"YOU'LL GET YUKICHI'S FACE ALL WET."
JAPANESE-ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF
EXTRANLINGUISTIC CULTURAL REFERENCES IN THE
SUBTITLES OF *TOKYO GODFATHERS*

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tässä tutkielmassa tarkastellaan kielenulkoisten kulttuurisidonnaisten elementtien käännösstrategioita japanilaisen *Tokyo Godfathers* animaatioelokuvan englanninkielisissä tekstityksissä. Tässä tutkimuksessa selvitetään laadullisen tutkimuksen menetelmien ja Jan Pedersenin (2011) määrittelemien käännösstrategioiden avulla, millaisia käännösstrategioita japani-englanti tekstityksissä käytetään ja millaisissa tilanteissa erilaisia käännösstrategioita suositaan. Lisäksi tässä tutkielmassa pohditaan, miten tekstittämisen tekniset rajoitukset vaikuttavat käännösstrategioiden valintoihin. Tutkimus löysi käännöksestä 227 kielenulkoista kulttuurisidonnaista elementtiä. Käännösstrategioista yleisin oli säilytys, sillä lähes puolet kielenulkoisista kulttuurisidonnaisista elementeistä oli elokuvan päähenkilöiden nimiä. Myös käännöslaina ja poisjättö olivat yleisiä strategioita. Elementit, jotka tulivat usein jollain tavalla muokatuiksi, liittyivät japanin kohteliaaseen puhetapaan. Tämä johti siihen, että hahmojen luonteenpiirteitä ja ihmissuhteita kuvattiin eri tavalla tekstityksissä alkuperäiseen audioon verrattuna. Vieraannuttavia käännösstrategioita, joita ovat säilytys, käännöslaina, ja tarkennus, käytettiin silloin, kun oli tarinan kannalta tärkeää pitää selvänä, että tarina sijoittuu Japaniin ja sen pääkaupunkiin Tokioon. Kotouttavia käännösstrategioita, joita ovat yleistys, korvaus, ja poisjättö, suosittiin silloin, kun käännöksen haluttiin kuulostavan luontevalta englannilta, suora käännös ei mahtunut teknisiin rajoitteisiin, tai kun elementti oli juonellisesti tarpeeton tai sen konteksti olisi vaatinut pidemmän selityksen tullakseen ymmärretyksi. Elementtien virallisia englanninkielisiä vastineita käytettiin silloin, kun ne olivat tarpeeksi lyhyitä mahtuakseen teknisiin rajoitteisiin. Tulosten vertailu muihin tutkimuksiin paljastaa, että japanilaisia elokuvia tekstitetään usein vastaavalla tyylillä, ja että japanin kohteliaan puhetavan termistö on haastavaa kääntää, eikä sen kääntämiselle ole konventionaalistunutta lähestymistapaa tekstityksissä.

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1   INTRODUCTION

The media landscape of the present day is rapidly becoming more and more globalized, with non-western popular culture growing in popularity as well as the amount of content available in the western markets. Particularly the amount of audiovisual content, such as films and TV series, are being exported from their origin countries to wider audiences abroad. This, in turn, means that translation and subtitling of audiovisual content is also in demand. However, despite the great popularity of subtitling as a mode of audiovisual translation (AVT), academic study of subtitling is still fairly recent and it lacks detailed methodology (Di Giovanni, 2016). Additionally, translation studies based on non-Indo-European languages and languages of non-western cultures are lacking in research (Wakabayashi, 1991). Therefore, language pairs such as Japanese-English have not been studied in as great a detail as they deserve. Considering the ever-growing number of Japanese media which has been translated into English in the recent decades and is being made available on streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, the study of Japanese-English subtitling warrants attention. In Europe and North America, Japanese animation series and films occupy a considerable percentage of all TV animations broadcasted (O'Hagan, 2006). The US alone is the biggest market for exporting Japanese animation with a market worth of billions of US dollars, and it is expected to grow annually in the future (Grand View Research, n.d.)

The naturalness of language in the translation is commonly required in order to not hinder the comprehensibility of information. Due to the vast linguistic and cultural differences of Japanese and English, Japanese very rarely translates smoothly into English. In order to ensure that the English translation sounds like natural English language use, Japanese-English translators sometimes need to get creative with their translations. (Wakabayashi, 1991). Because of this, the translation of Japanese popular culture goes through a unique process of cultural negotiation which Japanese-English translators must wrestle with in their work (O'Hagan, 2006). When translating for

subtitles, in addition to issues with linguistic and cultural differences, the translation needs to be fitted into the spatial and temporal technical constraints of subtitling (Pedersen, 2011, p. 19). All of these elements combined make studying Japanese-English translation for subtitling particularly interesting.

The main focus of the present study is the translation of culture-specific Japanese vocabulary which may not have easily understandable direct translations or equivalents in English. This study aims to explore how Japanese-English translators approach the translation of culture-specific vocabulary in different situations, since they have to take into consideration linguistic and cultural differences, as well as the situational contexts and technical limitations of subtitling. Due to the ever-growing Japanese animation market in the west, the data chosen for this study is a Japanese animation film named *Tokyo Godfathers*. The film is available on streaming services such as Amazon Prime and Apple TV. It has been subtitled for over a dozen different languages, which makes it a very widely spread film.

The overall aim of this study is to find out what kinds of translation strategies are used for culture-specific vocabulary in the Japanese-English subtitles of the aforementioned film. Furthermore, the study seeks to find out and illuminate what sort of impact different translation strategies have on the translated information, and what kinds of situational preferences there are for different translation strategies in Japanese-English subtitling. This thesis seeks to trace back and explore the decision-making process of Japanese-English subtitle translators and the impact those choices will have on the information conveyed to the viewer in the final product.

In the following chapter, the theoretical background of culture-specific vocabulary and their translation, subtitling, and Japanese-English subtitle translation are discussed in further detail. The third chapter displays the aim and research questions of this study, as well as the data and methodology used in the analysis. Chapter four discusses the analysis and findings as they relate to the aim of this study, and finally in chapter five concluding remarks of the study's findings will be discussed.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will explore the theoretical background relating to the present study. In order to understand what aspects must be taken into consideration when analyzing culture-specific vocabulary in Japanese-English subtitle translations, this chapter discusses relevant theories and previous research which lay the groundwork for the study. Firstly, translation studies and strategies are discussed more broadly, after which theory and research relating to subtitling in general and Japanese-English subtitling are discussed.

2.1 Translation studies

Important concepts when it comes to studying translation are descriptive translation studies (hereafter, DTS) as they are developed and refined by Toury (1980, 1992, 1995), and the descriptive paradigm, which is based on empirical observation of translation as an activity. The descriptive paradigm does not make moral or ethical statements of translation. Instead, its purpose is to find out what translation is like, not what translation should be like (Pedersen, 2011, p. 25). In other words, the descriptive paradigm does not assume anything, it simply observes and analyzes what kinds of strategies the translator has used. Furthermore, DTS can be defined as a target-oriented approach to the study of translation which aims to develop methodologies for translation and to gain understanding of trends in the process of translation (Assis Rosa, 2018).

When analyzing translations, the DTS model looks for words that are known as 'coupled pairs' between the source text (ST) and target text (TT). These coupled pairs can be for example cultural references, metaphors, or jokes, which do not translate easily between languages (Pedersen, 2011, p. 26). When these pairs are analyzed, first the TT solution is looked at, then the original ST. The coupled pairs are then extracted

and analyzed, and from the results tentative generalizations and norms about translation can be formed (Pedersen, 2011, p. 27). However, when it comes to applying DTS to AVT, it is important to bear in mind that DTS was originally developed for literary translation, therefore the model needs to be adapted in certain other translation cases (Assis Rosa, 2018). Still, DTS has been the driving force for bringing the study of AVT to the attention of academia.

2.2   Extralinguistic Cultural References

Some of the most prominent translation problems that a translator faces in their work are cultural references (Pedersen, 2011, p. 43). This means that a translator must not only have encyclopedic knowledge of the ST language, but they also need to have extensive knowledge of the ST culture. These cultural references are known as Extralinguistic Cultural References (hereafter, ECRs) (Pedersen, 2011, p. 43). In simple terms, ECRs are references, for example, to places, people, institutions, customs, food, and events that you may not know even if you have perfect encyclopedic knowledge of the language in question (Pedersen, 2011, p. 44). ECRs are defined by Pedersen (2011, p. 43, 45) as cultural linguistic expressions, which refer to entities and matters that exist outside language. Cultural references are often dependent on context, therefore when analyzing an individual translation, it is also necessary to examine its context (Pedersen, 2011, p. 49).

ECRs can be categorized into different domains. These domains are defined by Pedersen (2011, p. 59-60) as follows: weights and measures, proper names, professional titles, food and beverages, literature, government, entertainment, education, sports, currency, technical material, and other. Majority of ECRs are made up of proper names of people, places, and institutions, which are typically retained as they are, or there is a direct or official translation available. However, titles and terms of sports, food and customs are much more problematic to translate, because they are strongly tied to extralinguistic culture (Pedersen, 2011, p. 48). Therefore, the defining question when attempting to categorize something as an ECR is to determine whether or not the linguistic expression is transparent enough to be understood without cultural knowledge (Pedersen, 2011, p. 48).

2.3   Translation strategies of ECRs

Translation strategies can be recovered from the TT by using DTS and the descriptive paradigm. A widely used theoretical framework for the translation strategies of ECRs

was developed by Pedersen (2011). These translation strategies are not directives or guidelines a translator must follow. Instead, they are alternative ways of handling a translation problem in the ST that requires decision making from the translator (Pedersen, 2011, p. 37). Translation strategies are central to any study seeking to understand the translation process. In Pedersen's framework, translation strategies can be divided into source-oriented and target-oriented strategies depending on how they approach a translation problem. Source-oriented strategies are also called foreignizing strategies since they aim to retain the culture that is foreign to the audience reading the translation. In turn, target-oriented strategies are also known as domesticating strategies, as they aim to change the vocabulary to something that is familiar in the culture of the audience reading the translation (Pedersen, 2011, p. 71). Pedersen (2011, p. 74-76) defines the main translation strategies as follows:

Source-oriented translation strategies:
- **Retention:** the ECR stays unchanged or only slightly adapted in the translation, for example by marking the word with the use of italics in the subtitles. Adaptation can be, for example, fleshing out an acronym or adding more semantic content.
- **Specification:** More information is added to the translation of the ECR. This can be done, for example, by adding in someone's title or specifying what kind of building is being discussed about.
- **Direct translation:** No semantic changes are done to the translation, the ECR is translated as is.

Target-oriented translation strategies:
- **Generalization:** The ECR is made less specific than the original ST ECR by either using a Superordinate Term or by paraphrasing.
- **Substitution:** The ECR is completely replaced by something that is more understandable in the TC. The substitution can be either a more commonly known SC term, a term from TC, or something else altogether.
- **Omission:** The ECR is completely left out in the subtitles, usually due to spatial constraints if the ECR is not relevant information the viewer must know. Omission is sometimes also categorized as neither a source oriented nor target oriented strategy.

Neither source nor target-oriented:
- **Official equivalent:** Some ECRs have an official equivalent either by an administrative decision or simply by common usage.

Some of these strategies, such as retention, substitution, and omission, do not directly involve translation at all (Pedersen, 2011, p. 100). Instead, they require other skills such as decision making and cultural knowledge from the translator. Furthermore, it is important to note that in some cases these strategies can be combined, and they do not have clear rules or boundaries. They are simply guidelines that translators can use to tackle translation problems in their work.

2.4   Subtitling

Audiovisual translation (AVT) encompasses different modes and practices, such as subtitling, dubbing, and voiceover. Subtitling as an AVT practice has to take into consideration not only linguistic and cultural translation problems but also semiotic and technical constraints, which need to be understood when analyzing translation choices in subtitling (Pedersen, 2011, p. 18). The semiotic switch from spoken to written language brings with it the necessity of editing the speech (Pedersen, 2011, p. 18). For example, redundant filler words such as '*uh*' or '*like*' are typically left out of subtitles and repetition of words is reduced. Especially in the case of spontaneous and non-scripted speech, spoken language needs to be edited into written language, since literal transcription and its direct translation often leads to gibberish (Pedersen, 2011, p. 11). In addition to this semiotic switch, subtitles must adhere to spatial and temporal constraints, due to which all the verbal content present in the ST speech cannot always be represented in the TT subtitles (Pedersen, 2011, p. 20). Something usually has to be left out. This makes subtitling as a translation mode a highly complex process which has multiple stages and requires several different skills, competences, and knowledge from the translator (Di Giovanni, 2016).

The speech needs to be fitted into the spatial and temporal constraints that limit the text shown on screen (Pedersen, 2011, p. 19). Spatial constraints refer to the number of characters that can fit into a line, which is commonly 32 characters per line (Koolstra et al., 2002). The maximum character limit per line depends on the guidelines of different companies, for example at Netflix, the maximum limit is 42 characters per line (Netflix, n.d.). However, in general, subtitles are kept as short as possible for readability. Additionally, these spatial constraints require the segmentation of the subtitles since longer lines cannot be displayed on the screen simultaneously. They need to be segmented into parts, and each line needs to be able to function as a semantic unit to ensure smooth reading and understanding of the message (Di Giovanni, 2016). Temporal constraints are closely linked to the spatial ones. Temporal constraints refer to how long the subtitles have to be displayed in order for the viewer to be able to read them. On average, it takes about three seconds for the viewer to read a

full one-liner of 32 characters (Pedersen, 2011, p. 19 & Koolstra et al., 2002). Furthermore, the subtitles need to be delivered concurrently with the speech, and they must not be displayed before the speech starts or after the speech ends (Pérez-Gonzáles, 2020).

Due to the aforementioned constraints, it is very unlikely that all of the verbal content in the ST can be represented in the subtitles. The TT has to be edited so that the content of the ST message can be said in fewer words, which in translation terms is known as condensation (Pedersen, 2011, p. 20). This condensation is typical for subtitling, and it has the potential of having to clarify the ambiguity or indirectness of the original ST message (Pérez-Gonzáles, 2020), which requires paraphrasing skills from the translator (Di Giovanni, 2016). In addition to different semiotic and technical constraints, it also needs to be noted that subtitling as a process is very subjective and the translator's own experiences and biases effect the end result. Therefore, translations of the same ST can differ vastly from each other depending on the translator yet still be equally accurate (Sanders, 2022). In other words, there is never only one correct way to tackle translation problems in subtitling.

2.5 Japanese-English ECR translation strategies in subtitling

Wakabayashi (1991) notes that cultural factors such as differences in values and thought patterns can have an impact on how the translation is received by the audience. If a translation seems illogical to the viewer, it is possible that what was said makes perfect sense in the source culture, but not in the target culture. In addition, with unrelated languages direct translation is rarely possible due to the considerable differences in lexis and language structure. This may lead to Japanese-English translators venturing beyond the lines of typical translation and delve into the realm of editing and rewriting to ensure the naturalness and comprehensibility of the translation (Wakabayashi, 1991). Due to all of these cultural and lexical factors, as well as the semiotic and technical constraints of subtitling, translating ECRs for Japanese-English subtitles can be quite challenging.

During the past decade, some studies have been conducted on Japanese-English ECR translation in subtitling. Shinohara (2013) conducted a study of the English subtitles in the Japanese movie '*Departures*' regarding the ECRs and translation strategies as they were categorized in Pedersen's framework (2011). The study revealed that the source-oriented strategy of direct translation was the strategy of choice whenever it was possible. However, if there was no direct translation available, primarily target-oriented strategies were used instead. Direct translation was often used on city names, food, currency, and plant names. Target-oriented strategies generalization and

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substitution were used when an ECR would have needed a longer explanation to be understood, which was not possible due to the spatial and temporal constraints of subtitling. Examples of such ECRs were different varieties of baths which were all generalized as just '*bath*', or the word '*enka*' which is a type of Japanese folk song or a music genre, was substituted in the subtitles with '*an old song.*' All in all, source-oriented and target-oriented strategies were used in a fairly equal amount, but target-oriented strategies were used more diversely.

In a somewhat similar study, Sanders (2022) analyzed the Japanese-English subtitling in the animation movie '*Spirited Away*', including ECRs. Much like in Shinohara's (2013) study, ECRs which would require a longer explanation to be understood, were modified in some manner. Such as the word '*engacho*', which is a type of outdated ritual similar to '*cooties*' which children used when playing, was translated as "*Break the curse!*" in the subtitles. ECRs dealing with honorifics and polite speech patterns which are a norm in Japanese sociolinguistics tend to be a difficult task for translators (Sanders, 2022). In the case of Sanders' study, honorifics were largely omitted, but some were translated with official equivalents or by substitution. For example, the highly polite word for '*guest*' (*o-kyaku-sama*), was substituted with '*sir*' or '*madam*' in the subtitles to reflect the level of politeness.

Much like Sanders' (2022) study, Hosaka's (2016) study of the English subtitles in the Japanese movie '*Bayside Shakedown*' revealed that honorific speech was mostly omitted completely or substituted with personal pronouns. Due to omitting the honorific words and speech patterns which are typical in Japanese conversation between people of different status, Hosaka found that much of the characterization was portrayed differently in the subtitles. Other ECRs which were omitted or somehow modified were about workplace culture and rules, the hierarchy between the superiors and the employees, law, and societal values.

3   THE PRESENT STUDY

In this chapter, the present study will be introduced in further detail. First, the research aim and questions that guide the study are introduced. Secondly, general information about the data and data collection are discussed. Lastly, the methodology and reasoning for the research methods chosen for the analysis are introduced.

3.1   Research aim and questions

The aim of this study is to explore what kinds of translation strategies are used for ECRs in the Japanese-English subtitles of an animated Japanese film, and to discuss how these translation strategies impact the information relayed to the viewer. Additionally, this study aims to discover and discuss situational preferences for source-oriented strategies, target-oriented strategies, and official equivalents in the Japanese-English subtitling. In this thesis, these aims are attempted to be achieved by answering the following research questions:

1) What kinds of translation strategies are used for Extralinguistic Cultural References in Japanese-English translations in subtitling?
2) In what situations are source-oriented and target-oriented translation strategies as well as official equivalents preferred in Japanese-English translations in subtitling?

3.2 Data

The data in the present study is the Japanese animation film *Tokyo Godfathers* (orig. 東京ゴッドファーザーズ), its English subtitles, and the ECRs present in it. The film is directed by Satoshi Kon and originally released in 2003. The version used in this study is the version available on Apple TV, which was released in 2011 and has a total runtime of 91 minutes. The film is distributed by Sony Pictures Entertainment Japan, however, I was unable to find information about who or what company provided the subtitles for this version. The film takes place in Tokyo, the capital of Japan, during the end of the year and New Year. The film has four main characters. Firstly, there are three homeless people: an alcoholic middle-aged man named Gin, a transfeminine person named Hana, and a runaway teenage girl named Miyuki. The three of them discover an abandoned baby in a heap of trash, whom they name Kiyoko. The plot of the movie revolves around the homeless trio attempting to locate the baby's biological parents. During their search around the city, they encounter a series of unrelated events which force them to confront their own troubled pasts.

This data was chosen because of the film's premise which is set in real-world locations around Tokyo. Furthermore, the film's story revolving around the holiday season and the social dynamics of characters from different backgrounds were presumed to offer a large variety of cultural references. An animated film was chosen over an animated series because of the possibility to examine the product as a whole with all of the ECRs relevant to the story.

The data was extracted by examining the original Japanese audio and the English subtitles for coupled pairs of ECRs between the ST and TT. When collecting the ECRs, the question by Pedersen (2011, p. 48) defined for ECRs in his book was used: "Is the linguistic expression in itself transparent enough to enable someone to access its referent without cultural knowledge?" The findings were recorded by marking down the exact timing and the ECR example into an excel file. Once all of the ECRs in the data were collected, they were separated into ECR categories. These categories are: weights and measures, proper names, professional titles, food and beverages, literature, government, entertainment, education, sports, currency, technical material, and other (Pedersen, 2011, p. 59-60). In addition to the ECR categories defined by Pedersen, Japanese honorific titles, such as '-*san*' and '-*chan*', were also included into the analysis as their own category. Even though honorifics can be considered to be linguistic features instead of cultural, Japanese honorific titles have deep cultural connotations that reflect Japan's cultural values and habits (Qian, 2023). Due to this deep cultural connection and their frequent use in Japanese, it was decided that it would be appropriate to include honorific titles in the data collection.

The film was viewed multiple times to ensure that all of the ECRs had been spotted and collected. After it was made sure that none of the ECRs in the data were missed, they were separated into ECR categories. Afterwards, the ECRs were counted and examined for which translation strategy has been used in every instance. The ECRs were further categorized into the translation strategies as they were defined by Pedersen (2011, p. 74-76) which are retention, specification, direct translation, generalization, substitution, omission, and official translation.

3.3   Method of analysis

Qualitative and descriptive methods were used when analyzing the data. Descriptive qualitative research methods were chosen due to the research aim being exploring and understanding the process and choices made in Japanese-English translation and subtitling. In addition, as a baseline for the analysis Pedersen's theoretical framework for translation strategies of ECRs (2011) was drawn upon. The purpose of the analysis is to *describe* and *explore* the process of how Japanese-English subtitling is done, not to *explain* how it is done. Furthermore, the analysis utilizes the descriptive paradigm. In order to discover which translation strategies have been used, first the TT was examined and then the original ST (Pedersen, 2011, p. 27). The data was analyzed with the aim of tracing back the translator's decisions of which strategies they used for ECRs, and examined how these decisions impacted the information relayed to the viewer. To conclude, situational preferences for the usage of source-oriented strategies, target-oriented strategies, and official equivalents, and why they might be preferred over the others in some situations were analyzed.

4 ANALYSIS

This chapter discusses the findings of the analysis on ECRs in the subtitles of *Tokyo Godfathers*. The first subsection explores the different ECR translation strategies present in the subtitle translations, their number of instances, and the effect they had on the information being translated. The second subsection explores the different situational preferences for different translation strategies and the reasoning behind those preferences.

4.1 ECR translation strategies

The first subsection discusses the translation strategies in *Tokyo Godfathers* as they are defined in Pedersen's (2011) theoretical framework (see subsection 2.3) and how often they were used. Furthermore, this section explores how each of these strategies might impact the information relayed to the viewer. The findings are further illustrated with direct examples of the translations from the data.

All of the translation strategies as they were outlined in Pedersen's theoretical framework were used in the translated subtitles of *Tokyo Godfathers*. Some strategies were used overwhelmingly more than others. Source-oriented strategies were used twice as much as target-oriented strategies, but this is simply due to the fact that personal names were mostly retained. This was expected, since majority of ECRs one encounters in any language consist of proper names (Pedersen, 2011, p. 48). Table 1 shows the number of instances of each source and target-oriented strategy used in the translation, as well as the number of instances of official equivalents.

TABLE 1   Frequency of ECR translation strategies in the subtitles

Strategy orientation	Translation strategy	Number of instances
Source-oriented	Retention	118
	Direct translation	25
	Specification	4
Target-oriented	Generalization	8
	Substitution	15
	Omission	40
Neither	Official equivalent	17
All		**227**

Majority of the 227 ECRs were the personal names of the four main characters: Gin, Hana, Miyuki, and Kiyoko. *Retention* was the most commonly used translation strategy simply due to the large amount of retained personal names, which remained unchanged in the subtitles. Out of all of the proper names present in the ST, 114 remained unchanged and unmarked in the subtitles. In the case of personal names of people this did not impact the information relayed to the viewer, but in some other cases, such as a scene where an address in '*shinkocho*' is shown, irony or foreshadowing was lost to those unfamiliar with the SL. If translated directly, '*shinkocho*' translates to '*new happiness town*', therefore the irony of the address is lost since the people who moved to this address very much did not find new happiness. However, retaining the address ensures that the audience understands that the address is located within Japan, as opposed to being located somewhere abroad.

Direct translation was a favored translation strategy for most ECR categories apart from proper names and honorific titles, but not overwhelmingly so. Direct translation was utilized a total of 25 times and used whenever the context for the ECR did not need any further information, and the ECR was understandable without detailed understanding of the SC. Such cases were for example some professional titles and names of books or folk tales. What was interesting was the unlike in Shinohara's (2013) study where direct translation was used on names of food, no names of food were translated directly in *Tokyo Godfathers*. This is perhaps because in no scene was food relevant to the story.

Compared to the fairly frequent use of the other two source-oriented strategies, *specification* was used the least out of all the translation strategies. It was used merely four times during the entirety of the movie, and no ECR category favored this strategy. This correlates with Shinohara's (2013) findings on '*Departures*', where specification was similarly utilized very rarely. The lack of utilizing the specification strategy might be due to spatial constraints of subtitling. Most specification cases require the

translation to have more information than the ST, which in turn makes the TT longer and take up much of valuable space in the subtitles (Pedersen, 2011, p. 88). Since subtitling requires the translation to be as short as possible, specification might not be the ideal strategy to use in subtitling. In *Tokyo Godfathers*, specification was used only if the translation was not considerably longer than the ST, and the ECR did not translate well without specification. To give an example of such a case, specification was used with the professional title of '*sensei*.' Since depending on the context '*sensei*' can mean, for example, a teacher, a doctor, or a master, it is necessary to specify the title in the TT, which in this case was '*doctor*.'

The least utilized target-oriented strategy was *generalization*, as it was used only eight times in the translation. However, what was interesting was that many of the Japanese terms relating to the holidays and the time around New Years were generalized either through a hypernym or by paraphrasing. Terms such as '*nenmatsunenshi*' (*year-end and New Year holidays*) and '*o-shogatsu*' (*New Year's Day*) were both generalized as simply '*New Year*', therefore the specific dates and time frames mentioned in the ST were much more ambiguous in the TT. Generalizing these terms resulted in the specific dates not being relayed to the viewer in the majority of these cases. The apparent unpopularity of the generalization strategy in *Tokyo Godfathers* is in contrast with the findings on '*Departures*' by Shinohara (2013), where generalization was the most utilized strategy of the target-oriented translation strategies.

Substitution was utilized slightly more frequently, a total of 15 times. In some cases, proper names of people were substituted with pronouns. In Japanese, second and third person pronouns are used less frequently than in English, and it is normal to use a person's name even when talking to them directly. In such a case retaining the person's name in the TT might cause the viewer to think that the character is talking about someone who is not present in the conversation. To avoid this confusion, in some occasions proper names were substituted with the second person pronoun '*you*' or third person pronouns '*he*' or '*she*' to ensure that the viewer understands who is being addressed or talked about.

Omission was used 40 times in the translation, which makes it the most used target-oriented translation strategy. Omission's frequent use was simply due to the fact that majority of the honorific titles present in the ST were omitted in the TT. Omission was used in all cases with the familiar and cutesy honorific '*-chan*', which resulted in a loss of nuance in understanding the relationships between some of the characters. For example, Hana calls Gin '*Gin-chan*' when on friendly terms with him, but only '*Gin*' with the honorific dropped when angry or annoyed with him. Furthermore, on one occasion some other homeless people addressed Gin as '*Gin-san*', but the polite and respectful honorific was omitted in the subtitles. This difference in addressing Gin with different honorifics was not reflected in the subtitles at all, which resulted in

some loss of characterization and understanding how the other characters feel about Gin as a person. Similar loss of characterization was observed in '*Bayside Shakedown*' (Hosaka, 2016), where the omission of honorifics titles resulted in the loss of understanding of the characters' relationships and feelings towards one another.

Official equivalent, which counts as neither a source nor target-oriented strategy, was used a total of 17 times. Majority of the official equivalents used were through common usage as opposed to an administrative decision by some governing entity. For example, the honorific '*-san*' was in most situations translated with common usage English equivalents of '*miss*' or '*mrs.*' Despite the Japanese honorific being gender neutral, gendered honorifics were used in the TT. This created an interesting situation when Miyuki, who for the first half of the movie referred to Hana with mostly derogatory nicknames, switched to using the honorific '*-san*' when referring to Hana. When Miyuki calls Hana '*Hana-san*', it is translated as '*Miss Hana*' in the subtitles, despite it being unclear if Miyuki is deliberately gendering Hana as female in the ST. In the ST it is therefore unknown whether or not Miyuki's newfound respect for Hana includes viewing Hana as female. However, in the translation it makes sense choosing to use '*Miss*' over '*Mr.*', since throughout the film Hana has disliked being gendered as a male.

4.2 Situational preference of source and target-oriented strategies and official equivalents

The second subsection will further present examples of the situational usage of source-oriented strategies, target-oriented strategies, and official equivalents Additionally it discusses the possible reasoning behind choices of translation strategies, and why they might be preferred in certain situations. Provided for each example are the exact timing when the subtitles appear on screen, the original Japanese line, the English translation in the subtitles, and a more literal translation to illustrate how the translation has been adjusted to suit the subtitles. The examples are presented in the following manner. The ECRs in the examples will be **bolded** to highlight them, and numbered (***1**, ***2**…) if there are more than one highlighted ECR in the example.

Example X (Time)

Original Japanese line **ECR**	English subtitle **ECR**	Literal translation **ECR**

4.2.1 Preference for source-oriented translation strategies

Source-oriented translation strategies were preferred in situations where it was important to tie the story to Tokyo and Japan, and to make clear where the story is taking place. After all, the name Tokyo is in the film's name, therefore retaining the feeling of the story taking place in Tokyo is important. Such situations were, for example, scenes where names of people and locations or currency were discussed. Names were mostly retained in the subtitles as they are, as translating them would not usually add any additional information, and translating the names would make it unclear where the story is taking place and what the characters' ethnicities are. Moreover, to make sure that the viewer understands where a certain place is located, specification was used as demonstrated in Example 1 below.

Example 1 (01:08:00)

Shinagawa-ku no chuo byoin kara…	…from a hospital in **Tokyo's Shinagawa Ward.**	…from **Shinagawa Ward**'s central hospital.

In this scene, Shinagawa Ward is mentioned for the first time in the film. Since the names of specific locations and parts of the city of Tokyo are most likely not familiar to the audience outside of Japan, in Example 1 it was deemed necessary to specify where Shinagawa Ward is located. Japanese audiences would be more likely recognize this location without any specification, but audiences abroad would not. Specifying that Shinagawa Ward is located in Tokyo was done only during the location's first mention, as later in the movie Shinagawa Ward is mentioned again without specification with the assumption that the viewers now know where it is located. On most occasions, however, the names of locations were retained.

Direct translation was always used on currency, as the amount of money and numbers were typically shown on screen, therefore direct translation is the logical choice to avoid a disconnect between what is shown and what can be read. Using direct translation strategy on currency lines up with the findings of Shinohara's research on '*Departures*' (2013). This furthers the feeling of the story taking place in Japan. In Example 2 below, a man is bragging about turning his life around with a lottery win.

Example 2 (01:13:59)

Nenmatsu jambo de **10-man en** atattaru da!	I won **100,000 yen** in the lottery!	I won **100,000 yen** in the year-end jumbo!

Even though the audience outside of Japan most likely will not know how much money 100,000 yen is, the film makes no attempt to translate the currency on any occasion. To someone unfamiliar with Japanese yen this may sound like a large amount of money, but in truth it is 1000 euros at best. Therefore, the man's boasting rings quite hollow, since that is not enough money to turn anyone's life around. In addition to tying the story to Japan, direct translation of currency ensures that the translator does not have to pick to which currency to translate. English subtitling is typically not targeted at the audience of any specific country, therefore choosing which currency to use instead in the subtitles would be very tricky.

4.2.2 Preference for target-oriented translation strategies

The situational use for target-oriented strategies was much more varied than those for source-oriented strategies. The most common situations were when it was necessary to make the translation sound more natural in English, spatial constraints of subtitling requiring a shorter translation, irrelevance to the story, and unfamiliar context which would require a longer explanation to be understood. Many of these situations were overlapping with each other, in which case creative translation and rewriting was done.

Some linguistic features of Japanese, such as the usage of many honorifics or repetition of people's names in conversation instead of using pronouns, do not translate smoothly into English. For the English subtitles to sound more like natural English speech, most honorifics were omitted completely, and some names were substituted with second or third person pronouns, as illustrated in Example 3 below.

Example 3 (00:46:20)

Demo **Hana-chan** komatteru nara doshite uchi ni kaette konakatta no?	But if **you** were in trouble, why didn't you come back?	But if **dear Hana** was in trouble, why didn't [dear Hana] come back to us?

As is evident, a word-for-word literal translation sounds quite confusing in English. The usage of the second person pronoun '*you*' instead of the character's name makes the English line much more understandable and flow more smoothly. In addition to occasionally substituting names with pronouns, the endearing and familiar honorific '*-chan*' was always omitted. The closest equivalent for '*-chan*' in English would be '*dear*', which is not something one uses in English conversation much, especially not repeatedly as it can be used in Japanese. Therefore, even though omitting '*-chan*' reduces the audience's understanding of the nuances between the characters' relationships, natural sounding English was preferred in the subtitles.

Due to the spatial limitations of subtitling, longer phrases and expressions need to be compressed in order to make them fit into the subtitles. Therefore, in some cases the ST ECR needs to be substituted with a shorter term, generalized with a hypernym, or omitted completely to conserve space. In the film, this was a common strategy when the ECR was not very relevant to the plot, and it was possible to relay the necessary information without being entirely accurate, such as in Example 4 below.

Example 4 (00:59:18)

Keishicho de wa, hannin wa nanbeikei no gaikokujin to mite, nigeta otoko no ashidori wo otteimasu.	**Police** are seeking a fugitive thought to be Latin American.	**The Metropolitan Police Department** believes the criminal to be a South American foreigner, and [they] are tracking the escaped man's footsteps.

The official equivalent for '*keishicho*' is simply very long. '*The Metropolitan Police Department*' is the prefectural police of the Tokyo Metropolitan area. In this case the term is generalized as '*police*', as this is the only mention of this specific police department, and its official name is not relevant to the story on a larger scale. Therefore, generalizing the term does not hinder understanding the line or the story. In addition, the term '*The Metropolitan Police Department*' is 34 characters long, which exceeds the average 32-character subtitle line length (Koolstra et al., 2002). While it might be possible to fit the term into the subtitle depending on company guidelines, the term would take up the space of an entire subtitle line alone.

Furthermore, irrelevance to the story was a common theme between the ECRs which were changed significantly from the ST. While complete irrelevancy was not common, lines such as grocery store intercom advertisements or TV broadcasts, were generally treated as background noise and worldbuilding with no real relevance to the story. Additionally, in scenes with much repetition of the same term such as personal names, omission was used to reduce some of the repetition in the subtitles. Example 5 illustrates a situation where multiple strategies were used to reduce the amount of information in the subtitles. Example 5 furthermore illustrates the reduction and paraphrasing of information that is often required when translating for subtitles (Di Giovanni, 2016).

Example 5 (00:58:30)

Oomisoka*1 ni **o-shogatsu*2**, **toshikoshisoba*3** ya oishii **osechi*4** wa, za fuudo sutoa ni zenbu o-makase!	Come to The Food Store for all your special **New Year's*1*2** needs!	For **New Year's Eve*1** and **New Year's Day*2, year-crossing noodles*3** and delicious **New Year's dishes*4**, leave it all up to The Food Store!

This line is heard over a grocery store intercom where traditional New Year's dishes are advertised. It is irrelevant to the plot itself, as the characters are not in the store to buy anything, and the specific terms for New Year's holidays also do not add anything relevant to the story. Therefore, food terms were omitted, and holiday names generalized and combined into one term in order to compress the information enough to fit the subtitles. As the intercom broadcast's primary purpose in this scene is to create a contrast between the intercom's bright and excitable voice and the chaos happening in the scene with an ambulance crashing into the store, the line's contents are less important than the disconnect between what is heard and what is seen. Sudden influx of irrelevant information to read in the subtitles could be distracting to the viewer during a scene where what is happening is more important than what is heard. Additionally, in a similar fashion to Example 4, Example 5's literal translation is quite long. If the average subtitle line is 32 characters long (Koolstra et al., 2002), the literal translation with all its official equivalents would take up four lines. It seems unlikely that so much subtitle space would be allowed for information irrelevant to the plot. Therefore, in a situation like this, the translator must edit and rewrite the ST to suit the TT subtitles (Wakabayashi, 1991). Similar editing and rewriting with omission of ECRs was observed in the subtitles of '*Bayside Shakedown*' in a scene with a police radio broadcast (Hosaka, 2016).

In some cases, an ECR can be highly specific to the society and culture of Japan that it simply does not have an English equivalent in a way that would still be understandable to those unfamiliar with the culture. When the context on an ECR would be unfamiliar to the viewer, a longer explanation would be needed, which due to the spatial constraints of subtitling is usually not feasible. Therefore, the ECR needs to be substituted with something else, as is illustrated in Example 6 below.

Example 6 (01:00:46)

Yukichi no kao made nagetoru yo.	You'll get **the bills** all wet.	They're [tears] being thrown even on **Yukichi's face.**

In this scene, Gin is paying for Hana's hospital treatment with his own hard-earned money. '*Yukichi's face*' refers to Yukichi Fukuzawa, a 19th century literary author, whose likeness is used in the 10,000-yen bills. Gin and Hana are crying, and Gin is worried that they will get the bills wet, in other words, get Yukichi's face wet. The context behind this ECR is so specific that understanding it outside of Japanese culture is very improbable. Much like the word '*engacho*' in '*Spirited Away*' (Sanders, 2022), '*Yukichi's face*' is a monocultural reference specific to Japan. Therefore, even though the humorous choice of words is lost, substituting '*Yukichi's face*' with a

transcultural term '*the bills*', which is understandable across cultures (Pedersen, 2011, p. 90), ensures that the line is understandable in English.

4.2.3 Preference for official equivalents

For an official equivalent to be used, apart from an equivalent existing in the first place, the equivalent also needed to be short enough to fit in the subtitles. Many of the official equivalents used were honorifics such as '*miss*' or '*mrs.*' for the honorific '*-san*', which, unlike '*-chan*', does have official equivalents in English through common use. A few official equivalents of entertainment related terms were used, but most were other terms for names and phenomena which exist in both the ST and the TT. Example 7 below introduces such a term.

Example 7 (00:05:52)

Nanashi no gonbee da yo.	"**John Doe**."	It's "**nameless peasant**."

    In this scene the trio has just discovered an abandoned baby in a heap of trash. They are discussing what her name might be, during which Gin suggests '*nanashi no gonbee*', which is used for people, commonly males, without known identities. In the subtitles '*John Doe*' was used as it is the closest equivalent English has, even though '*John Doe*' is used in a much more official capacity, for example in police reports, unlike '*nanashi no gonbee*' which is much more colloquial. They both, however, are terms used to describe unidentified people.

    In this case an official equivalent through common usage exists in both the ST and the TT, and the TT equivalent is short enough to comfortably fit into the subtitles. However, if the official equivalent for the ECR is much longer in the TT than in the ST as was illustrated in Example 4, the official equivalent was not used. Therefore, even though an official equivalent might exist and would normally be preferred, in the case of subtitling spatial constraints sometimes require some other translation strategy to be used. Official equivalents were therefore preferred only when the spatial requirements were also fulfilled.

5   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to discover how ECRs were translated in the Japanese-English subtitles of the Japanese animated film *Tokyo Godfathers*. The analysis was conducted with qualitative and descriptive research methods and the descriptive paradigm (Toury, 1980, 1992, 1995). As a baseline for different approaches on the translation of ECRs the theoretical framework on translation strategies by Pedersen (2011) was used. With the help of these methods and frameworks, this study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1) What kinds of translation strategies are used for Extralinguistic Cultural References in Japanese-English translations in subtitling?
2) In what situations are source-oriented and target-oriented translation strategies as well as official equivalents preferred in Japanese-English translations in subtitling?

This study provides detailed and in-depth analysis of the film's ECRs, their translation strategies, and their situational usage. As the film was analyzed in its entirety, the story and its context were taken into consideration as a whole in the analysis. The findings of this study on the situational use of different translation strategies shed light on when translators are prone to run into difficulties with Japanese-English translation in subtitling and how they tend to solve them. The findings may be useful for students and researchers of Japanese-English translation alike, in terms of understanding how different translation strategies affect the outcome and what difficulties to watch out for in their work.

The study found a total of 227 ECRs in the data, about half of which were retained proper names of the film's four main characters. Furthermore, all of the translation strategies in Pedersen's theoretical framework were used in the subtitles with varying frequency. Additionally, it was found that the technical constraints of

subtitling affected the translated subtitles a great deal. Due to spatial and temporal challenges all verbal content in the ST could not be represented in the TT, which follows the trend on previous research done on subtitling (Pedersen, 2011, p. 20). Many situations, such as a ST ECR's official equivalent being much longer in the TT or the translation needing a longer explanation to be understood, required the information to be condensed and paraphrased to fit the subtitles. As pointed out by Pedersen (2011) and Di Giovanni (2016), deletion and condensation of information in the TT is often necessary in subtitling.

In a similar fashion to Shinohara's study on '*Departures*' (2013) and Sanders' study on '*Spirited Away*' (2022), source-oriented strategies were primarily used on proper names and currency. Source-oriented strategies were primarily used to make sure that the story stays tied to Japan and Tokyo specifically. Target-oriented strategies were used when the translated ECR needed to be fitted into the technical constraints of subtitling or when natural sounding English was preferred in the translation. In such cases the ECR would be generalized, substituted, or completely omitted.

The omission of honorifics in Tokyo Godfathers was done in a similar fashion as found in Hosaka's study on '*Bayside Shakedown*' (2016), as majority of them were omitted completely, although the omission was not quite as common. For example, the honorific title '-*san*' was sometimes translated with the English equivalents of '*miss*' or '*mrs.*' Similarly to '*Bayside Shakedown*', this omission of honorifics resulted in the characterization present in the ST being portrayed differently in the TT. This, in turn, caused the nuanced feelings the characters feel towards one another being lost in the translation. Specifically, the complete omission of the honorific '-*chan*' impacted the characterization quite a bit. However, not all Japanese-English subtitles omit the honorifics completely, as was evident in Sander's study on '*Spirited Away*' (2022), where some honorifics were successfully translated by paying attention to how politeness is expressed in English. Even though the honorifics were not translated directly, the politeness was expressed by making the translation sound more formal and slightly stiff and less conversational. It would be beneficial for Japanese-English subtitling to attempt something similar with familiar honorifics such as '-*chan*', to emphasize the familiarity in language use between different people and contexts.

Honorifics and their translation appear to be a tricky problem for Japanese-English translators. Omission of honorifics and polite speech in Japanese-English subtitles seem quite prevalent. The different approaches films have for translating honorifics implies that there is no uniform strategy for translating them. Going forward, something could be done in the field of Japanese-English subtitling in order to create a framework for honorific translation to reduce the loss of characterization from omitted honorifics. Such loss happened in the subtitles of *Tokyo Godfathers* with how Gin was addressed by different characters in different situations, which resulted in the

relationships Gin has with other characters to be portrayed differently in the TT as opposed to the original ST. As expressed by Wakabayashi (1991), the translation of non-Indo-European languages has not been studied much in the past, and in particular this aspect of translating honorifics requires deeper study as well as framework and strategy development.

Since this study focused on a single film, its results cannot be used to generalize Japanese-English subtitling as a whole. Additionally, much like how Sanders (2022) points out that translation is subjective and the process is prone to be colored by the translator's own experiences and biases, the analysis and interpretation of the translated product is affected by the researcher's perceptions. Much like the translator, the researcher has to notice the ECR in order to analyze it, and what counts as an ECR is not always perfectly clear. There are border cases for what counts as an ECR and what does not, such as certain honorifics in Japanese. In this study they were chosen to be categorized as ECRs, as their usage is deeply tied to Japanese culture. It is entirely possible that the film contains ECRs which were not included in the analysis of this study, yet they would have been included in some other study, and vice versa.

Further research into the translation of ECRs in Japanese films and specifically animated Japanese films could be extended into the dubbed versions of the films. A dubbed version of *Tokyo Godfathers* and other animated films exist and comparing them to their subtitled counterparts could offer insight into how translation strategies differ depending on the translation medium. Furthermore, similar research could be done on other language pairs such as Japanese-Spanish or Japanese-Finnish, to determine whether or not different language pairs have different approaches to ECR translation in the subtitles. One is also left to wonder how differently the same ECRs present in the film would have been translated in another form of media, such as in a comic book or in a novel, where spatial constraints are not as strict and temporal constraints do not exist.

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