

## TRANSLATION PROCEDURES OF CULTURAL WORDS IN ONE OF THE BEST MOVIES OF ALL TIMES

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**Abstract.** *This paper aims to describe the translation strategies used in translating cultural words found in the subtitle of Godfather Movies (I and II). Godfather is one of best of all time movies America has ever had. It contains a lot of cultural words worth to notice. Since subtitle is limited both in term of duration and space, it is interesting to find out how the cultural words are translated to be displayed in the subtitle. The researcher gathered the data by watching the movie, spotting the cultural words, and then writing the translation displayed in the subtitle. Using qualitative approach and through comparative method the researcher analyzed the data. The result of this study shows that the subtitler used five procedures in translating cultural words: naturalization, transference, functional equivalence, cultural equivalence, and modulation. The frequently used procedure among them is transference. This research also investigates the parameters influencing the subtitler's decision in choosing the translation strategies to translate cultural words. It was found that there were six influencing parameters: monocultural, transcultural, specific media constraint, centrality of reference, context, intersemiotic redundancy. Considering the influencing factors as well as choosing proper translation procedures could minimize the translation problems arised in subtitling.*

**Key words:** *Subtitle; Godfather; Cultural word; Translation Procedure; Equivalence Analysis*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Subtitle becomes an important aspect in audiovisual entertainment like movies. The success of an internationally distributed movie partly depends on the quality of the subtitle. Subtitle acts as a bridge to accommodate viewers across language and culture. In translation studies, Jakobson categorized subtitle as intersemiotic translation in which verbal sign is translated into non-verbal sign. However, subtitling has its own challenges. According to Gottlieb, “*Subtitles, sometimes referred to as captions, are transcriptions of film or TV dialogue, presented simultaneously on the screen. Subtitles usually consist of an average maximum length of 35 characters. As a rule, subtitles are placed at the bottom of the picture and are either centred or left-aligned* (1992:245). From the definition, challenges that a translator will face are time and space. The translator should consider the time because the subtitle has to be presented simultaneously as well as the space because the characters are restricted only to 35 characters for each scene.

Besides time and space, another important aspect in translating subtitle is cultural terms. Cultural terms are usually found almost in every movie. It is due to the fact that language is bounded by the culture, as Malinowski stated “*language is essentially rooted in the reality of the culture. It cannot be explained without constant reference to these broader contexts of verbal utterance.*” We cannot separate language from the culture. For example Indonesia language has more vocabularies to refer to rice than English. Indonesia language has *gabah*, *beras*, *aron*, and *nasi* while English has only *rice* to refer to them. The reason behind this could be that for Indonesian rice is the staple food. Therefore, there are words which contain cultural value or words that only belong to the source language culture. Cultural manifestation in language is specially discussed by Newmark (1988) who categorized it into *ecology* (flora, fauna, hills, winds, plains), *material culture* (food, clothes, houses and towns, transportation), *social culture* (work and leisure), *Organizations*, *Customs*, *Activities*, *Procedures*, and *gesture and habit*.

Such words could be problematic and the translator should address this kind of issue with certain translation strategies. Many experts define translation strategies differently. Since the researcher used Newmark theory as reference, translation strategies refer to the way a translator use to translate a text or a smaller unit of language. Newmark (1988) called them translation method and translation procedure. Translation method is a series of strategies a translator can use to translate different kind of text while translation procedure is a series of strategies to translate smaller unit of language like word, phrase, or clause. To translate cultural terms which are potentially untranslatable translators may choose one of the translation procedures which suit the communicative function.

It is interesting to find out how the translator deals with cultural words in the subtitle. In such challenging situation the translator should transfer the meaning of a very specific term accurately and in the same time make sure that the translation is readable and acceptable for the audience in the target language. Therefore, this research aims to describe translation procedures used in translating cultural words and the shifts which occur in translating the cultural words. The result of this research could be an insight into how to work on untranslatability in the subtitle translation.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research focused on the product of translation which is the translation of cultural elements in movie subtitle. The cultural elements examined are ranged from word, phrase, into clause. Sources of the data are the dialogue and its subtitle of God Father 1 and 2 movie. It is a trilogy movie which is adapted from a novel by Mario Fuzo about mafia from Sicilia, Italy who live in America. Although it is an old movie, it is considered as one of the best movies of all time. The data were collected through comparing the movie dialogue with the subtitle in target language. The cultural words found were then classified based on the translation strategies used. Afterwards, the parameters influencing the subtitler's decision

were investigated based on the seven kinds of parameters; 1) transculturality (transcultural, monocultural, microcultural); 2) extratextuality; 3) centrality of reference; 4) intersemiotics redundancy; 5) co-text; 6) media specific constraints; and 7) paratextual consideration.

### C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The finding will be discussed in two major section, they are translation procedure and influencing parameters. In translation procedure section, the cultural words in SL will be compared with the translation in TL to find out about the procedures used by the translator. In influencing parameters section, the factors which influenced the translator's decision will be discussed.

#### Translation Procedure

##### a. Transference

Table 1. Cultural Words translated using transference procedure

No.	TSu	TSa
1	lasagna?	lasagna?
2	the cannoli!	the cannoli!
3	Cuba Libres, Pina Coladas,	Cuba Libres, Pina Coladas,
4	Banana daiquiri	Banana daiquiri
5	Scotch?	Scotch?
6	Anisette	Anisette
7	chicken cacciatore	chicken cacciatore
8	a tarantella.	a tarantella.
9	FBI	FBI
10	consigliere.	consigliere.
11	Ivy League	Ivy League
12	Don	Don
13	capo regime	capo regime
14	Kefauver	Kefauver
15	G.I.s	G.I.s
16	cosa nostra	cosa nostra
17	Cent' Anne.	Cent' Anne.

The data showed that borrowing is the most commonly used translation strategy in translating cultural words in the subtitle. Most of the cultural words borrowed are those from material culture and organization category. Transference, or as Pinchuk (1977) called it borrowing, is the reproduction of SL word into TL as it is without any changes both in form or meaning. As can be seen from the data, the words from the SL are borrowed since there is no closest equivalence in the TL. Furthermore, borrowing makes it possible to introduce SL culture to the TL audience. As can be seen in data a1 to a8, the translator consistently used borrowing procedure to translate all the material culture in the form of food and beverages. Through this procedure, TL audience are introduced to the uniqueness of SL culture. Eventhough those words are not translated or explained, some semiotic channels available in the movie can help the audience understand the words. Gottlieb (2005) introduced four semiotic channels in subtitle: 1) the verbal auditory channel; 2) the non-verbal auditory channel; 3) the verbal visual channel; 3) the verbal visual channel; and 4) the non-verbal visual channel. For instance, when the word 'Tarantella' appeared, the scene showed a party where people were gathering to eat and dance. The following is the complete sentence of the data:

BS: I can't believe that out of thirty professional musicians, there isn't one Italian in the group here. Come on, let's have a tarantella.

BT: Aku tak percaya, 30 musisi disana tak satu pun orang italia. Ayo, kita tarantella. (24:09/Godfather II)

According to Encyclopedia Britanica, *Tarantella is couple folk dance of Italy characterized by light, quick steps and teasing, flirtatious behaviour between partners; women dancers frequently carry tambourines*. Although 'tarantella' belongs to a specific culture and may be unknown to some TL viewers, they could grasp that tarantella is a kind of dance from the context. In addition, the subtitler used this procedure for cultural words that are familiar to the TL viewers, as can be seen in data a1 and a9. Lasagna which is originated in Italy and considred as the oldest type of pasta has been widely known by TL viewers. It can easily be found in Italian restaurant menu in

Indonesia. Therefore, it can be inferred that the subtitler decided to translate it using this procedure because the viewers have been familiar with the cultural word.

**b. Naturalization**

Table 2. Naturalization

No	TSu	Tsa
18	the casino.	Kasino
19	baptized	dibaptis
20	communion	komuni
21	pinocchio	pinokio
22	Champagne	Sampanye
23	gypsies	Gipsi

According to Newmark (1988), naturalization is a kind of procedure by which a translator adapts the words in SL into the normal pronunciation in TL. This procedure can be used for words which have been familiar to the target reader. As can be seen in the table above, the words are quite familiar to the target reader even though it might not be commonly found in Indonesia. For instance, the word *casino* which according to Wikipedia is *a facility which houses and accommodates certain types of gambling activities* is found in a lot of western movies especially action movies. Besides, for some viewers who may not know what the casino is, the non-verbal visual channel in the movie provides the information. This applies to the other words in the table that it can be concluded the subtitler decided to choose this procedure for words which have been familiar to the target reader and the pronunciation can easily be adapted to the TL.

**c. Componential Analysis**

Table 3. Componential Analysis

No	Tsu	Tsa
24	a Wop	Mafia
26	Kraut mick	Jerman-Irlandia

Both data in the table above contains some connotative meaning. A *wop* according to [urbandictionary.com](http://urbandictionary.com) is *“An epithet used for those of Italian descent. WOP stands for Without Papers. Many Italian immigrants had*

*no papers to identify themselves and were branded as WOPs.*” However, a farther discussion in an online forum called Quora stated that the origin of the word *wop* is from an Italian word *guappo*. It is a word from Sicilian and Neopolitan dialect which means “a swaggering thug” or *an arrogant criminal*. While *Kraut Mick* according to Urban Dictionary refers to German-Irish people and is an offensive term according to Meriam Webster online dictionary. Both words are translated using componential analysis procedure. The following is the explanation:

Table 4. componential analysis for the word *a wop*

	Related to Italia	Negative connotation	Criminal organization
A wop	✓	✓	-
Mafia	✓	✓	✓

The table demonstrates that *a wop* and its translation in TL *mafia* has some related meaning. *Wop* is related to Italian people in terms of its originality and to carrying negative connotation when used by non-Italian to refer to Italian people. Meanwhile, *mafia* is actually a foreign word adapted into the TL which has some similar meaning component with *a wop*. According to Wikipedia, “The word *mafia* (Italian pronunciation: [ˈma.fja]) derives from the Sicilian adjective *mafiusu*, roughly translated, means 'swagger', but can also be translated as 'boldness' or 'bravado'.” What makes it different from *a wop* is that it refers to a criminal organization. However, in Sicily, where the word comes from, *mafia* actually doesn't have any negative connotation. It was just after the immigrants from Italy came to the U.S. had the meaning shifted.

Table 5. componential analysis for the word *Kraut Mick*

	Related to Specific Nation	Negative connotation
Kraut Mick	✓	✓
Jerman-Irlandia	✓	-

*Kraut Mick* and *Jerman-Irlandia* share at least one related meaning for which they both refer to specific nation. According to Wikipedia, *Kraut* is a German word for herbs or a traditional Central and Eastern European food. *Kraut Mick* is a word

used by American soldiers to call German-Irish people in the World War I and was considered offensive. In TL, *Kraut Mick* is replaced by more explicit word, *Jerman-Irlandia*. Consequently, the negative connotation contained in the SL cannot be preserved in the TL. This procedure seems to help the subtitler to avoid unnecessary connotation.

#### d. Functional Equivalence

Table 6. Functional Equivalence

27	Bridal purse	Hadiah pernikahan
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In American wedding tradition, bridal purse actually refers to a real purse used by a bride to carry the confetti in. While in Italian wedding bridal purse refers to a purse carried by the bride in which guests put their envelope of money. The subtitler decided to use functional equivalence strategy since if translated using other procedure such as transposition it would be *tas (kecil) pengantin* and it is contextually inappropriate when put in its complete sentence. The following is the complete sentence of the data:

SL: for your daughter's *bridal purse*

TL: untuk *hadiah pernikahan* putrimu

Using this procedure the emphasis lies on the function rather than the form. This is due to the fact that the same cultural material as *bridal purse* is not found in the TL.

#### e. Modulation

Table 7. Modulation

No	Tsu	Tsa
28	cha-cha-cha	dansa.
29	Guinea	Kalian
30	dago, guinea, wop, greaseball goombahs	orang kalian

Newmark (1988) pointed out, modulation is a translation procedure by which a translator reproduce the message of the original text in the TL text in conformity

with the current norms of the TL, since the SL and TL may appear dissimilar in terms of perspective. In other words, modulation is a shift in point of view. The following is some shift in perspection that may occur in translation:

- a. Specific => General
- b. Whole => Part
- c. Negative => Positive
- d. Active => Passive

All data on the table above are translated using modulation procedure which the point of view changed from specific into general. Cha-cha-cha, according to Wikipedia, is a dance of Cuban origin. It was created by a Cuba composer and violinist Enrique Jorin in the early 1950s. However, this detailed information is not too important to be presented for the viewers. By using the hypernim of cha-cha-cha which is *dansa*, the viewers could grasp the message that cha-cha-cha is a kind of dance. The other data are similar to the previous ones. They contain some connotative meaning which are considered offensive for a certain community. However, the subtitler decided to use more general word in TL which is *kalian* and *orang kalian*. As a result, the connotative meaning contained could not be preserved in the TL.

#### e. Transposition

Table 8. Transposition

No	Tsu	TSa
31	C note	Kunci nada C
32	a Navy Cross	Salib AL
33	the fifth amendment	amandemen kelima

Transposition in translation almost always occur. This is due to the fact that each language has different grammatical rule. Newmark (1988) devided this procedures into four types of grammatical change. The words in the table above can be categorized into the first category which concerns with word's form and position.

In SL, the modifier comes before the head noun. While in TL, the head noun precedes the modifier.

- a. C (modifier) Note (head) => Kunci Nada (Head) C (modifier)
- b. A Navy (modifier) Cross (head) => Salib (Head) AL (modifier)
- c. The fifth (modifier) amendment (head) => Amandemen (head) Kelima (modifier)

The meaning of data 31 and 32 are distorted. According to the context *C note* is an idiom for \$100 and *a navy cross* refers to a decoration awarded to a member of the United States Navy for extraordinary heroism. Therefore, for these specific cultural terms this procedure fails to preserve the meaning of the SL. However for data 33 this procedure can deliver the meaning without distorting it. In conclusion, applying this procedure for cultural words or idioms requires more concern and consideration to avoid meaning distortion.

#### f. Cultural Subtitution

Table 9. Cultural Subtitution

No	TSu	TSa
36	Godfather	bapa baptis
37	Just make yourself at home.	Anggap saja ini rumahmu

The data in this category are translated using cultural equivalent procedure by which they are replaced by cultural expression in the TL. According to online Oxford Dictionary a godfather is “*A man who presents a child at baptism and promises to take responsibility for their religious education.*” In TL, it is used to be called *Bapak Baptis*. While *Just make yourself at home* is an expression used to welcome guests in someone’s house to make them comfortable. A quiet similar expression in TL culture is availabel, which is *anggap saja ini rumahmu* (be like in your own home).

### 3.2 Influencing Parameters

After analyzing the procedures, in this section some influencing parameters on the subtitler's decision will be listed. The following categories of parameter are based on what have been formulized by Pedersen (2005) in his paper on *How is Culture Rendered in Subtitle*. The data in the table below demonstrates that one cultural word may be translated using a certain procedure based on multiple influencing parmaters. It also presents that each factor did not result in one type of translation procedure choice.

Table 10. Translation Procedure and Influencing Factor

	SL	TL	Translation Procedure	Influencing Factor
1	lasagna?	lasagna?	Transference	Transcultural&Intersemiotic Redundancy
2	the cannoli!	the cannoli!	Transference	Monocultural
3	Cuba Libres, Pina Coladas,	Cuba Libres, Pina Coladas,	Transference	Monocultural
4	Banana daiquiri	Banana daiquiri	Transference	Monocultural
5	Scotch?	Scotch?	Transference	Monocultural
6	Anisette	Anisette	Transference	Monocultural
7	chicken cacciatore	chicken cacciatore	Transference	Monocultural
8	a tarantella.	a tarantella.	Transference	Monocultural
9	FBI	FBI	Transference	Transcultural
10	consigliere.	consigliere.	Transference	Monocultural
11	Ivy League	Ivy League	Transference	Monocultural
12	Don	Don	Transference	Monocultural
13	capo regime	capo regime	Transference	Monocultural
14	Kefauver	Kefauver	Transference	Monocultural
15	G.I.s	G.I.s	Transference	Monocultural
16	cosa nostra	cosa nostra	Transference	Monocultural
17	Cent' Anne.	Cent' Anne.	Transference	Monocultural&Co-text
18	the casino.	Kasino	Naturalization	Transcultural
19	baptized	dibaptis	Naturalization	Transcultural
20	communion	komuni	Naturalization	Monocultural
21	pinocchio	pinokio	Naturalization	Transcultural
22	Champagne	Sampanye	Naturalization	Transcultural
23	gypsies	Gipsi	Naturalization	Transcultural

24	a Wop	Mafia	Componential analysis	Centrality of reference
25	Kraut mick	Jerman-Irlandia	Componential analysis	Centrality of reference
26	Bridal purse	Hadiah pernikahan	Functional equivalence	Monocultural&Media specific constraint
27	cha-cha-cha	dansa.	Modulation	Monocultural&Intersemiotic redundancy
28	Guinea	Kalian	Modulation	Monocultural&Media specific constraint
29	dago, guinea, wop, greaseball goombahs	orang kalian	Modulation	Monocultural&Media specific constraint
30	C note	Kunci nada C	Transposition	Monocultural&Media specific constraint
31	a Navy Cross	Salib AL	Transposition	Monocultural&Media specific constraint
32	the fifth amendment	amandemen kelima	Transposition	Monocultural&Media specific constraint
33	Godfather	bapa baptis	Cultural equivalence	Transcultural
34	Just make yourself at home.	Anggap saja ini rumahmu	Cultural equivalence	Transcultural

### A. Monocultural

The table indicated that most of cultural words are monocultural. Monocultural words are only found in source language culture. For words that are monocultural and influenced by intersemiotic redundancy and co-text are translated using transference. Intersemiotic redundancy came in the form of visual channel. Meanwhile, data 17 is influenced by co-text since the explanation about it was found in the dialogue after it. Therefore, the subtitler didn't need to explain the words for the visual channel and the explanation found in the dialogue had helped the viewers to grasp the meaning. For words which had been familiar to the viewers, the subtitler decided to use naturalization to translate them. Modulation was also used to translate monocultural words which contain connotative meaning and was influenced by intersemiotic redundancy in a form of visual channel.

However, translator's decision to translate monocultural words which are also influenced by specific media constraint using transposition is amiss. The meaning of the SL could not be preserved. In fact, the subtitler could choose another procedures such as functional equivalence as she/he did to the data 27.

### **B. Transcultural**

Contrary to the monocultural words, transcultural words are found or known not only by source language speakers but also by target language speakers. Therefore, the procedures used by the translator for words which are influenced by transcultural factor are transference, naturalization, and cultural equivalence. These procedures resulted in acceptable translation because the words have been familiar to the target viewers and because the same expression is also found in the target language.

### **C. Centrality of Reference**

Centrality of reference concerned about how important the cultural word to the whole theme of the movie. When the translator decided to translate the word *a wop* and *kraut-mick* using componential analysis procedures which resulted in some loss of meaning component in the translation, it seemed that he/she considered both words to be inessential to the whole theme of the movie.

### **D. Intersemiotic Redundancy**

Gottlieb (1997) considered subtitle as a polysemiotic text. There are four channels identified in polysemiotic text: 1) non verbal visual channel (i.e. picture); 2) non-verbal audio channel (i.e. sound effects and music); 3) verbal audio channel (i.e. dialogue); and verbal visual channel (i.e. sign and captions). These channels indirectly deliver meaning to the viewers. Therefore, when a specific cultural word is accompanied by one or more channels, the subtitler can benefit from it in a way that he/she doesn't need to put more effort to give additional information in the subtitle. As can be seen in data 1 and 28. *Lasagna* and *cha-cha-cha* are material culture of SL culture and there is no direct equivalence for them in TL.

However, the subtitler decided to translate them using transference for *lasagna* and *modulation* (from specific to general) for *cha-cha-cha*. It could be performed since their appearance is supported by non-verbal visual channel.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Cultural words in subtitle should be treated distinctively for there are various influencing factors to be considered. It was found that there are six translation procedures used to translate the cultural words: transference, naturalization, modulation, transposition, functional equivalence and cultural equivalence. It was also discovered that there are five factors which influenced the subtitler's decision in translating the cultural words: monocultural, transcultural, specific media constraint, centrality of reference, co-text, intersemiotic redundancy. The finding illustrated that the untranslatability of cultural words in subtitle which may raise some problem can be minimized if addressed precisely. It could be carried out by considering the influencing factors as well as choosing proper translation procedures.

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