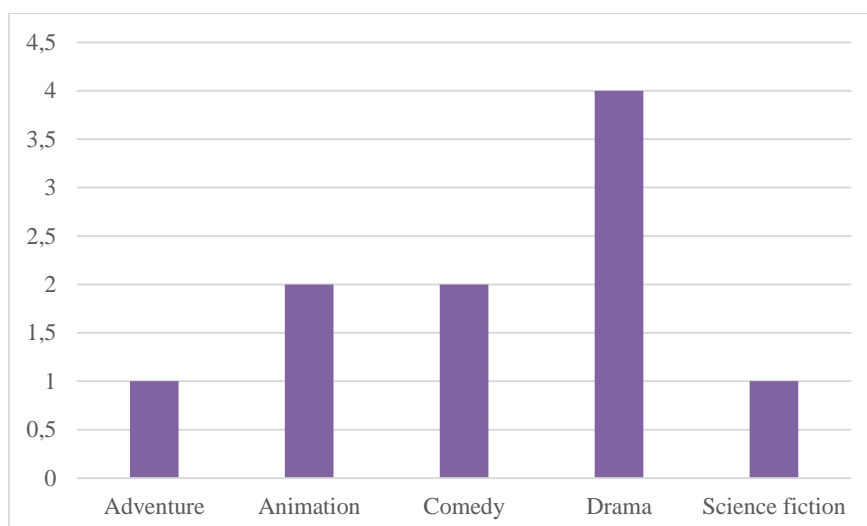


Graph 5 Accessibility and translation practices at Yelmo Cines Plaza Mayor (Film Festival)



Graph 6 Accessibility and translation practices at Yelmo Cines Vialia (Film Festival)

The scarce offer is at least varied as far as genre is concerned, excelling drama again:



Graph 7 Genre distribution of accessible films in the cinemas of Malaga

### 3.3. Technical means

Not always are there technical means available: 21 films offer the spectator the possibility to use WhatsCine and 2 films can be watched using Audesc Mobile.

WhatsCine (2020: online) is a free application for audio description, adapted subtitling and Spanish Sign Language, created in collaboration with the Spanish University Carlos III. It

can be used in movie theatres, with a server connected to a closed Wi-Fi network, which contains the necessary software to host, manage and synchronise the accessibility files of the audiovisual content, previously created by certified centres. The synchronisation process, through a complex mathematical model, recognizes which content is being broadcast and launches the chosen accessibility service at the exact point where it is located.

AudescMobile (AMovil 2013: online) is a similar, free solution on a mobile device, promoted by ONCE with the support of the Vodafone Foundation España. It allows visually impaired people to access the audio description of films, and any other audiovisual production, with synchronised audio playback and a video in progress, regardless of the physical platform on which it is broadcast.

### 3.4. Languages involved

Most of the accessible films (13 out of 15) are produced in the United States of America and dubbed and/or subtitled from American English into Spanish; only 2 are original Spanish films. There are no other languages involved. Financial profit could easily underlie the priority given to American commercial productions.

## 4. Audiovisual accessibility and translation in theatre

#### *4.1. Audiovisual offer*

At present Malaga has four theatres: Teatro del Soho, Teatro Cervantes, Teatro Echegaray and Teatro Cánovas.

The Teatro Alameda, the only large-scale private theatre in Andalusia, was active from its creation in 1961 until May 2018, when it was closed to the public for its renovation. From October 2019 it became the Teatro del Soho, a project sponsored by Antonio Banderas. It has two halls: a main one on the ground floor with a capacity of approximately 627 seats and a secondary one on the upper floor with room for about 235 seats. Own productions of national and international scope are exhibited in the main hall while the works of alternative theatre are anticipated in the secondary one. The agreement between Antonio Banderas and the businessmen Jesús and Carlos Sánchez-Ramade, owners and managers of the theatre up to the present, will last twenty years. Lluís Pasqual is in charge of the direction. In its architectural configuration it highlights the compliance with current local regulations (Boletín Oficial de la Provincia de Málaga 2004: 61) in relation to accessibility in the conditioning of theatres, halls and auditoriums (Hinojosa 2018: online).<sup>1</sup>

The Teatro Cervantes and the Teatro Echegaray are theatres acquired and managed by the City Council of Malaga and directed today by Juan Antonio Vigar.

The Teatro Cervantes, known first as the Teatro Miguel de Cervantes, dates back to 1870, when the Ministry of Culture declared it a Historic Artistic Monument. Since 2005 the Teatro Cervantes is an Asset of Cultural Interest of the Andalusian Historical Heritage. It has undergone several renovations to update its equipment to the current local regulations regarding accessibility. In collaboration with the Accessibility Area of the City of Malaga, some ramps, an elevator, a magnetic inductive loop system for hearing aid users and a system for signalling the room with pictograms, easy reading and Braille in the number of the box seats and stalls were installed. The Teatro Cervantes offers six seats to spectators with disabilities. With a final capacity of 1134 seats distributed in a single hall, the Teatro Cervantes offers national and international shows of different scenic genres of lyric, music, theatre and dance. Its programme is designed to “Satisfy the demands and interests of citizens regardless of their age, social status, training, cultural background or any other type of features and particularities” (Teatro Cervantes 2020: online; our translation).

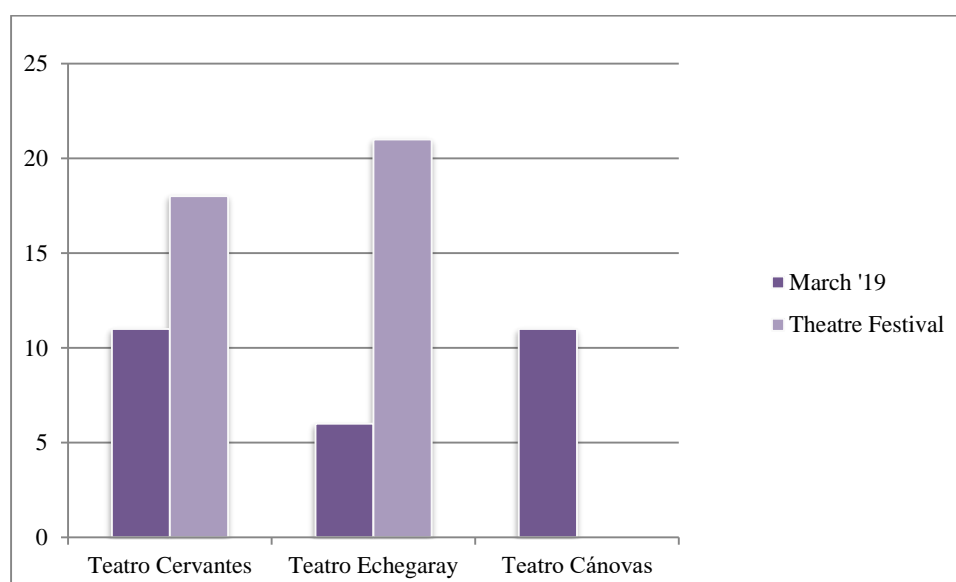
The Teatro Echegaray was inaugurated in 1932 as Cine Echegaray. Films were projected until 2001, when the City Council of Malaga signed an agreement with its owners to destine it to theatrical use. The remodelling, completed in 2009, resulted in a theatre with a capacity for 297 seats in a single hall. It has a ramp to facilitate access for people with reduced mobility and it also has architectural accessibility in the first row of seats. In addition, it has integrated the magnetic loop for hearing aids. Managed by the City Council of Malaga and thought of as an alternative scenic space to the Teatro Cervantes, the Teatro Echegaray offers national and international avant-garde and repertoire shows, from small-format lyric to theatrical performances such as music or children’s theatre. Moreover, it has its own production space, Factoría Echegaray, which “enables [...] the integration of the different branches of the performing arts” (Teatro Cervantes 2020: online; our translation).

In its joint mission to offer the public of Malaga a diversified theatrical show, both theatres, Cervantes and Echegaray, offer tickets and discounts for general public, young people, people with disabilities, pensioners and retirees, unemployed, schools, institutes and conservatories, and cultural associations (Teatro Cervantes 2020: online).



The Teatro Cánovas was opened in 1991. Since 2005 it has been managed by the Andalusian Agency of Cultural Institutions, attached to the Office of Culture and Historical Heritage of the regional government Junta de Andalucía as the Teatro Alhambra in Granada and the Teatro Central in Seville. Its coordinator is Antonio Navajas. It is a modern building that has three halls: Main Hall (370 seats), Hall B (50 seats), and Sala Gades (234 seats). The Teatro Cánovas (Main Hall and Hall B) specializes in children and young people, while the Sala Gades, located in the Higher Professional Dance Conservatory, programs performances related to this stage genre. Within its national and international programme, its own productions stand out. The Cánovas Pass, intended for a general public, the Amigo Card, aimed at young people, students, unemployed, the elderly or members of a professional association of the performing arts, and the Family Pack, aimed at families of at least four members, promote the access to its programming of varied social collectives. Groups and teaching centres obtain special rates for night shows and people with disabilities are generally considered in discounts for other groups (Teatro Cánovas 2020: online).

The audiovisual offer of these three last theatres during the month of March 2019 and during the 36th Malaga Theatre Festival held from January 6 to February 13, 2019 is summarized in the following graph:



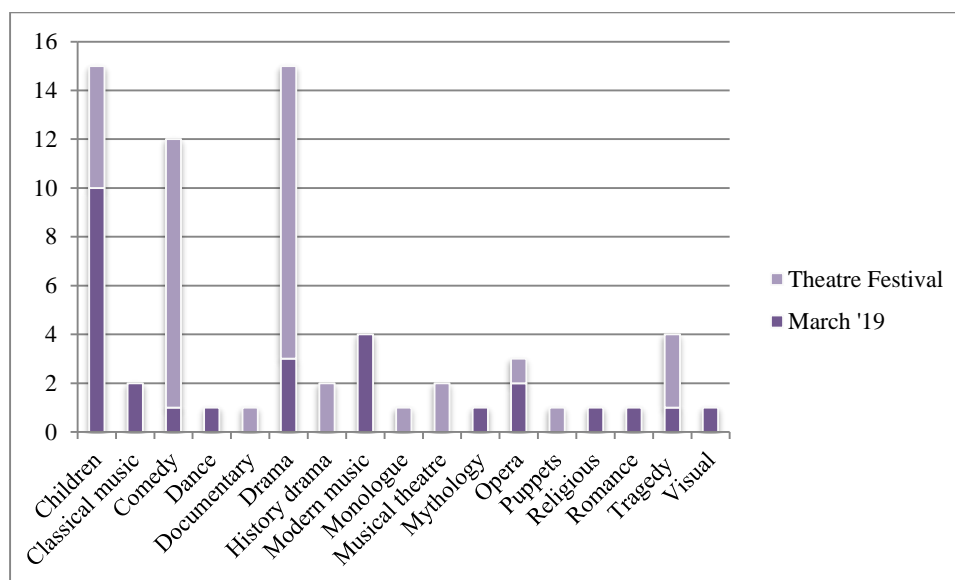
Graph 8 *Number of works performed in the theatres of Malaga*

In March 2019, in the ordinary guide of theatres, whose performances amount to 28, the Teatro Cervantes and the Teatro Cánovas offer the same number of plays (11, corresponding to 39.3 per cent of the total offer each), while the Teatro Echegaray hosts a lower number (6, corresponding to 21.4 per cent of the total offer).

The Teatro Cánovas does not participate as the venue for the Malaga Theatre Festival, which is centralized in the Teatro Cervantes, the Teatro Echegaray and other smaller stage spaces such as the Sala Joaquín Eléjar, the Microteatro Málaga, the Caja Blanca or the Museo del Vino. The Teatro Cervantes and the Teatro Echegaray have almost evenly distributed plays of the Festival, which are a total of 39, with 46.2 per cent (corresponding to 18 plays) the first and 53.8 per cent the second (corresponding to 21 plays).

Of all the plays performed in all the theatres, at ordinary and extraordinary times, only one has an international character from a linguistic point of view, that is, it has been performed in a language other than Spanish, that is, Italian. This is the opera *Aida*, offered by the Teatro Cervantes in its ordinary programme of the month of March 2019.

In relation to the genre of performances, theatre for children stands out in the general ordinary programme with 35.7 per cent of performances (corresponding to 10 plays), while drama (42.8 per cent or 12 plays) and comedy (39.3 per cent or 11 plays) are among the most performed plays during the Festival.



Graph 9 Genre of the works performed in the theatres of Malaga

The ordinary theatrical production in Malaga does not reflect a specific age rating except in plays intended for children audience, in which the age from which children can attend the performance is recommended (from toddlers to 7-year old children on). In the Festival, in addition to the recommendations for children (from 3-year old children on), 10.2 per cent of the performances offer indications about the age of their recipients (corresponding to 4 comedy, drama, tragedy and documentary plays).

#### 4.2. Accessibility and translation practices

Out of the accessibility and translation practices that can be implemented only the opera *Aida* uses interlingual surtitling, performed in the Teatro Cervantes in March 2019.

#### 4.3. Technical means

The technical means used for the only existing case of accessibility and translation practice, the opera *Aida* performed at the Teatro Cervantes in March 2019, follow these guidelines: “The staging of the operas has surtitling in Spanish for the better monitoring and understanding of them, which is not always possible from the seats closest to the stage, given the location of the screen,” (Teatro Cervantes 2020: online; our translation). In fact, the surtitle

is projected on a narrow horizontal screen located in the upper part of the stage. In the case of *Aida* a production company with an in-house translation service carried out the staging.

#### *4.4. Languages involved*

The working languages for the opera *Aida* are Italian as the original language and Spanish as the translation language. The surtitles, therefore, imply in this case an interlingual translation.

### **5. Conclusions**

The analysis of the results allows us to verify our main directional hypothesis, but certain comments are applicable to it.

As regards the cinema, the cinematographic offer in the city of Malaga by 2019 is wide. However, the percentage of accessible films offered is minimal (5.8 per cent of the total), though the legislation provides a framework for the implementation of accessible cultural content and requires it to be taken into account. Nevertheless, it seems that the absence of positive motivation for private enterprises that offer audiovisual products and fines or penalties when accessibility is not guaranteed leads to comply with the legislation only in a very small percentage. Not only is the percentage notable, but also the nature of the accessible audiovisual material. For instance, none of the films presented at the 22nd Malaga Spanish Film Festival were accessible and, therefore, people with disabilities would have difficulties in attending the presentations of new and original works. Likewise, audiovisual products like short films or documentaries, and even miniseries, that are usually not part of the movie theatre programmes, but of the 22nd Malaga Spanish Film Festival, cannot be enjoyed by sensory disabled people as there is no accessible offer at all. So, it is no surprise that CERMI recently demanded that the existing Spanish Law 55/2007 (Boletín Oficial del Estado 2007a: online) on cinema had to be amended to ensure audiovisual accessibility for people with disabilities (Tododisca 2019: online). They argue that regulatory provisions are not only scarce but also lax, and, as a consequence, they are insufficient to guarantee the rights that the law foresees for people with sensory disabilities.

In relation to the theatre, the plays performed in the theatres are mostly national from a linguistic point of view, either because they are translations of works originally written in other languages or because they are their own productions. This condition influences possible interlingual translation practices, given that they are not necessary for an audience without sensory or mental disabilities, but should not influence media accessibility practices, since they contemplate intralingual translation. Only the Teatro Cervantes has audiovisual accessibility means but exclusively circumscribed to opera intralingual and interlingual surtitling. This means that even specific legislation like the Royal Decree Act 1709/2011 (Boletín Oficial del Estado 2011: online) with its national strategy for inclusive culture has for now not been able to achieve the goal of real cultural inclusion, although working closely together with stakeholders like CESyA. We can see that the aim of the specific legislation often remains a good wish not been applied so far.

Taking into account both scenarios, we can conclude that the situation of accessibility to the media in the cinema and the theatre in Malaga is still to be developed. The cultural offer in these two audiovisual media is wide for a general potential audience, but very restricted for

a group with disabilities who requires translating practices such as SDH, AD, surtitling, live subtitling (through respeaking) or SLI. Expanding this offer would mean a re-evaluation of the processes and practices that each film or theatre company is currently carrying out based on documented and concrete work suggestions. In this sense we intend to continue our research by directing the focus to producers and recipients so that a technical report can be the basic tool on which to set up accessible translation practices that favour social inclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> The Teatro del Soho is not included because at the time of the empirical research the theatre was still under major renovation works.

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# Arabic- English Translation in the Palestinian – Israeli ‘Conflict’: Ideology in the Wings<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*This study presents a critical analysis of a sample of Arabic-English media translations sponsored by MEMRI (Middle Eastern Media Research Institution) and related to the Palestinian-Israeli ‘conflict’ in special dispatch stories taken from Arabic Newspapers and magazines. The results of the study show that translation has been employed as a tool to propagate the views and ideologies of the translators in a good number of cases. Such translations contain terms and ideas that have changed the original intended meaning. The study further demonstrates that the translators’ association with the text could affect the translation and the ideology of the target text especially in contexts of political conflicts.*

**Keywords:** Arabic-English translation, ideology, media, Palestinian-Israeli conflict

## 1. Introduction

This is a study on translation and ideology. In particular, it aims to demonstrate how ideologically motivated Arabic-English translation in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli ‘conflict’ can be used as a manipulation tool to reshape the recipient’s perceptions, beliefs, ideas and thoughts. To demonstrate this, the current study draws on House’s (2015) Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) model and applies it to the English translations of a collection of Arabic-English media translations sponsored by the Middle Eastern Media Research Institution (MEMRI) and related to the Palestinian-Israeli ‘conflict’ in special dispatch stories taken from Arabic Newspapers and other media sources.

Media and translation are important tools of communication which are used to connect peoples and cultures (Abdulla 1999). In this context, news media are used by different institutions to project their ideas and thoughts as well as their cultural, political and religious beliefs and perceptions. Thus, the employment of media and translation serves, though mostly indirectly, to present the interests of these institutions by attempting to influence the recipients’ ideas and beliefs. Put another way, an important aim of media and translation agencies is to persuade the recipient of certain views and perceptions.

The message presented by these agencies is never transmitted in a vacuum. It is more likely to be affected by the translator’s beliefs, thoughts, values, i.e. the translator’s ideology. In this sense, the translator is the leader of the translation process which stands as an ideological carrier from one language or cultural community to another. Translators are often free to choose the source text (ST), the recipient audience and the strategies they apply. These choices affect the translation process and the outcome through the application of strategies such as lexical choice, substitution, addition and deletion that may change the meaning of the original ST (Sharma 2015; Sinha 2015; Soori 2015).

Translation, especially in the context of conflict and instability, embodies a number of sensitive and controversial issues which represent certain political and ideological stances (Byewerk 1998; Asghar 2015). These stances are mainly affected by the translator or the translation agency’s beliefs and views toward certain matters. In this sense, translation turns into a manipulatory act that contributes to reshaping the recipients’ thoughts and perceptions towards



certain issues through hidden devices within the text (Shuping 2013). This act, once achieved, creates a context for the recipient to be involuntarily affected by the ideology of the translator or the agency. The recipients receive new ideas and cultural forms which either detach them from a certain perspective or link them with certain ideas and beliefs depending on the received material and the ideology of the translator.

Furthermore, the translator's ideological choices may emphasize or suppress the meaning and the message behind the ST and thus change its author's ideas and beliefs. Consequently, these changes may lead to manipulating the readers' mind through presenting a new version loaded with 'alien' concepts and ideas. Once this happens, this new version, i.e., the target text (TT) creates an ideological misrepresentation which deludes the recipient from the original meaning and creates a different understanding, especially in the context of political conflict and instability, to generate certain notions or weaken some established views.

## **2. Translation, media and ideology**

Ideology plays a very important role in shaping and reshaping ideas and texts in translation (Said 2008; Karoubi 2009; Oyelele and Osisnawo 2013; Melhem 2017). De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:109) are among the first to discuss the subject of ideology and translation, suggesting that ideology intervenes with the translated text when the ideology of the ST does not match the translator's own ideology. Ideology can drive the translator to empower or diminish a perspective to achieve certain goals through a manipulation process applied to the text. Therefore, the text is usually managed "according to the producer's outlook, beliefs, plans and goals" De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981: 109). Venuti (1998:7) describes translation as a rewriting process which allows those in power to project their ideologies and propaganda through the TT. When the meaning of the original text is "differential, exceeding and possibly conflicting with the intentions of ... the translator" Venuti (1998: 7), the translator tends to maneuver, persuade and twist the text to match his/her own narrative of the story.

Van Dijk (1998:2) presents a theory and a definition of ideology which explains how ideology is manipulated, expressed and reproduced by discourse. He defines it as "a system of wrong, false, distorted or otherwise misguided beliefs, typically associated with our social or political opponents". He posits that ideologies are basic systems that present common social orders which affect and reshape the ideas and beliefs of certain groups. In the same vein, Baker (1998:107) suggests that "individuals and institutions have applied their particular beliefs to the production of certain effects in translation" (see also Baker 1992, 2006). Shuping (2013: 56) claims that "translation has never been an isolated activity". It is governed by the translators' affiliations in the text and context which "has been shaped by a certain force, power or reason" Aksoy (2001: 3).

Further, Fandi (2005: 67) argues that ideology is concerned with reproduction, legitimization, false ideas, and dominant power, social and political interests. He claims that "translation gives only a partial version of reality because some translators may well be inclined to manipulate, distort and suppress so that the end product, i.e. translation, is recognizably biased and prejudiced". However, Chung-ling (2010) argues that the ideologies and strategies applied by the translators are controlled and constrained by authoritative bodies such as institutions, publishers and governments. The choice of strategies is "out of their free will and personal preferences... [and] ideology [is] one of the varieties that has governed the translator's choice of strategy and the overall translation performance".

In addition, an ideology is not always easily spotted by the reader or the recipient. The recipients tend to rely on the new media agencies or institution to receive their daily news and refine

their perceptions, especially with regard to religious and political contexts. Ashubbak and Hussein (2013: 105) confirm that the promotion of ideology can be best manifested in political contexts because they contain sensitive and controversial issues. They remark that “the matter of objectivity and subjectivity is subjective to the political and ideological dimensions of the translators”. Lopez and Caro (2014: 250) also believe that the translated text is managed by the translators’ political, cultural and religious views which control their decisions. These decisions “may also be ideologically biased, exerting a positive or negative influence on the image and impact of a translation and its target culture” Lopez and Caro (2014: 250).

In contrast, Aslani and Salmani (2015: 86) add that news agencies influence the delivery of information and affect the translation process through biased interpretations embedded in the translated text. They claim that “power relations and ideological stand points of the news providers highly affect the process of news production in translation”. Allawzi (2018: 3) believes that the language and content of the translated news report are controlled by the narrative and ideology of the news agency. She claims that:

*Language can be a battlefield of discourses and counter discourses that promote and/or change certain ideologies. Thus, it can be used as a manipulation tool for the interest of certain power and agents in order to promote certain ideas and thoughts.*

As is clear, the studies presented above show that ideology in translation has been investigated by many scholars in different contexts and different languages. However, political texts occupy a significant position due to their vital role in shaping the audiences’ perspectives, decisions and attitudes. In this context, the study reported here examines the extent to which the Arabic-English translation of political texts has the potential to be used as a proxy for promoting ideologies through employing House’s (2015) model. However, before proceeding and for the readers’ convenience, an over view of the model is presented in section 3.

### **3. House’s 2015 TQA model**

House’s TQA model is based on Hallidayan Systemic-Functional Theory (SFT), drawing at the same time on Prague School ideas, Grice’s speech act theory, pragmatics and discourse analysis. According to this model, in order to assess the quality of translation, the original text needs to be compared and contrasted with its translation on three levels, viz., (1) language/text, (2) register (field, tenor, and mode), and (3) genre. House (2015: 64) posits that field “captures the topic, the content of the text and its subject matter with differentiations of degrees of generality, specificity or ‘granularity’ in lexical items.” Tenor deals with the participants, mainly the addresser and the addressee and the relationship between them taking into account social power and social distance. It further includes “the text producer’s temporal, geographical and social provenance as well as his intellectual, emotional or affective stance (his personal ‘viewpoint’) ... [and] ‘social attitude’, i.e., different styles (formal, consultative and informal)” (ibid: 64). Mode “refers to the channel – spoken or written, and the degree to which potential or real participation is allowed for between writer and reader” (ibid:64). If there is no participation of the addressee as is the case in a monologue, it is ‘simple’, but if the addressee is involved, it is labeled as ‘complex’. An adequate translation then based on this model is an undertaking that involves “replacement of a text in the source language by a semantically and pragmatically equivalent text in the target language” (ibid:63). In an attempt to translate a text adequately, translators may resort to overt or covert translation strategies. In House’ words, an overt translation is:

*One in which the addressees of the translation text are quite 'overtly' not directly addressed: an overt translation is not a 'second original'. In overt translation the original is tied in a specific manner to the source language community and its culture, and is often specifically directed at source culture addressees but at the same time points beyond the source language community because it is, independent of its source language origin, also of potential general human interest (2015:54).*

Covert translation, on the other hand, is “a translation which enjoys the status of an original source text in the target culture. The translation is covert because it is not marked pragmatically as a translation text of a source text but may conceivably have been created in its own right” (ibid: 66). Ideologically motivated mismatches are more likely to fall within covert translation in terms of tenor, particularly the political stance of the translator compared with the original stance of the creator.

A careful examination of the source text and the target text then based on House's (2015) Model could lead to the identification of mismatches that can either be covert or overt. Covertly erroneous translations result from dimensional mismatches at the levels of field, tenor, and mode. Overt errors, on the other hand, result from “either a mismatch of the denotative meanings of source and translation text elements or from a breach of the target language system (ibid:33).

#### **4. Research questions**

The study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What strategies do MEMRI translators use to promote certain ideologies in their translations of news media reports from Arabic into English in the context of the Palestinian – Israeli ‘conflict’?
2. How does the use of these strategies impact the understanding of the translated text when compared with the original one?

#### **5. Source of data**

The data of the study were collected from the website of MEMRI, which was founded in 1998 by Yigal Carmon, a former Israeli military intelligence officer and Meyrav Wurmser, an Israeli-born American political scientist (<https://www.memri.org/about>). MEMRI is a research institution based in Washington D.C. It offers a wide range of translations whose source texts are taken from Arabic newspapers. As stated on its website, MEMRI claims that its ultimate objective is to "bridge the language gap between the Middle East and the West". Further, it describes itself as “an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit ... organization”. However, Political Research Associates (PRA), which studies the US political right, considers that MEMRI's claims about its goal and status do not “convey the institute's stridently pro-Israel and anti-Arab political bias”. In the same vein, Brian Whitaker, a former Middle East editor for the Guardian, reports that his problem with MEMRI is that it “poses as a research institute when it's basically a propaganda operation”, adding that its role is to “further the agenda of Israel” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle\\_East\\_Media\\_Research\\_Institute#History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_East_Media_Research_Institute#History))<sup>2</sup>.

## 6. Corpus and selected sample

As far as this study is concerned, MEMRI provides a wide collection of timely translations on a daily basis from Arabic Middle East media into English. The reports on MEMRI's website are divided into six main categories, namely, special dispatches, inquiry and analysis series, MEMRI daily brief, special announcements, special alerts, and special reports. The selected sub-corpus for this research consists of 280 reports related to the Palestinian-Israeli 'conflict' and published by MEMRI under the category of special dispatches. They are divided into three types: verbatim translations, commentaries and reviews. In this research, verbatim translations are the ones initially selected for analysis. They constitute 178 reports. However, these reports are listed under different sub-types as well, including articles, videos and clips, speeches and addresses, statements, reactions of people, interviews and songs. Hence, for better and more focused analysis, this research is limited to articles, speeches and addresses. The data proper of this study (i.e. the sample) are MEMRI anonymous English translations of Arabic articles, speeches and addresses which are originally delivered in newspapers such as *Al-Quds*, *Dunya Al-Watan*, *Al-Ayyam* and other media sources on issues related to the Palestinian-Israeli 'conflict'. The number of these is 65 on an average of 12 per year, one item a month, generally the first translation. In the years which have less than 12 relevant reports, all were selected.

The selected translations have many things in common. First, in terms of length, they range from a minimum of 220 words to a maximum of 1000. Second, all are anonymized and referred to as MEMRI translations. Finally, they appear between 2012 and 2017, a period which witnessed political and/or regime changes in some Arab countries. However, the impact of these changes was not restricted to the countries in which they occurred such as Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Syria but they caused general instability in the region as a whole and affected the Palestinian-Israeli 'conflict'. Each translation was compared with its source text with a view to identifying those TT tokens which showed an ideologically motivated change in the meaning of the ST.

## 7. Results and discussion

The analysis of data demonstrated that MEMRI translators used covert translation strategies to create a second though unjustifiable ideologically-motivated version of the Arabic ST. In the words of House (2015:67) in a covert translation "the translator's task is to betray the original and to hide behind the transformation of the original; he is certainly less visible, if not totally absent." House (2015: 67) further maintains that "since true functional equivalence is aimed at, the original may be legitimately manipulated at the levels of language/text and register using a cultural filter. The result may be a very real distance from the original."

In light of this, the ideologically motivated translations are directed to a recipient who belongs to a culture different from that of the ST and who speaks the language of the target text (TT), in our case, English. Such a reader is exposed to what appears to be a straightforward text in terms of language and probably culture because as House posits the translator has created a second original. In such a case and under such conditions, the target audience of readers are unlikely to discover the covert mismatches which have been intentionally hidden in the text by the translator. However, the situation is quite different from the perspective of a translation assessor who is expected to base translation quality assessment on a careful comparison and contrast of both the ST and the TT. It goes without saying that such an assessor is assumed to be linguistically, culturally

and pragmatically competent in the languages of the two texts and thus can identify ideologically motivated covert mismatches if any.

Further, the analysis of data from an assessor perspective highlights that MEMRI's translators have used covert translation, particularly in terms of tenor, often by twisting some of the facts on the ground, e.g., turning perpetrators into victims, and by introducing an anti-Palestinian and pro-Israeli stance manipulating the predominantly prevalent pro-Palestinian stance and narrative in the original texts. Careful examinations of the translations reveal that MEMRI's translators have utilized three strategies to hide their ideologically motivated mismatches in the TT. These strategies are substitution, addition and omission. The employment of these strategies has yielded 56 mismatches as shown in the table.

Number and percentage of ideologically motivated mismatches in terms of strategy

Strategy	Number of Tokens	Percentage
Substitution	28	56
Addition	9	18
Omission	13	26

As shown in the table, substitution was the most frequently used strategy as it has yielded the greatest number and percentage of ideologically motivated mismatches, accounting for 56 percent of the identified cases while addition was the least used strategy accounting for 18 percent only. Omission ranked second accounting for 26 percent of the tokens. In what follows we provide a brief description of each strategy together with illustrative examples. We also show how the use of each strategy has impacted the understanding of the translated text when compared with the original one. The elements under investigation in the illustrative examples always appear in boldface.

### 7.1 Substitution

Substitution is defined as “the act, process, or result of substituting one thing for another” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary). For the purpose of this study, substitution refers to the process of replacing a word, a phrase or more with one item or more within the translated text to serve an ideologically driven purpose intended by the translator. In translation, this process usually implies a replacement of an item with another in the target language which may have a similar indication of the original or a different one that changes the original. This change is more likely to impact the recipients' understanding and guide their perspective away from the original to a new one indicated by the translator's choice of replacement. Further, it is one of the most frequent discursive structures used by translators to reflect an ideology through the text. Nida and Taber (1982: 140) claim that “in semantic analysis, however, our substitutions are right if the substitution in question serves to identify the same constituent without introducing contradictory or additional features not already implied in the original context”. Van Dijk (1998: 205) also posits that word choice and replacement of certain items promotes an ideology and a system of beliefs regarding certain issues in the world. Accordingly, such strategy “presupposes norms, values and ideologies that are claimed to be universal or widely accepted in a society” (ibid: 259). For example, when

the translator replaces the word ‘martyr’ with ‘late’, this replacement changes the interpretation implied in the original text by the word ‘martyr’ which holds a figurative national concept of struggle and sacrifice for a just cause. However, the word ‘late’ is usually used to refer to a deceased person showing respect to the person who died carrying a note of reverence, but not to someone who lost his/her life for the sake of a noble cause. It also affects the mind of the reader and his/her view of the situation and removes the empathy factor from the text.

The following are examples of the use of substitution as a strategy to serve an ideologically driven purpose. The first example presents the case of substitution of a word with another. However, the second and the third examples demonstrate the substitutions of a phrase or more with another in the translated text.

(1) a. Source text

ورغم أنَّ أحداث الهولوكوست وقعت في الماضي، إلا أنَّ محنة الفلسطينيين ما زالت مستمرة في الحاضر. ومن ثم، يصعب جداً أن نطلب من الضحايا الذين يعانون من احتلال لوطنهم ومصادرة مستمرة لأراضيهم وممتلكاتهم ومعاناة أحبائهم في **المعتقلات** وحرمانهم من حقوقهم الانسانية أن يتعرفوا على معاناة الآخر.

(Fikraforum.org, November 26, 2013)

wa raghma ʔanna ʔahdaath al-holokost waqaʿat fi al-maadi, ʔilla ʔanna mihnāt al-filistiiniyyiin maa zaalat mustamirra fi al-ḥaadir. wa min thamma yasʿub jiddan ʔan naṭluba min al-dahaaya al-lathiina yuʿaanuuna min iḥtilaal liwaṭanihim wa muṣaadara mustamirra liʔaraadihim wa mumtalakaatihim wa muʿaanaat ʔahibbaaʔihim fi al-muʿtaqalaat wahirmaanihim min huquqihim al-ʔinsaaniyya ʔan yataʿarrafu ʿalaa muʿaanaat al-ʔaakhar.

b. Target Text

While the events of the Holocaust happened in the past, the Palestinian suffering still continues, and therefore it is very difficult to ask these victims – who suffer the occupation of their homeland, the continuous usurpation of their land and property, the suffering of their loved ones in **prisons**, and a denial of their humanitarian rights – to study about the suffering of others.

(<https://www.memri.org/reports/professor-al-quds-university-holocaust-must-be-taught-pa-schools>)

While the Arabic text uses the word **معتقلات** ‘detention centers/camps’ to refer to the places where the Palestinian prisoners are kept by Israel, the translated text uses the word ‘prisons’. The word ‘prison’ is used to describe the place where someone is imprisoned and is put there as a result of committing a crime that breaks a federal or criminal law. However, **معتقلات** refers to the place where the person is arrested, detained and his/her rights are trespassed without referring to any law or legislation. The word itself holds a further political meaning especially for Palestinians. The word ‘prison’ is used to refer to a criminal act or behavior. However, **معتقلات** has always been used by Palestinians and opposition political parties in some Middle East Arab countries to refer to the kind of imprisonment which includes administrative detention by the Israeli forces or the regimes of their countries without reference to any charges. A fair and faithful translation of the word **معتقلات** is probably concentration camps or detention centers (Cronin 2017). A “concentration camp refers to a camp in which people are detained or confined, usually under harsh conditions and without regard to legal norms of arrest and imprisonment that are acceptable in a constitutional democracy” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). As is clear, the translator’s word choice in this example has reduced the intensity and brutality associated with the ST term.

Furthermore, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica, these camps are internment centers for confining members of national groups or minorities based on their political or ethnic affiliations. The prisoners are confined according to a military order or an executive decree and often denied a fair trial. The word has been used with many translations and names of other concentration camps such as معتقل غوانتانامو ‘Guantanamo Bay detention camp’ in the United States and معتقل الخيام ‘Khiam detention camp’ run by Israel in southern Lebanon from 1985 to 2000. In actuality, Palestinian media sources tend to use the binomial السجون والمعتقلات الإسرائيلية ‘Israeli prisons and detention camps’. This was spotted in many articles and news reports taken from the website of the news agency, an example of which is *Donia Al-Watan*.

Hence, the choice of the word used in the translation process has suppressed the meaning of the original text serving the translator’s aim to mitigate the intensity of the original word. Lopez and Caro (2013: 250) described similar interventions as “ideologically biased, exerting a positive or negative influence on the image and impact of a translation and its target culture”. In this example, the translation has impacted the target text by providing a less negative image compared with the original item and thus has toned down the meaning the word معتقلات which actually describes the detention status of the Palestinian prisoners. This ideologically motivated translation is not in line with the Palestinian narrative and media jargon, to say the least. Put under the microscope of a translation quality assessor, this substitution is a clear case of a covert mismatch in tenor, particularly in terms of the attitude of the translator in comparison with that of the author of the original text. This substitution is not the result of cross-cultural misunderstandings, nor is it the outcome of language deficiencies in the translator. Instead, it is the product of an intentional ideologically motivated manipulation that is unlikely to be spotted by a reader who does not have a linguistic and/or cultural and pragmatic competence in the languages of both the source and the target text or even a competent translation assessor in the absence of the ST.

(2) a. Source Text

ما أشبه اليوم بالأمس ففي العام 1967 كانت نكسة حزيران، وسقطت الضفة وسيناء والجولان بيد إسرائيل.

(Al-Quds (Jerusalem), March 21, 2017)

maa ʔashbah al-yawm bilʔams faʔii al-ʕaam 1967 kaanat naksat ḥaziiraan, wasaqat al-diffa al-gharbiyya wa siinaa wa al-juulaan biyad ʔisraaʔiil.

b. Target Text

How similar our current time is to yesteryear. **In the June 1967 [war] we suffered defeat,** and the [West] Bank, Sinai, and the Golan fell into Israeli hands.

(<https://www.memri.org/fatah%20member%20%27abbas%20zaki%20calls%20for%20popular%20resistance%20against%20israel>)

While the Arabic text refers to the Arab failure in the 1967 as نكسة حزيران ‘June Naksa or Setback’, the English text renders it as ‘defeat’. The translator’s substitution of the mitigated meaning embedded in the phrase نكسة حزيران in the source text with ‘defeat’ changes the intention and the emotional outlook of the original (cf. Assaiqeli 2021) and thus violates one standard of textuality, namely, intentionality. The translator presented another term (not a synonym) to the target audience which is culturally and politically different from the shared concept by the Arabic-speaking audience. The phrase نكسة حزيران in the ST is used to refer to the 1967 war between Israel and the neighboring Arab countries. The war resulted with Israel’s occupation of the Gaza strip, Arab East Jerusalem and the West Bank in addition to Sinai and the Golan Heights. However, the

Arab leaders and Palestinians refused to call the war result هزيمة ‘defeat’; they looked at the painful result as something temporary which they would shortly overcome. Therefore, they called the second catastrophe نكسة [the first was in 1948] because the term has a lighter weight on the hearer and thus less harsh than a defeat. Furthermore, the term ‘Naksa’ presents a temporary hurdle. In other words, the term implies that it is only a matter of time in which there will be a recovery and a comeback. Hence, the translator’s substitution conceals the Arab and Palestinian refusal to accept defeat by subscribing to the word ‘Naksa’.

Fahmi and Emad (2011) refer to this kind of substitution as a form of framing in which the translator re-organizes or redefines a culture-specific concept. The translator’s intervention introduces a new voice (the translator’s voice) and interpretation to the translated text. The new voice aims to promote the translator’s ideology which probably supports a different and harsher narrative towards the outcome of the 1967 war.

(3) a. Source Text

مما تسبب حتى الان في تحميل الشعب الفلسطيني أثمان باهظة في الأرواح والممتلكات كان في غنى عن دفعها... بينما لا بواقي للفتى أبو خضير لأنه من ذوي الدماء غير المقدسة بحسب تصنيف المجتمع الدولي للعرقيات السياسية والبشرية التي تضع (الإسرائيلي) في مرتبة متقدمة، والفلسطيني في مرتبة متدنية.

(Amad.ps, August 7, 2014)

... mimma tasabab hatta al-ʔan fii tahmiil al-shaʕb al-falastiini ʔathmaan baahitha fi al-ʔarwaah wa al-mumtalakaat kaan fi ghina ʕan daffiha ... baynama la bawaaki lil-fata abu khdeer liʔannahu min thawi al-dimaaʔ ghayr al-muqaddasa bihasb tasniif al-mujtamaʕ al-duwali lil-ʕirqiyyaat al-siyasiyya wal-bashariyya allatii tadaʕ al-ʔisraaʔiili fi martaba mutaqaddima wal-falastiini fi martaba mutadaniyya

b. Target Text

... which caused the **Palestinians** considerable and avoidable casualties and material damage ...but it does not lament the death of the Palestinian boy Abu Khdeir, since he belongs to the group whose blood is not [considered] sacred, according to the international community's classification of human, ethnic and political groups, which places **Israel** high on the ladder and the **Palestinians** low.

(<https://www.memri.org/reports/palestinian-columnist-hamas-did-not-win-war-only-brought-suffering-upon-gazans>)

In this example, the translator replaces the phrase الشعب الفلسطيني with ‘Palestinians’ in the translation process. In this substitution, the translator draws his/her own political practice on the translated text reducing the quality of the original text. Using House’s (2015) model, through comparing and contrasting the original text and its translation one can see an intentional change in the tenor, particularly in the stance or viewpoint of the author of the ST. In the Arabic text, the word شعب which can be rendered as nation or people refers to a large number of people who share the same origin, ancestry, history, language, culture and traditions who inhabit a particular land or state. However, the translator’s choice, i.e. referring to الشعب الفلسطيني as Palestinians, changing the adjective to a noun produced a different meaning which removes the feature of a nation living on their specified land. For example, when referring to ‘Kurds’ the term refers to an ethnic group which share the same ancestry, language or religion, but not necessarily sharing a specified land or borders that unite them. They live in different countries including Iran, Syria, Iraq and Jordan. Hence, this choice of word strips the Palestinian people from this feature of a nation on a specified land.



Again, the reader can also notice the translator's rendition of 'الاسرائيلي' as 'Israel' not 'Israeli' giving the Israelis the feature of a country and a geographical location. When compared to the translation of الفلسطينيين as 'Palestinians' without highlighting a place nor a country, the reader can clearly identify the translator's choice which strips the feature of a nation or a state from one side of the 'conflict' and giving it to another. The translator's choice of substitution reflects an ideological bias to the narrative of a certain side, i.e. the Israeli side. Therefore, "translation gives only a partial version of reality because some translators may well be inclined to manipulate, distort and suppress so that the end product, i.e. translation, is recognizably biased and prejudiced" towards a certain side or group especially when presented through a political text which represents a status of conflict (Fandi and Wardat, 2015:67).

## 7.2 Omission

In omission, the translator drops a word, a phrase, or a sentence which was there in the source text from the translated text. Omission does not always affect the meaning because the translator sometimes opts to drop words that are unfamiliar to the culture of the target text reader and replaces them with what he/she thinks convey the original message. However, the omitted text, if done intentionally to serve an ideological purpose, it can change the meaning and intentions of the source text. It can reduce the quality of the translated text, promote a different understanding which deludes the reader from the original meaning and thus creates false ideas and concepts. Khanmohammad and Aminzad (2015: 9) claim that omission as a translation strategy is similar to addition in which it may cause damages to the original text and change the meaning of the original. This issue becomes more critical when "done by a news agency on the translation of social, cultural and political news... [because] news agencies are, supposedly, the most trustable organizations to deliver the news unruffled".

### (4) a. Source Text

استخدم المستوطنون جسد الفتى المقدسي محمد حسين أبو خضير (١٧ عاماً)، من قرية شعفاط شمال القدس المحتلة، لانتقامهم المقدس من خلال تعذيبه وحرقه حتى الموت ....

(*Al-Risalah* (Gaza), July 3, 2014)

istakhdama al-mustawtinuun jasad al-fataa al-maqdisi muhammad hussein abu khdeir (17 years), min qaryat shu'faat shamaal al-quds al-muhtalla, lintiqaamihim al-muqaddas min khilaal ta'hiibih wa harqih hatta al-mawt.

### b. Target Text

The settlers used the body of 17-year-old Muhammad Hussein Abu Khdeir, from Shuafat in **northern Jerusalem**, to carry out their sacred [act of] vengeance by torturing him and burning him to death ....

(<https://www.memri.org/reports/editor-hamas-paper-murder-palestinian-teen-jerusalem-reminiscent-jews-custom-baking-matzos>)

The Arabic text gives details regarding Abu Khdeir's village. It is called Shuafat and is located in the north of occupied Jerusalem شمال القدس المحتلة. The text refers to Jerusalem as an occupied entity. However, the translator in the English text refers to it as 'Jerusalem' only and omits the word occupied المحتلة. This omission removes the meaning indicated by the word 'occupied' and its implications including, but not limited to, the existence of a dominant illegitimate power,

violations, stolen land and borders, etc. The translator has manipulated the translated text through omission which resulted in highlighting and probably promoting the Israeli narrative regarding the status of Jerusalem as the united capital of Israel. In the words of Nida (1964:154), the translator here through this covert mismatch “distorts the message to fit [his/her] own intellectual and emotional outlook.”

Suleiman (2004: 138) posits that “one of the most important aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the manipulation of terminology to create a *linguistic map* that conditions people’s perceptions of the facts on the ground”. Consequently, the translator’s intervention here is just an example of manipulating the terminology of the original in favor of the Israeli narrative. According to van Dijk (1998: 2), ideologies presuppose the socially or politically self-serving nature of the definition of truth and falsity”. Hence, the translator’s manipulation in this example is another act of framing imposed on the translation process to present a different perception of the truth.

(5) a. Source Text

لم أتوقع أي سيناريو، ولكنني استبعدت بعد حكمي 16 مؤبدا وقضائي فترة في السجن قلت إن الأمر يختلف، وحينما جاءت المطالبات الأمريكية باعتقالي، تفاجأت ولم يكن لدي أي علم أن من بين القتلى 2 أمريكيان، أنا أعلم أنّ الصهاينة جاؤوا من أصقاع الأرض ولم يكن لهم مكان، ولم يكن لدي أي دراية عن جنسيات القتلى.

(*Al-Ghad* (Jordan), March 20, 2017)

lam ʔatawaqqa ʔayya sinaaryu, walaakinni istab ʔadtu ba ʔda hukmi 16 muʔabbaddan wa qadaaʔi fatra fi al-sijn qult inna al-ʔamra ikhtalaf, wa hiinamaa jaaʔat al-muʔaalabaat al-ʔamriikiyya biʔtiqaali, taffajaʔatu wa lam yakun ladayya ʔayyu ʔilm ʔanna bayna al-qatlaa 2 ʔamiirkaan, ʔanaa ʔa ʔlam ʔanaa al-sahaayina jaaʔuu min ʔsqa ʔ al-ʔard wa lam yakun lahum makaan, wa lam yakun ladayya diraya ʔan jinsiyyaat al-qatlaa.

b) Target Text

When the Americans demanded to arrest me, I was surprised, because I didn't know that the victims [of the Sbarro bombing] included two Americans. I know that the Zionists came [to Palestine] from all over the world and they had no place, but I did not know the victims' nationalities.

(<https://www.memri.org/reports/palestinian-jordanian-terrorist-ahlam-al-tamimi-jordanian-muslim-brotherhood-mouthpiece-long>)

The Arabic text highlights the brutal and arbitrary sentence issued by the Israeli authorities against Ahlam Al-Tamimi, i.e. 16 life imprisonments in addition to her being jailed for an unspecified period of time. Conversely, the English target text has dropped this part completely. According to the international criminal law item No. 147, any sentence of life imprisonment is a minimum of 10 years and a maximum of 30 years and may not exceed that period. However, the Israeli penal law states that life imprisonment is a minimum of 10 years and varies according to the number of life imprisonments the person receives which may reach 100 years or even more depending on the directed accusations and the committed crime. Hence, the translator’s manipulation of the translated text by the abandonment of realities and facts serves the translator’s ideological purpose which aims to diminish and conceal the bitter facts stated in the original text. According to van Dijk (1998), the translators’ manipulation affirms the employment of ideology in the translation process to conceal certain facts from the original text. In this excerpt, the translator’s act has concealed the brutal and arbitrary sentences issued in accordance with the Israeli Penal law.

(6) a. Source Text

فلو أدركت حركة حماس بجناحها وقيادتها السياسية والعسكرية الظروف الغزية التي عاشها ويعيش المواطن طيلة السبع سنوات الماضية لما وصلنا إلى هذا الحد من الخسائر المأساوية ، ولما فقدنا ما يقارب أحد عشر ألف مواطن بين شهداء وجرحي جلهم من الأطفال والنسوة وكبار السن.

(Amad.ps, August 7, 2014)

falaw ?adrakat harakat hamaas bijnaahiha wa qiyaadatiha al-siyasiyya wal-askariyya al-Thuruf al-ghaziyya allatii 'aashahaa wa ya'yiish al-muwaatin tiilat al-sab' sanwaat al-maadiya lama wasalna ?ilaa haatha al-had min al-khsaa?ir al-ma'saawiyya, walamaa faqadnaa maa yuqaarib ?ahada 'ashra ?alf muwaatin bayn shuhada? wa jarhaa julluhum min al-?atfaal wal-niswa wa kibaar al-sin.

b. Target Text

Had Hamas' various branches and political and military leaders understood the Palestinians' living conditions in the last seven years, **we would not have reached this situation [and suffered] these tragic casualties...** mostly among children and elderly people.

(<https://www.memri.org/reports/palestinian-columnist-hamas-did-not-win-war-only-brought-suffering-upon-gazans>)

The Arabic text gives an estimated number of the wounded and martyred citizens. It clarifies that these citizens are mostly children, women and the elderly among the Palestinian people over the past seven years. Conversely, the translated text completely omits this huge number and changes the words شهداء وجرحي, i.e. martyrs and wounded, to 'casualties'. According to Oxford Online dictionary, the word causality refers to any person or group of people who were harmed or killed as a result of an accident, event or an act of war. However, 'wounded' i.e. 'جريح' indicates "a suffering of an injury or a bodily harm caused by a bullet or a laceration". Furthermore, the word 'martyr' i.e. شهيد means a person who suffered persecution and was killed due to advocating and refusing to relinquish a certain belief or cause of a great value; the cause in the text is defending a country. The translator here suppresses the intended meaning of the original Arabic text. The translator's management in the text is visible in the omission of the number of losses which aims to reduce the volume of the brutality of the Israeli crimes. Moreover, the replacement of شهداء وجرحي with 'casualties' aims to reduce the empathy factor to the reader. This management in the text is a manipulation which aims to influence the reader's understanding of the text that is affected by the translator's political views. These views reflect the translator's ideological perception which is in favor of a certain power and side of the 'conflict'. Shuping (2013:56) posits that "translation is not a pure, simple and transparent linguistic matter but involves factors such as power, ideology, poetics and patronage". Furthermore, Van Dijk (1998: 168) claims that most scholars, especially in political contexts and conflicts, are subjective to self-serving opinions and truths which are consistent with their interests and demand. Accordingly, the ideology employed in this example serves to diminish the intensity of the Palestinian people's suffering and to conceal the brutal crimes of the Israel.

### 7.3 Addition

Addition in translation is the process of adding a word, a phrase, a sentence or more to the TT which do not exist in the ST. This addition to the text brings certain non-existing concepts which produce a different meaning. According to Khanmohammad and Aminzad (2015), additions might cause irreparable damages to the translated text. Yet, the issue becomes more complicated and disputable when addition is undertaken by a news agency or a translator with a view to promoting an ideological perspective while interacting with a social, cultural and political text. The new elements added to the translation can either introduce a certain concept or meaning which is not

originally there in the source text or reduce the quality and the purpose intended by the original text.

(7) a. Source Text

قامت البلديات العربية والإسرائيلية المتعاقبة بإضافتها (المنطقة غير الدينية) للمدينة وتقسيمها إلى قدس إسرائيلية وقدس عربية تفصلهما حواجز نفسية وسياسية.

(Maannews.net, January 28, 2014)

qaamat al-baladiyyaat al-<sup>ʿ</sup>arabiyya wa al-ʔisraaʔiiliyya al-muta<sup>ʿ</sup>aaqiba biʔidaafatihaa  
[ʔalmaantiq ghayriddiiniyya] lilmadiina wa taqsiimihaa ʔilaa quds ʔisraaʔiiliyya wa quds  
<sup>ʿ</sup>arabiyya tafsiluhumaa hawaaajiz nafsiyya wa siyaasiyya.

b. Target Text

Consecutive Arab and Israeli municipalities annexed [the nonreligious area] to the [holy] city, and it was divided into Israeli Jerusalem and Arab Jerusalem, which are separated by **psychological and political barriers but not by any [physical] wall or barrier.**

(<https://www.memri.org/reports/palestinian-lecturer-palestinians-should-moderate-their-negotiating-positions-and-stop-being>)

The Arabic text حواجز نفسية وسياسية ‘psychological and political barriers’ describes the barriers that divide Jerusalem into Arab East Jerusalem and Israeli West Jerusalem as being both psychological and political. However, the translated text contains an addition introducing a new meaning that was not included in the original text. The addition of ‘but not by any [physical] wall or barrier’ to the translated text indicates the non-existence of any real or noticeable barrier that divides the two parts of the city. The translator manipulated the original text through twisting facts and changing realities. In fact, on crossing the East part of the city to the West or vice versa, one can notice differences between both areas. For instance, Suleiman (2004: 12) explains that at a certain point through his trip to Jerusalem his child asks him whether he can speak Arabic now (after leaving West Jerusalem and nearing the East part) every time they reach the uphill which creates a physical socio-political and linguistic boundary between the two sides. When Suleiman and his family or any other Palestinians cross the West part of the city, they tend to switch to English because most of the people on the streets there are either Israelis who speak Hebrew or foreigners who speak English, thus creating both a linguistic and physical boundary between the two sides of the city. Furthermore, after crossing the uphill (a physical barrier) one can also notice the difference in buildings (old vs. new) and shop signs (which are written in Hebrew). The people themselves and the way they are dressed are also different, especially the Ashkenazi Jews. These noticeable features and changes between the two parts of the city are physical barriers that separate the two parts of the city into two different cities: Arab East Jerusalem and Israeli West Jerusalem.

The source text does not indicate the non-existence of any physical barriers. However, the addition or explanation imposed on the translated target text introduces a meaning that was not intended nor implied by the original text. This manipulation in the text diminishes the original meaning and neglects any negative indication of any actual obstructions or barriers between Eastern Jerusalem and Western Jerusalem. Allawzi (2018), De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) consider this type of manipulation in the text as a twist in the source text. In the case at hand, the addition seems to favor the Israeli narrative of a united one peaceful city. It also neglects the official Palestinian point of view of two separate cities: Arab East Jerusalem and Israeli West Jerusalem.

(8) a. Source Text

ويقدم الزواوي قراءة سياسية للمرحلة التي تمر بها القضية الفلسطينية حالياً. بالقول: «لسنا أمام عدو عادي أو مشروع صغير؛ نحن نقاتل أخطر مشروع دولي، وخصوصاً بعد تبني الولايات المتحدة إقامة دولة يهودية». (Al-Akhbar.com, March1, 2017)

Wa yuqaddim al-zawawi qiraʿa siyasiyya lil-marhala allati tammur bihaa al-qadiyya al-falastiiniyya haaliyyan. bil-qawl: lasnaa ʔamaam ʿaduw ʿaadi ʔaw mashruuʿ saghiir; nahnu nuqaatil ʔakhtar mashruuʿ duwali, wa khuṣuṣan baʿd tabanni al-wilayaat al-muttaḥida ʔiqamat dawla yahuudiyya.

b. Target Text

Providing a political analysis of what is happening with the Palestinian cause today, Al-Zawawi said: 'We are not facing an ordinary enemy, or a small-scale plan. Rather, we are fighting the most dangerous international plan, especially after the U.S. adopted the **[idea the Palestinians must recognize Israel as] a Jewish state.**

(<https://www.memri.org/reports/plo-ambassador-iran-we-will-liberate-palestine-river-sea-%E2%80%93-everything-stabbing-and-vehicular>)

In this example, the translator does not only apply a change to the original text, but adds a new sentence completely out from the text which contains the modal verb 'must'. The translator here is adding his/her voice to the text to produce a new meaning and indication providing a new message added to the original one. The addition of 'idea the Palestinians must recognize Israel as' to the translated text tampers the original text writer's perception and introduces a new message to the reader. The Arabic text *تبنى الولايات المتحدة إقامة دولة يهودية* confirms that the U.S supports the establishment of a Jewish state. However, the translated text implies the U.S's inducement that Palestinians must approve the establishment of a Jewish state on their lands. The translator adds a sense of obligation implemented by the modal verb 'must'. 'Must' gives an obligatory meaning expressing an opinion that is logically essential and highly recommended which in this text refers to the Palestinians recognition of Israel as a Jewish state. Hence, the reader can sense the voice of the translator interfering with the translation process and tampering the original source text to introduce an ideological perception which affects the reader's opinion. The translator manipulated the source text through the process of translation by adding new elements to the text. Venuti (1998) posits that manipulation is part of translation as a rewriting process which paves the road for those who are in power to make their ideologies and propagandas more accepted in support of the party in power, i.e. the Israeli side in this 'conflict'.

## 8. Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of the study showed that media was used as a powerful tool to influence the recipient's perception of certain political and social matters, which resulted in promoting an ideological perspective. The researchers highlighted the translators' use of a number of strategies while interacting with the source texts and producing the ideologically motivated translations. Such strategies included substitution, omission and addition.

Further, the instances of ideologically driven mismatches in tenor attested in this study were not the result of cross-cultural misunderstandings, nor were they the outcome of language deficiencies in the translators. Put differently, they were not translation errors in the real sense of the term 'error'. Instead, they were the product of intentional manipulations achieved through resorting to covert translation strategies. This argument gains support from the fact that the

MEMRI's Arabic- English translations are not the product of a bunch of stumbling amateurs but a group of professional translators. This is evident in their well-structured sentences. In actuality, their manipulations are not easy to uncover without close reference to the original Arabic texts. Manipulated translations, simply put, are not the result of mishaps produced by careless or incompetent practitioners.

Moreover, the paper revealed that the use of manipulative strategies in the translation of news items produced target texts that differed from the original and promoted a different ideology. Target language texts tended to be influenced by the ideas, beliefs, values and thoughts of the translator. Apparently, once these ideologies penetrate the translation process, they often function as a proxy for legitimizing and justifying the interests and views of the media agency, i.e. MEMRI that sponsored the translation task.

But are the biased translations highlighted in the study enough to charge MEMRI with mendacity and thus accuse its translators of promoting some claims and narratives of one party to the Palestinian-Israeli 'conflict' at the expense of the other by systematically using the Israeli media political diction and jargon? The answer is more likely to be put in the affirmative. However, one may argue that more illustrative examples of unambiguous ideologically motivated translations are still needed. In this context, it is probably difficult to overlook views that echo those voiced by Brian Whitaker, the Middle East editor for The Guardian newspaper in 2003, in the email debate with Carmon, a cofounder of MEMRI (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jan/28/israel2>). Whitaker wrote that his problem with MEMRI is that it introduces itself as a research body "when it's basically a propaganda operation" whose role is to "further the political agenda of Israel" (also see Carmon and Whitaker, 2003).

In light of the aforementioned, the study sets forth the following recommendations for future research on the impact of ideology on translating news items in the context of political conflicts:

- (1) A comparable study may be conducted on the role of translation in promoting ideology in the context of other political conflicts in the MENA region, e.g. the Yemeni-Saudi conflict.
- (2) Since the data of this study were derived from the articles, speeches and addresses translated by MEMRI in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli 'conflict', future studies may focus on other genres also translated by MEMRI such as statements, interviews, songs, clips and news reports.

## Endnotes

1. We put the term conflict in single quotes in the title and the body of the paper in response to a note from an anonymous reviewer who advises that in the Israeli-Palestinian issue we have to do with more than a conflict as the term suggests an equality of the parties concerned, which is not really the case.
2. This webpage is edited on 21 March, 2021.



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# Young Interpreters' Coping Strategies – an Interview Study

Marcin Kosman

## Abstract

*The article investigates coping strategies of young interpreters. For the purpose of the study, young interpreters are defined as relatively inexperienced (up to five years of practice) interpreters who are no longer students. In the literature there is a plethora of studies on stress among trainees and experienced professionals, but that has not been the case with interpreting novices. In order to verify the problems young interpreters face, semi-structured interviews with eight interpreters were conducted. It turned out that young interpreters rely on problem- and emotion-oriented coping strategies to a similar degree.*

## Keywords:

*coping, Interpreting Studies, qualitative methods, semi-structured interview, stress*

## 1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, translation studies an interdisciplinary discipline. Throughout the long history of the discipline, scholars have made numerous attempts to categorize different areas of research. One of the most comprehensive endeavors is James S. Holmes's "the Map" published in his seminal work *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies* (1988). The term *translation studies* (TS) itself is derived from Holmes's work. Holmes divided TS into two key categories: pure and applied. The pure sector was further divided into theoretical and descriptive categories. In order to highlight the background of the present study, the descriptive branch of translation studies (DTS) will be described in detail. There are three divisions of DTS: function-, product, and process-oriented. Function-oriented DTS focuses on the context rather than on the text, examining the socio-cultural environment of the text, as well as the times when it was translated. Product-oriented DTS analyzes existing translations and compares a translation with the original text. Lastly, process-oriented DTS refer to psychological aspects of translation. This approach perceives translation as "a black box" where cognitive processes occur (Munday 2008:10-11). Korpala (2016) observes that the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have seen a cognitive turn in Translation and Interpreting studies as the question of the interpreter aptitude has been one of the most relevant debates in the literature. In addition to language command and cognitive skills, scholars have begun to examine psycho-affective factors such as stress resistance, motivation, or anxiety.

## 2. Interpreting and stress

Interpreting is generally considered as one of the most demanding activities. A number of studies has confirmed its stressful nature. Kurz (2003) names the following factors which invoke stress among interpreters: the need to keep a high level of focus during the whole assignment, considerable cognitive load, time constraints, the confined nature of the booth, and fatigue. These factors are said to elicit objective stress. Gile (2009:188) coined the phrase "problem triggers" to describe factors which require deepened processing capacity and are particularly seen as difficult by interpreters. Thus, the presence of them might impair the quality and accuracy of interpretation, as well elicit more stress. Among such factors are proper names, enumerations, morphological and syntactic features of the source language, strong foreign accent, rate of delivery, and numerical data.

Stress has been one of the most discussed notions in psychology, but also in the context of disciplines focusing on foreign languages and its applications such as pedagogy or applied linguistics. For the sake of brevity of the paper it is impossible to give a comprehensive outline of stress theories here, thus only the most relevant frameworks will be discussed in this article. For a detailed overview of studies on stress and coping mechanisms, see Baqutayan (2015).

One of the pioneers in terms of stress theories is Hans Selye who introduced the term *stress* in 1926. According to Selye:

Stress is defined as the nonspecific response of the body to any demand, where nonspecific refers to those common changes produced by a variety of agents, or stressors. In everyday we distinguish between two types of stress effects, namely eustress and distress, depending upon whether stress is associated with desirable or undesirable results (1980:93).

Commonly, stress is perceived as something negative and detrimental to one's health. However, Selye discusses *eustress* as a factor referring to aspects of stress, as stressful situations can be perceived as challenging and motivating. If that is the case, overcoming them may result in boosting one's self-esteem and positive responses to future stressors (Suedfeld 1997:851). The main criticism of Selye's theory is it concentrates almost solely on biological aspects of stress and the organism's biological response to stressors. Psychological processes are not given priority in his model. Scholars have since focused on non-biological processes which play a role in stress response. One of the most fundamental models is the transactional model of stress by Lazarus and Folkman. According to them:

Psychological stress is a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being (1984:31).

Stress is thus perceived as a dynamic process and a transaction (relationship) between individuals and their environment. Therefore, people can appraise stressful situations as challenging or threatening (Lazarus, 1966). Coping, in turn, is defined as *cognitive and behavioral efforts to master, reduce, or tolerate the internal and/or external demands that are created by the stressful transaction* (Folkman 1984:843). Lazarus and Folkman have distinguished two fundamental forms of coping: emotion- and problem-oriented coping. The former refers to efforts made to control emotional consequences of stressful situations. The aim of such strategies is to weaken emotional distress perceived by the individual. The latter, on the other hand, involves actions aimed at solving the task itself or efforts to alleviate stressful circumstances (Lazarus and Folkman 1984:150-152). In order to broaden the model, Endler (1997) introduced avoidance-oriented coping which is characterized by the lack of attempts at altering the situation. While all three strategies can be beneficial in different contexts, studies have shown that problem-oriented coping is the most effective one, whereas in the long run avoidance-oriented coping is associated with poorer adjustment (Endler & Parker, 1999).

<b>Emotion-oriented coping</b>	<b>Problem-oriented coping</b>	<b>Avoidance-oriented coping</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Humour</li> <li>- Acceptance</li> <li>- Distancing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rumination</li> <li>- Procrastination</li> <li>- Passive-aggressiveness</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seeking social support</li> <li>- Accepting responsibility</li> <li>- Positive reinforcement</li> <li>- Self-control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Obtaining instrumental and social support</li> <li>- Problem-solving</li> <li>- Planning</li> <li>- Restraint coping</li> <li>- Active coping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social withdrawal</li> <li>- Losing hope</li> <li>- Avoiding the situation</li> </ul>
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Table 1 *Ways of Coping Mechanisms (Endler, 1997)*

### 3. Literature review

A number of qualitative studies that has contributed to Interpreting Studies, most of which used semi-structured interviews. Green et al. (2012) explored interpreters of Kurdish refugees and their experiences of working in mental health services of the United Kingdom. It turned out that the traumatic stories they interpret had negative impact on them. The authors suggested that refugee interpreters need support, which can be realized by supervision sessions concentrating on developing coping strategies. Similarly, a Danish study by Holmgren (2003) investigated working conditions of interpreters who worked for the Danish Red Cross. The results showed that the interpreters experienced severe emotional distress. Further, psychological reactions of them were highly maladaptive, as they included sleep deprivation, ruminating, mood swings and lack of concentration. A study by Watanabe (2012) investigated Japanese interpreters working in an international hospital in Thailand. Two themes were identified: interpreters as problem solvers, and emotional labor and compassion fatigue. Thus, qualitative research in Translating and Interpreting Studies is multicultural, as interpreters reported similar problems and difficulties regardless of culture.

Kállay and Vissu-Petra (2014) compared first and second year students of the European Masters in Conference Interpreting (EMCI) with a corresponding sample of 74 female participants from the general population. The study showed that EMCI students were on average less stressed and more conscious as regards their emotions than the general population, but they also tended to rely on maladaptive coping strategies such rumination and blaming others. Moore (2020) investigated coping mechanisms of novice sign language interpreters. The participants of her study mentioned positive self-talk, reflection, and contact with animals as strategies which helped them relieve stress before a difficult assignment. Also, being judgmental and skewing information were discussed as factors giving them anxiety about interpreting. Martínez-Gómez (2020) conducted a qualitative study involving young language brokers. In their accounts on sources of positive emotions they mentioned feelings of pride, achievement, and joy. An opportunity to develop their language skills and a feeling of solidarity were discussed as well. On the other hand, difficulties included lack of confidence in their skills, interpersonal tensions between family members, and a sense of responsibility.

The existing quantitative literature research concerning psychological and physiological aspects of interpreting usually differentiates between two groups: professional interpreters and trainees (Riccardi et al. 1998; Kurz 2003; Tang and Li 2015; Korpál 2017). The present study aims at specifying the characteristics of another group – young freelance interpreters who do

not have much experience in their profession, but already finished their university education. Investigating such a group may provide valuable insight as to which elements of university education are most relevant and beneficial in occupational contexts, and how young interpreters develop their strategies and work on their craft during the first years of their practice.

Some studies have also investigated coping strategies that interpreting trainees implement in their assignments in the classroom. Kao and Craige (2013) stated that problem-focused coping was a predominant strategy among participants. However, Korpál (2017) in his mixed-method study comparing interpreting trainees with professionals discovered that while problem-oriented strategy was mentioned by both groups, positive reinterpretation and self-esteem, both of which belong to emotion-focused strategies, played a significant role as well. This finding suggests that preferences as regards coping strategies change in time; one of the aims of the present study is therefore to comment further on the process of developing such strategies by investigating a group that is, as far as interpreting experience is concerned, situated between professional interpreters and trainees.

## **4. Methods**

### *4.1. Study design and participants*

The aim of the study was to investigate young interpreters' coping strategies related to stressors and to discover specific problems related to their profession. Furthermore, the goal of the study was to understand how young interpreters perceive their roles, what challenges they come across while interpreting and how they cope with difficult situations. In order to provide a complex picture of their perspectives, the questions referred not only to the occupational environment, but also touched upon the perception of the profession among family and friends. The participants were young interpreters who hold a degree in Translation Studies or a related discipline, and work as interpreters at least as freelancers. They also came from monolingual families and did not spend more than a semester in a country in which their working language is spoken. This was done in light of recent research on bilingualism which suggested that there are significant differences in emotionality when one uses native or foreign language (Dewaele 2004; Caldwell-Harris 2014).

### *4.2 Data collection and procedures*

Eight semi-structured interviews were carried out with the participants of the study. The interviews were conducted in Polish, then they were translated into English by the author of the paper. The interviews took place individually – five of them were conducted at the University of Warsaw where the author works. Three of the interviews were scheduled after the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland, therefore, they were conducted via Skype. Participation in the study was voluntary. The participants were informed about the goal of the research, and the author received their consent to record and interpret the data. After the data had been collected, they were transcribed verbatim. To ensure anonymity of the participants, their names were replaced by symbols, ranging from S1 to S8. In order to avoid response bias, participants were encouraged to add their own comments during the interview. They were told that no answer is right or wrong, and there was no time limit as regards the length of the interview.

### *4.3. Development of interview questions*

Interview questions were developed on the basis of a literature review. They touched upon both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of aptitude. Then, they were consulted with a qualitative researcher working in the field of psychology and a recent alumnus of Translation Studies from the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. The final interviewing protocol was followed by clarifying questions, if necessary.

## 5. Qualitative analysis

In the qualitative interview transcripts, four main categories were identified: A) Principles of the profession and its reception; B) Emotions with regard to the profession; C) Coping with difficult situations; D) Self-perception and self-improvement. Exemplary quotations were provided in tables below.

<p>A1: Reception of the profession among friends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They are impressed, it has an aura of prestige. They imagine that every interpreter is an ideal interpreter. So my memory is perfect, my language skills are flawless, not necessarily native ones. This is the stereotype that is often recurring: knowledge of native language is not as important, and since I am an interpreter I act like dictionary: I know everything about the language, culture... They are impressed. In their mind we are, well, there is a great mind power inside of us [S2]</li> <li>- It's good. I mean, it is kind of, moderately prestigious, let's say. Yeah, you must know the language very well, they say. [S4]</li> <li>- I think people underrate interpreters a bit. I don't know about other languages, but I have a feeling that English is often belittled. It is believed that C1 level is a standard, but I'd say it's closer to B1+. People don't say it directly, but I feel that they respect interpreters from other languages more. But there are people who respect my profession and admit they wouldn't be able to do this, so there is some prestige here. [S7]</li> </ul>
<p>A2: Reception of the profession by clients</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clients very often want to work even for free because it is just, just a few sentences, some scattered phrases. So they wouldn't want to pay for it, just treat it as a favor. [S3]</li> <li>- The Polish are demanding, critical. I had a situation when this made interpreting harder, looking at the faces... well, it is said that everyone knows English, thinks he or she knows... There is some criticism involved just by this kind of reception. [...] The threshold of tolerance is low, as far as the Polish are concerned. [S6]</li> <li>- I think the overall awareness of the profession has improved over the years, but I still think many clients do not realize that being an interpreter is a difficult job. The concept of booths seems to be completely alien for some. I also think that they are surprised at how much our services cost. But that's mostly the case with private clients, not corporations or organizations. [S8]</li> </ul>
<p>A3: Language preferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It's strange, but in my case from Polish into English. It stems from the ease, I mean, English is more malleable. In a Polish into English interpretation I can modify the words, start interpreting even not knowing how the sentence ends. From English into Polish... very often I don't really know what the point of the speaker is, and I have a delay, I can't start. [S6]</li> <li>- This is a really good question. I think I prefer from Spanish into Polish. Why? This is somehow connected with cognitive processes, because, well, because it happens, for example, that if I was speaking Spanish with someone, and then I switch into Polish, I'm adding Spanish words. And when I speak Polish, and then Spanish, this doesn't happen as often. Something like that. [S4]</li> <li>- Definitely into English, I interpret... Definitely I'm less stressed when interpreting into English and way more into German, because in Polish the verb is always at the beginning of a sentence. In German, the verb is very often at the end, and this is demanding, this is very demanding.</li> </ul>

<p>This is, well, a question of interpreting the grammar of Polish into the grammar of German. [S3]</p>
<p>A4: Characteristics of a good interpreter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A good translator definitely has to be self-confident. He has to act that he is self-confident, has to convince the audience that what he says is true. He has to have a good technique of note taking. [...] He has to have a good voice which people would enjoy listening to, and of course, how to say it, language competences, this is a foundation. [S3]</li> <li>- First of all, flexibility. I have worked with interpreters who, instead of solving problems, were causing them. If I from the get go work with somebody who starts complaining, sees only problems, there's no booth, no good equipment, doesn't want to find a solution such as "Hey, it is loud, we have to speak louder", but has a feeling that there will be problems, well, there will be problems then. So flexibility. But a good interpreter should be humble. I can't imagine a situation in which somebody from the audience corrects me and I'd ignore that completely. [S6]</li> <li>- He should be empathetic, be able to talk to the other person, people he interprets. He should be engaged. I think that if you are not emotionally invested, you will not interpret something well, and even the client will feel treated instrumentally, that's what I think. [S4]</li> <li>- Like I said – being able to use his voice or face. But also communicativeness, flexibility. It might not be obvious, but good physical condition. Maybe not in simultaneous interpreting, but in business contexts or generally in consecutive interpreting you are standing all the time, or you keep following someone, so you need some basic stamina. [S7]</li> </ul>
<p>A5: The role of feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aside from my time at university, I have never received feedback. [S5]</li> <li>- It happens, but rarely. I'd say I receive feedback around 25% of times. I think clients usually don't know much about language and they think that if I interpret, then I must be good. If anything, I receive feedback from people I interpret, speakers. [S7]</li> <li>- I think if someone wants me to interpret I assume that this person doesn't speak this language, although recently I got an assignment from a girl who speaks English but doesn't feel as confident to interpret, so if I had received feedback that everything went well, that would have been nice because she knows something about English. I might have felt a bit better inside, but a thank you is enough for me, and of course money. [S2]</li> </ul>

Table 2 *Main category A: Principles of the profession and its reception*

#### Theme A1: Reception of the profession among friends

Young interpreters reported that their profession is respected by their friends or family, although it was reported that they do not know much about the specifics of the job. The perception is rather stereotypical and focused on technical aspects, rather than emotional. One person mentioned that the perception of interpreters may vary depending on their working languages, with English being underestimated in comparison to more exotic languages. Furthermore, interpreters seem to be respected more than written translators.

#### Theme A2: Reception of the profession by clients

Interpreters stated that their clients tend to be critical and demanding, and they often fail to provide interpreters with appropriate equipment. On the other hand, it was reported that the situation was better than it used to be, thus the awareness as regards the profession might be growing, albeit it is a slow process.

### Theme A3: Language preferences

Participants stated that they usually interpret from Polish into their working languages. However, some of them had scarce experience in interpreting from a foreign language into Polish. The malleability of a foreign language was named a factor in interpreters' preferences, as well as their experience in interpreting onto a foreign language.

### Theme A4: Characteristics of a good interpreter

Interpreters named aspects pertaining mostly to personality traits. Self-confidence was named the most important aspect of being good at interpreting. Flexibility and ability to work under pressure and stressful conditions were regarded as desirable as well.

### Theme A5: The role of feedback

It turned out that feedback is given to young interpreters rather sparingly. If they receive feedback, it is given to them by speakers, rather than clients. Positive feedback was reported to be a pleasant aspect of interpreting and some of participants expressed desire to receive it more often.

#### B1: Remembering of assignments

- Not really, heh. I mean, maybe what the general topic was, but when it comes to some details – not really. No... More so the speaker I had to interpret rather than what he was talking about. [S4]
- I don't remember, even the first one. Never remember the details, or what was happening around me. [S3]
- Back then, I really wanted to ask them if it was good, but I thought they would see this as a weakness. Interestingly, I don't remember exactly what I was interpreting, I just don't remember the text. [S8]

#### B2: The first assignment

- Lots of stress, but at the same time a lot of excitement. [S1]
- After high school, I took part in a conference, and the interpreter was there. It was a consecutive interpretation, from English into Polish. Something happened on the last day of the conference, he had to come back to his town. I was asked if I could, because I knew the organizers, I had to interpret. I was like "there's nobody else?". There wasn't. So, I was 19 at that time, very nervous, grabbed the microphone, I stood in the center of the hall. Everything was very dynamic, but I thought it went pretty well for a debut, it gave me a feeling of being good at something, especially because people were approaching me saying "hey, that was good, is this your job?". I think this was a good starting point. [S6]
- It was even before I started my studies. I was very stressed, way more than now. I stood aside, so that as few people as possible could see me. My voice was shaking, that's for sure. However, it was a challenge, so I managed to stay to the end. [S5]

#### B3: Satisfaction

- Oh well. You know, a sense of a job well done, when I interpret the output relatively faithfully, and, if possible, nicely. Also, a chance to deepen my general knowledge. [S1]
- I'm always happy when I can interpret, I think I feel satisfaction. It's difficult to say why. I'm always happy when I can use my knowledge of a foreign language, and this is, well, let's say, facilitation of communication with other people. It's a kind of challenge, at least in your own opinion. I tend to check new things, it's something for development. [S5]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Satisfaction that I managed to interpret something that wouldn't be understood without me. The fact you interpreted something which was completely foreign. The fact that, after all, thanks to interpreters the world becomes more, more of a unity, because there are no borders between one language and another. Even though such borders do exist, the interpreter can build a bridge between them. It sounds grand, but that's the way it is. Uniting people with one another, that happens if we interpret for a large audience. I think this feeling of satisfaction is every time. Sometimes bigger, sometimes smaller, it also depends how happy I am with my performance. [S3]</li> </ul>
<p>B4: Stress and type of working language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It depends, but I can image a situation in which interpreting into Polish would be more stressing than into English. [S5]</li> <li>- Like I said before, when I interpret into a foreign language, I feel stronger emotions. Maybe it's connected with seeing something as a challenge, tough to say. Stress probably is a bit higher, but it's a kind of positive stress. [S7]</li> <li>- Every contact with Italian, be it active or passive, is a big emotional load. The emotions are always there, but the language doesn't have a huge impact on them. Maybe I was more stressed when I didn't know Italian that well as now, but now it doesn't have a big impact on me. [S8]</li> </ul>

Table 3 *Main Category B: Emotions with regard to the profession*

#### Theme B1: Remembering of assignments

According to participants, only selected aspects of assignments tend to be remembered. Speakers than topics of their speeches are remembered. It was also reported that the first assignments are well remembered, but with time they tend to be treated less emotionally.

#### Theme B2: The first assignment

According to participants, the first assignment was a stressful situation. Interpreters were able to precisely describe the situation, speakers, topics, and organizers of the event. Some saw the first assignment as a challenge, which helped them to cope with the situation. In most cases their first assignment took place before they started studying. The emotions named after having finished the assignment were pride, self-respect, and excitement. The significance of receiving positive feedback was named a factor in their desire to continue interpreting.

#### Theme B3: Satisfaction

Satisfaction was acknowledged as a recurring aspect of their in their interpreting work. A chance to expand their general knowledge as well as being able to form a sense of community around their clients was mentioned. Also, a bridge metaphor was used – interpreters were perceived as ambassadors who enable communication between people from different cultures. Interpreters saw their work as important and relevant to people. Moreover, a boost in self-confidence was mentioned to occur after a successful interpreting.

#### Theme B4: Stress and type of working language

Subjects reported that they are slightly more engaged when they interpret from a foreign language into Polish. However, they perceived this aspect as motivating rather than stressful. Moreover, a task-oriented approach was dominant in their accounts. Interpreters also said that their level of stress was higher when their proficiency of their working languages was lower.



<p>C1: The day before the assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assignments are assignments. I try not to think about them, sometimes, if I have the materials, I go through them. If I have the materials, for example with a specific sentence, I'm work out the problems strategically. But it's not like I interpret the whole speech before, especially since once I did that and it turned out that I was given the wrong materials, and my speaker started talking about something completely different. [S6]</li> <li>- I try to prepare well. Simple as that. I go to sleep early, eat well – this is crucial, heh. [S7]</li> <li>- I try to walk around and walk the stress off. Stop concentrating on the act of interpretation, just go with the flow. Of course, if we are talking about specialized translations, I try to absorb the vocabulary, revise something. But the day before is for relax and chill. [S8]</li> </ul>
<p>C2: Reactions to their mistakes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It depends, it depends when I realize that. Sometimes it's too late, once I corrected myself only the second time the word was uttered. It's such a fast situation that it's tough to correct myself instantly. If I see a mistake and I know how to correct it, I do it. Sometimes I feel less confident. Once I didn't know the word and the speaker hinted what his word was, and I didn't feel good about it. It was a simple word, but I knew it, I just couldn't recall it in that moment. It doesn't disrupt the process of interpretation, but in such a moment I feel a bit incompetent. [S5]</li> <li>- I am ashamed, heh. Above all, I'm ashamed. I just look how others react, whether they realized that or not. If so, I try to act as if everything is all right. If not, I say that I made a mistake, and the proper meaning is this and that. [S4]</li> <li>- I don't like such situations because it gets me out of the rhythm. I'm more annoyed with that than stressed – I know that the interpretation will suffer regardless. If I can correct it fast enough, I do it. If not, I tell myself “well, tough luck”, and I try to go with the flow. [S7]</li> <li>- Most of the times I try not to laugh, I find it funny. Well, it also depends on how serious this interpreting is. [S6]</li> </ul>
<p>C3: Distance and self-irony</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I keep telling myself that nobody will die if I make a mistake. [S2]</li> <li>- I try to tell myself at the very beginning... I have my saying that I tell myself before I start: “bigger events were crashed”. This helps me distance myself a bit. I conclude that if there was somebody who could do a better job than me, he'd be here. If the organizers believe that I am good, then I just do my job, and I think I try to have some distance, not to worry. [S6]</li> <li>- Chill and self-distance. The awareness that we all make mistakes. Paradoxically, purism may do more harm than good. [S8]</li> </ul>
<p>C4: Interaction with speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I think you can feel more confident if you hear how somebody speaks. I think this could help by initiating a kind of relationship so that you can feel more comfortable with this person. [S5]</li> <li>- I feel best when I exchange a few words with the speaker. Some human contact, yeah. Not, well, mechanically. What's more, he was Spanish, earlier speakers were from Latin America. This is easier, these people are more open, they initiate this contact. They see me, walk up to me, and we have a small conversation. [S4]</li> <li>- Before the interpretation we even talked, and it really helped me clear everything up. [S2]</li> <li>- The speakers are not aware of the fact they are being interpreted and interaction with them can change it. [S6]</li> </ul>

Table 4. *Main category 3: Coping with difficult situations*

#### Theme C1: The day before the assignment

The day before the assignment was named as highly stressful. Avoidance-oriented strategies, such as blocking negative thoughts and going for a walk were mentioned by subjects. However, task-oriented strategies were also named (revising vocabulary, thinking about potential problems in interpreting). The degree of stress perceived the day before varied according to their perceived subjective significance of assignment. An assignment for friends or acquaintances was seen as less stressful than one for somebody they did not know.

## Theme C2: Reactions to mistakes

Emotion-oriented and task-oriented strategies were mentioned by interpreters. As regards the former category, shame and annoyance was mentioned as prevalent emotions felt after the mistake was made. Humor was also named as a strategy of coping, which is an example of a positive emotion-focused coping technique. However, task-oriented strategies, such as trying to come up with an equivalent, were mentioned. Regardless of the type of strategy, participants reported that making a mistake is a situation that gets them out of their rhythm and has rather negative impact on their performance.

## Theme C3: Distance and self-irony

Distance was seen as a crucial factor in preparation to assignments. Self-irony helped interpreters to be at peace with making them.

## Theme C4: Interaction with speakers

Contact with other people was discussed as a stress-relieving factor before interpreting. If interpreters have an opportunity to talk with speakers, they do so. It was reported that their performance would improve after contacting speakers. Interaction with speakers was also named a facilitating aspect.

### D1: The Polish language

- I try, but it's difficult, because of so many nuances, I try to care about my Polish, although I know that this is getting off the beaten tracks. If I use Polish as my native language, the mistakes will keep on occurring. They or some accretions. But I do try to discover what is a mistake and what is not, I try to remember about it and use it. And I read a lot. It helps me to keep touch with a different, let's say, register. [S6]
- I read books and consult our language clinic in case of any doubts. [S1]
- Hmm, regretfully, I have to admit that I don't train it. It's sad, because it definitely would be helpful. Sure, I read books, articles, but I don't do anything more. [S5]
- I try to read articles from newspapers, newspapers of high quality, but I admit that I don't train Polish very often. [S8]

### D2: The choice of the profession

- Most of all, it was related to lifestyle. Namely, prospects of trips, but I also thought I had some talents to do this, linguistically speaking. [S1]
- I started studying English because I would be hopeless at anything else. Or so I thought at that time, it might have been an easy choice. Anyways, it started with first interpreting classes, it was already Masters. I noticed I was pretty good at it, better than most of the year, so I decided to go that route. [S7]
- This profession seemed way more prestigious than being a teacher, and I had only these two choices. It was a question of prestige, I thought my earnings would be better, so there's that. That's why I made that decision, what happened later, that's a different story. [S3]
- It began with the fact I studied Translation; I've always liked challenges. It is really connected with auditory aspects, sounds, melody, etc. That was my beginning, my first contact with interpreting, more classic types: consecutive, simultaneous... It's a kind of challenge. [S4]

<p>D3: Diction and articulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I lack the technique and I would like to get some experience as to how to work with the voice. [S3]</li> <li>- I try to work on my diction – I said before that this profession reminds me that of an actor. I know that you must know how to use your voice. I have a coursebook and I do the exercises. [S7]</li> <li>- I should, but when it comes to voice hygiene, I try to do some articulation exercises before the interpretation. I'm a teacher by profession, also an interpreter, recently I have dabbled in organized tours... I work with my voice. It's not easy, takes a lot of practice, time... [S6]</li> </ul>
<p>D4: The role of talent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You can train a lot of things, but, you have to have that something extra, something difficult to define, but sometimes you can see who is among the very best, and who is merely among the very good. I hope I'm in the first group, at least that's my goal! [S8]</li> <li>- You can train it in a way, but not really... No, not everyone can be an interpreter. I don't think everyone can do it. [S4]</li> <li>- I think it's 30% of talent and passion, and 70% of hard work and craft. It's similar to writing, I have a feeling that these are very similar disciplines. It's said that interpretation and translation is a reconstructive work, but I don't think so. If we're talking about documents, the sure, but if it's something creative, then it's much more difficult a job.</li> <li>- I'd say 20% talent, and the rest – work, preparation, and practice. Simply put, experience. [S1]</li> </ul>

Table 5 *Main Category D: Self-perception and self-improvement*

#### Theme D1: The Polish language

Interpreters perceived their Polish as an important aspect of their job. They do not take part in specialized courses, but they try to work on accuracy and switching between registers on their own. It was reported that native language was a neglected aspect of their craft, as in some cases participants expressed regret that they do not spend enough time on the Polish language. Also, the lack of specialized classes on university was mentioned.

#### Theme D2: The choice of the profession

Prestige and lifestyle were mentioned as important factors regarding the choice of the profession. Also, positive feedback after first interpretation classes proved beneficial to interpreters' motivation. Another factor that was named in this section was a challenging nature of the profession.

#### Theme D3: Diction and articulation

Similarly to Theme D1, participants acknowledge the importance of these skills. One person admitted that the knowledge as regards voice emission, which was gained during his pedagogical training, has proven to be instrumental in his career as an interpreter. Those who did not receive formal education in this regard noted that they try to develop these skills on their own. Participants perceived diction and articulation as skills which are difficult to master, but helpful in everyday practice.

#### Theme D4: The role of talent

Talent was mentioned as a factor which does not play a crucial role, it is difficult to achieve absolute mastery without it. On the other hand, talent on its own was perceived as insufficient. A metaphor of writing was used – it takes practice in both disciplines, as experience was said to be another key component. Talent was not named explicitly by interpreters – it was described as something imponderable, pertaining to something intangible.

## 6. General discussion and limitations

One of the fundamental aims of the interview-based study was to collect qualitative data on stressors in interpreting and young interpreters' ways of coping. The results illustrate that stress is an essential part of the profession, which is in line with previous research. However, coping strategies reported by young interpreters were varied and typically included both problem- and emotion-oriented ones. Avoidance-oriented coping was not reported by participants. The results of the study may thus complement Korpál's (2017) experiment which suggested that self-esteem and positive reinterpretation (emotion-oriented strategies) were predominant in the accounts of trainees, but it was unclear whether those strategies would actually be implemented in interpreting practice. This study shows that young interpreters use both types of strategies to a similar degree. While emotion-oriented strategies (distance and self-irony) were predominant in the accounts of young interpreters, problem-oriented strategies (e.g. focus on the task and preparation) were also mentioned by the interviewees. Therefore, young interpreters adjust their strategies to a given situation.

The level of stress varied depending on the assignment. Firstly, one might observe that the highest level of stress was observed when the participants recalled their first assignment. The first assignment was also well-remembered by all participants, whereas further interpretations were recalled rather fragmentarily. This finding has its evidence in neuroscientific research as people tend to remember stressful events better due to stress-induced plasticity in the amygdala (Rooszendaal et al. 2009). One can thus see that perceived stress decreases with more interpreting practice. Moreover, some assignments were seen as less stressful, particularly those commissioned by their friends. Such assignments were not seen as demanding, and the emotions accompanying them were not debilitating and closer to eustress than distress. It is worth noting that most of the studies in the literature focused on interpreters working in extreme environments. The aim of this study was to discuss stressors and coping strategies of interpreters working in more ordinary conditions, e.g. in tourism, culture, and education. Therefore, their stress level was probably lower than interpreters' working with refugees.

It needs to be taken of the account that the results of the study are preliminary, and it is impossible to generalize them. Further research is necessary to verify them. Some issues of the study as well as possible room for improvement will be discussed below.

The results of the study might prove beneficial in designing a follow-up quantitative study which would provide more definite answers as regards the development of coping strategies and well-being of young interpreters. Organizing a focus group with some of the participants might provide an ample opportunity to discuss the themes further. The study captures the changes in coping strategies to a limited degree. A longitudinal study in which the participants in which the participants would be interviewed in different stages of their careers might capture how young interpreters change their strategies and attitude towards interpreting. Such a study could also be accompanied by obtaining qualitative data from other sources than interviews (diaries, surveys, journals) which would improve the reliability the results and validate their interpretation. The study might also be replicated internationally to verify whether the problems that the participants of this study encountered are Poland-specific. Further conclusions might be obtained by conducting a similar interview-study involving a comparison between two interpreting modes (consecutive and simultaneous), as no quantitative studies have been conducted in which the two modes would be compared as regards their stressfulness..

What is more, the study investigated only the perspective of young interpreters. Future studies might also explore the perspective of others (i.e., friends, colleagues, clients) regarding the profession of interpreter to verify whether young interpreters' accounts are valid. This might bring forward valuable insight as regards public awareness of the profession and what should be done to improve it. The perception of interpreters revolved around technical aspects of the profession (language proficiency, good memory, strong cognitive skills), whereas factors pertaining to psychological aspects were scarcely mentioned. According to the interviewees, the portrayal of an interpreter is thus incomplete oversimplified. As interaction with speakers was mentioned as one of the key factors facilitating the process of interpreting, it might be beneficial to inform speakers at various events that they are being interpreted. Furthermore, the interviewees reported that they wish they received feedback after having completed the assignment. It was mentioned that if they do receive comments, they are mostly negative. This finding is in line with previous research as Sakamoto and Foedisch (2017: 345-346) discovered that while translators consider negative feedback a good learning opportunity, positive feedback often does not reach them and it is a sign of a weak rapport between the client and the translator. This may suggest that the awareness as regards the profession is still relatively low in Poland. The conclusions of the article can thus be treated as guidelines as to what should be done to raise that awareness and how to educate clients about the intricacies of the profession of interpreter. A fruitful cooperation between both parties might help interpreters in enhancing their performance, and clients/speakers in receiving an improved product.

Overall, young interpreters perceived the profession as prestigious and challenging, but satisfactory and offering numerous chances for self-development. Facilitating interaction with others, prestige, contact with people, and facing challenges were main factors behind the choice of the profession. Also, in their accounts they touched upon factors pertaining more to personality and internal factors such as flexibility or communicativeness. They also are eager to work on their craft. Talent was seen as only a small part of the profession; experience was mentioned as a factor more important than talent. Stress-coping strategies may thus change with experience.

In conclusion, the results offer a perspective regarding what is taught at university and how that theory is confronted with practice. It might be beneficial to introduce courses on stress management and coping in university education so that young interpreters would be able to implement them consciously.

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