The Transfer of Culture-Specific Items in Subtitling: Case of TED Talks Translation from English into Arabic

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Abstract

Technology Entertainment and Design (TED) is a well-known organization that presents influential speeches or talks about different topics such as science, health, culture, and others. These talks are subtitled in different languages including Arabic. In light of this, the present study sheds light on the intersection between culture and subtitling manifested through the equivalence of culture-specific items in the subtitled TED talks from English into Arabic along with the position of the subtitler in this transfer. To this end, quantitative qualitative methods are adopted to measure and analyse the selected culture-specific items by applying Diaz Cintas and Remael's [10] cultural classifications and Pedersen's [34] and Baker's [4] translation strategies. The findings of the study show that direct translation and retention are the most deployed strategies to express the foreignness of the selected culture-specific items to target viewers. However, cultural substitution and paraphrase are employed to familiarize target viewers with CSIs to better understand the plot. As for official equivalent strategy, it is used to conventionally transfer the names of institutions. The findings further contribute to understanding the relationship between the implemented translation strategies and the subtitling guidelines of the TED organization.

Keywords: Subtitling, TED talks, equivalence, cultural classifications, translation strategies.

1. Introduction

The transfer of culture-specific items (CSIs in short) has been discussed by translation scholars and theorists ([25]; [1]; [37]; [40]; [27]; [4]; [8]; [34]; [21]). They are challenging since they cause a translation problem in their transfer to the target text due to the lack of equivalent items in the target culture [1]. In audiovisual translation, CSIs are verbal and non-verbal manifested in images, street signs, and other cultural practices specific to the source culture [8]. In this vein, scholars render these items differently in subtitled programs based on cultural classifications and translation strategies that are adapted to the nature of data ([13]; [8]; [34]; [10]).

Previous studies have been conducted to investigate the transfer of culture-specific items in TED talks. Candel-Mora and Gonzalez-Pastor [6] analyzed the equivalence of CSIs in TED talks delivered in Spanish variants to examine the cultural differences in the applied translation strategies. The results of the study showed that neutralization was used in greetings, although differences in Peninsular and Latin American Spanish were manifested in the use of 'usted' and 'tú' for the second person singular (you). In some cases, the transfer of acronyms remains the same in English, which may confuse target

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viewers. In other cases, they are explicitly spelled out in English as the example ENA which is subtitled into National School of Arts.

In another context, Štelemėkaitė [41] examines the translation strategies implemented to render CSIs in TED talks from English into Lithuanian. The findings of the study illustrate that direct translation and retention are employed to transfer different types of CSIs such as geographical CSIs, historical CSIs, and names of cities, countries, animals, and plants. Nevertheless, specification, generalization, substitution, and omission are less employed depending on the type of CSI.

Zhang [52] relates the choice of translation strategies in subtitling the TED talk ''Why We Have Too Few Women Leaders'' from English into Chinese to Skopos theory. The latter holds that the initiator of the translation activity determines the communicative purpose of the translation. For clarity and unambiguity, deletion is opted for to transfer extra words which do not alter the meaning of the sequence. Moreover, domestication and foreignization are utilized in this study to enhance the artistic effects of the subtitles by preserving the content, especially in the drama genre.

Indeed, previous studies have explored the equivalence of CSIs either in different language pairs or by taking into account other case studies. However, the transfer of CSIs from English into Arabic in TED talks related to the history of tea, the rise of the Ottoman Empire, and aspects of the Arab culture has not been investigated. In this regard, the present study aims to investigate the equivalence of culture-specific items in TED talks through the exploration of translation strategies and their role in either facilitating or hindering the cultural transfer in subtitling. Accordingly, this research seeks to analyze English culture-specific items in the selected TED talks and their Arabic subtitles from a cultural perspective, to highlight the significance of translation strategies in rendering translating CSIs, and most importantly, to shed light on the position of the subtitler in the cultural transfer. This study follows the eclectic model that involves the cultural classifications of Diaz Cintas and Remael [10] along with the translation strategies of Pedersen [34] and Baker [4] at word level and above word level. In light of this, this study aims to answer the following questions:

- *What are the most and least used translation strategies employed by the subtitlers to transfer CSIs in the selected TED talks from English into Arabic?*

- *What is the position of the subtitlers in this cultural transfer?*

- *Do the implemented translation strategies conform to the general subtitling guidelines of TED organization?*

2. Literature Review

2.1. Culture-Specific Items in Subtitling

Culture-specific items, realia, lexical items, culturemes, extralinguistic cultural references, culture-specific references are diverse terms that refer to words, collocations, fixed expressions, and proverbs that are embedded within a specific culture ([1]; [27]; [20]; [37]; [8]; [34]). They are linked to the arbitrary area of language that encompasses names of institutions, streets, figures, places, and art, among others. The changing nature of CSIs may cause a translation problem for translators in terms of identifying the culture with which the item is associated. However, certain CSIs are static despite their different textual functions. Also, the non-existence of the equivalent CSIs in the target culture and the distinct interpretations may cause a translation problem [1]. In the same vein, Nord ([27], p. 34) views CSIs as: "[. . .] a social phenomenon of a culture X that is regarded as relevant by

the members of this culture and, when compared with a corresponding social phenomenon in a culture Y, is found to be specific to culture X". The role of the translator is crucial to analyse the TT communicative function and bridge the gap between ST and TT. Translation purpose determines the appropriate choice of translation strategies [28].

The multimodal nature of audiovisual translation diversifies culture-specific items as they are: "[. . .] exclusively or predominantly visual (an image of a local or national figure, a local dance, pet funerals, baby showers), exclusively verbal or else both visual and verbal in nature" ([8], p. 156). Thanks to globalization, hybrid communities share mixed cultural values and beliefs (Blommaert, as cited in [19]) which embody CSIs that are familiar to them.

TED talks are 18-minute influential talks that researchers, scientists, business leaders, and experts deliver by providing innovative ideas and knowledge in various fields[1]. TED talks are part of TED non-profit organization headquartered in New York and Vancouver which introduced programs and initiatives such as TED Fellows, TEDEd, TEDX, and TED Translators, among others. TED Translators initiative came to light due to the viewers' demand. Thence, 220,000 translations have been released in 115 languages[2]. It is worth noting that subtitling TED talks follows the functional approach to translation studies which emphasizes the importance of providing target viewers with a similar communicative purpose to source viewers [27], [28]. Since these talks are informative, TED organization role is to simplify the subtitled version by following the technical dimension of this audiovisual modality so that target viewers clearly understand the videos.

2.2. Cultural Classifications of Culture-Specific Items

Various cultural classifications are suggested in audiovisual translation so as to classify CSIs. Espindola [13] introduced twelve classifications which are toponyms, anthroponyms, forms of entertainment, means of transportation, fictional character, Brazilian local system, local institution, measuring system, food and drink, scholastic reference, religious celebration, and dialect. Some of these categories are specific such as the Brazilian local system that is implemented only in Brazilian AV products. Similarly, Diaz Cintas and Remael [10] proposed three major cultural classifications which are geographical references, ethnographic references, and socio-political references. As for the first category, it includes certain phenomena, general/ unique locations, and endemic animal and plant species. The second category encompasses food and drinks, objects from daily life, work, art, media and culture, groups, weights and measures, and brand names and personal names. The third category involves administrative or territorial units, institutions and functions, socio-cultural life, military institutions and objects, and personal and institutional names. This taxonomy is adopted in this study since it is adapted to the nature of the selected data. Also, they present a comprehensive overview of the types of CSIs that subtitlers may encounter [10].

2.3. Translation Strategies of Culture-Specific Items

Translation strategies are: "[. . .] the set of rules, aims and means used by the translator in the process of translation" ([38], p. 126). They enable the translator to analyze the original text to be rendered by fulfilling the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic levels in the target text [38]. Using the appropriate translation strategies shows that the translator follows a translation brief that orients his position. In this vein, several translation strategies were proposed to deal with culture-specific items in audiovisual products. Tomaszkiewicz [47] put forward four translation strategies, namely omission, direct transfer, equivalence, and adaptation. However, these strategies are not adopted in

the study because they do not offer a comprehensive understanding of the translator's orientation within the cultural transfer of the selected TED Talks. Pedersen [34] enumerated source-oriented strategies that direct the translator towards foreignization and target-oriented strategies that direct the translator towards domestication. Source-oriented strategies are retention, specification which includes addition and completion, and direct translation. Target-oriented strategies are generalization which involves superordinate terms and paraphrase, and cultural substitution. As for official equivalent and omission, they are not placed within both strategies since they can be integrated in both. Pedersen's [34] model is followed in this study for two reasons. First, it is based on an empirical process whereby it matches the world. Second, it offers subtitlers and researchers a clear understanding of the position of the subtitler when rendering CSIs in subtitled programs.

These translation strategies can be combined to serve the purpose of equivalence. Indeed, Baker [4] suggested six types of equivalence, which are equivalence at word level, equivalence above word level, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence, pragmatic equivalence, and beyond equivalence. This study follows (1) equivalence at word level which examines the transfer of problematic words from the original dialogue into subtitles, and (2) equivalence above word level which deals with the transfer of combinations of words to form collocations and fixed expressions.

3. Method

Since the present research seeks to investigate the equivalence of culture-specific items presented in TED talks from English into Arabic, 13 English TED talks and their Arabic subtitles are selected from TED talks official website. English transcripts are extracted from the official website, and the Arabic subtitles are extracted directly from the videos. More precisely, the selected TED talks are mainly about the history of tea, the rise of the Ottoman Empire, and aspects of the Arab culture. These TED talks are chosen because they involve various CSIs which are considered as an important source of data for the study.

This study follows a descriptive-analytic method. Elaborately, the first section of the analysis is concerned with the examination of the cultural classifications of the selected CSIs by following the classifications of Díaz Cintas and Remael [10], and the second section is about pairing CSIs to their TT equivalents to set their appropriate translation strategies by following Pedersen's [34] translation strategies along with Baker's [4] equivalence at word level and above word level. This eclectic model is followed for two reasons. First, it is peculiar to the analysis of culture-specific items in subtitled programs; therefore, it will provide an elaborate analysis of the cultural classifications and translation strategies deployed in the present research. Second, it comprises the equivalence at word level and above word level which help to organize the analysis and make readers understand the translation strategies employed at both levels.

In this regard, this study follows mixed methods in the sense that quantitative method is employed in measuring the frequency of occurrence of the implemented translation strategies while qualitative method is deployed in the analysis of the transferred culture-specific items from English into Arabic. Relatedly, timing is a crucial element in the analysis since subtitles are characterized by in and out times. That is to say, they are characterized by the specific moment when the subtitle appears on screen and disappears from it [10]. In light of this, the following section will dig deeper into the analysis of culture-specific items in the selected TED talks.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Cultural Classifications

Table 1. Examples of food and drinks

ST	TT	Timing
He quickly hit his <u>curry</u> behind his back	يخبىء بسرعة <u>طبق الكاري</u> وراء ظهره	00:17 –> 00:20 [30]
and create a beverage called muo cha or <u>matcha</u>	و هكذا يستخرج شراب يطلق عليه موو تشا أو <u>ماتشا</u>	01:23–>01:24 [46]
At first, Britain paid for all this <u>Chinese tea</u> with silver	بداية دفعت بريطانيا الفضة مقابل <u>الشاي الصيني</u>	03:12–>03:13 [46]
and from sugary <u>Turkish Rize tea</u> to <u>salty Tibetan butter tea</u>, there are almost as many ways of preparing the beverage as there are cultures on the globe	من <u>شاي ريزا التركي</u> حلو المذاق الى <u>الشاي المالح بالزبدة</u> <u>شراب سكان التبت</u>. هناك طرق عديدة لتحضير شراب الشاي تختلف باختلاف الثقافات في العالم	04:27–>04:28 [46]

Table 1 illustrates examples from the cultural category ethnographic references which include food and drinks. The instances represent different kinds of food and drinks that belong to different cultures. Curry is a traditional Indian dish which is made of meat, fish, or vegetables that are cooked with spices and herbs. The cooked meat, fish, or vegetables are served with a spicy sauce with rice or bread ([49], p. 7). As for Matcha, it is a Japanese drink that was first used in the 1200s by monks for meditation purposes. It is a green powder mixed with hot water to prepare tea, and its quality is related to the color of matcha powder as well as its taste [35]. In addition, Chinese tea, Turkish Rize tea, and Tibetan butter tea are distinct drinks. In fact, China is one of the earliest countries to cultivate and consume tea. The harvest of tea leaves is performed during all seasons of the year, and the variety of the types of tea depends on the season when tea leaves are plucked [9]. Turkish Rize tea is specific to the Rize region in Turkey which is known for its tea gardens. With three harvest times, Turkish Rize tea is served in a tulip-shaped glass at every meal [51]. Concerning Tibetan butter tea, also named butter tea, it is a mixture of tea, milk, sugar, salt, and butter which is served in Tibetan, Lhoba, and Menba [50].

Table 2. Examples of religious culture-specific items

ST	TT	Timing
My father had to sit in a <u>Friday sermon</u>	كان على والدي أن يجلس في <u>خطبة الجمعة</u>	02:05 –> 02:06 [3]
Listening to the <u>Imam</u>	يستمع الى <u>الإمام</u>	02:06–>02:08 [3]
I wrestled with the <u>Quran</u>. I read and reflected and questioned and doubted and, ultimately, believed.	لقد كافحت مع <u>القرآن</u>. قرأت و تدبرت و سألت و شككت وفي النهاية آمنت	02:05–>02:13 [24]
The first thing I wanted to do as a Muslim was to go to <u>Mecca</u> and visit the <u>Kaaba</u>	و كان أول شيء قمت به كمسلم هو الذهاب الى <u>مكة</u> و زيارة <u>الكعبة</u>	00:10–>00:14 [2]

These instances represent religious culture-specific items in the selected TED talks. Friday sermon, named as *khutba*, is a congregational religious prayer that is performed in a mosque. For Muslims, the Friday sermon is considered as an essential religious prayer in Friday noontime prayer [29]. In fact, the imam, the preacher, or the orator delivers the Friday sermon before proceeding to the prayer [29]. The imam holds a leadership position among Muslims [26] and he reads the Quran to Muslims in the mosque. Concerning the last religious CSI, Mecca is a holy place for Muslims where they perform their pilgrimage. Mecca is known for Kaaba which is: "[. . .] the cubical stone structure covered with cloth, which stands in the middle of the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca" ([11], p.7).

Table 3. Examples of art, media, and culture

ST	TT	Timing
Bringing people, future generations, together through <u>Arabic calligraphy</u> is what I do	التقريب بين الناس و أجيال المستقبل معا من خلال الخط العربي هو ما أقوم به	01:58 –> 02:04 [12]
I have been long so fascinated and amazed by so many aspects of <u>Netflix</u>	من مدة طويلة لقد كنت مذهولا و مندهشا بالكثير من الأمور المتعلقة بنتفليكس	00:06–>00:10 [16]
Karaoke world	عالم الكاريوكي	06:47–>06:48 [22]
Hollywood	هوليوود	04:30–>04:31 [22]

Table 3 shows culture-specific items related to the cultural category ethnographic references which includes art, media, and culture. Indeed, Arabic calligraphy is an artistic practice of calligraphic writing in the Arabic language, which characterizes Islamic culture. Arabic calligraphy is renowned for its various types such as the Kufic script, Riq'a, Nashker, Diwanii, among others. [18]. Other CSIs related to the subcategory media and culture are Netflix, Karaoke world, and Hollywood. Netflix is a media and entertainment business that provides services to viewers such as creating original content [39]. As for Karaoke, it is named as empty orchestra for the fact that karaoke amateurs can hold a microphone and perform the empty track with a voiceover. It is a form of Japanese art [42]; however, due to globalization, it has been known and performed worldwide. The last form of art, media, and culture is Hollywood, which is a film industry that is specialized in cinema production and movie making [5].

Table 4. Examples of plants

ST	TT	Timing
It is very similar to your local <u>marula</u>	هو مشابه <u>للمارولا</u> المحلية	06:56 –> 06:59 [30]
India had just such a food, called <u>Mahua</u>	الهند كان لديها طعام مماثل يدعى <u>ماهوا</u>	06:29–>06:31 [30]

These examples illustrate specific plants mentioned in the selected TED talks. In this sense, local marula is a tree in Africa which is rich in minerals and vitamin C. It is consumed either as jellies, fruit juices, and other forms of food [17]. As for Mahua, it is an Indian plant, and its flowers are eaten in different ways [31].

Table 5. Example of Institutional names

ST	TT	Timing
He claims it is done based on a <u>UNESCO</u> study	هو يدَّعي بأنها أجريت بناء على دراسة أجرتها <u>اليونيسكو</u>	06:30 –> 06:31 [3]

UNESCO is an institutional name that refers to The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization that is responsible for fostering peace, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through science, culture, education, and communication[3]. UNESCO funds numerous studies and research that lie within the interests of communities.

4.2. Translation Strategies

4.2.1. Equivalence at Word Level

Table 6. Examples of translation strategies at word level

Translation Strategies	ST	TT	Timing
Retention + Specification	He quickly hit his <u>curry</u> behind his back	يخبىء بسرعة <u>طبق الكاري</u> وراء ظهره	00:17 –> 00:20 [30]
	They believed that cacao was a heavenly food gifted to humans by a feathered serpent god known to the <u>Maya</u> as Kukulkan	ظنوا أن الكاكاو كان طعاما من الجنة ووهبه الإله ثعبان الريش إلى البشر المعروف باسم (كوكولكان) في <u>حضارة (المايا)</u>	00:51–>00:59 [36]
	And to <u>the Aztecs</u> as Quetzalcoatl	و (كيتزالكواتل) في <u>حضارة إمبراطورية الأزتيك</u>	00:59–>01:01 [36]
Retention	The first thing I wanted to do as a Muslim was to go to <u>Mecca</u> and visit the <u>Kaaba</u>	و كان أول شيء قمت به كمسلم هو الذهاب الى <u>مكة</u> و زيارة <u>الكعبة</u>	00:10–>00:14 [2]
	and create a beverage called muo cha or <u>matcha</u>	و هكذا يستخرج شراب يطلق عليه موو تشا أو <u>ماتشا</u>	01:23–>01:24 [46]
	I wrestled with the <u>Quran</u>.	لقد كافحت مع <u>القرآن</u>	02:05–>02:13 [24]
	Listening to the <u>Imam</u>	يستمع الى <u>الإمام</u>	02:06–>02:08 [3]
	Why does <u>wasabi</u> make your eyes water?	لماذا يجعل <u>الوسّابي</u> عينيك تدمعان؟	00:14–>00:15 [14]
Official Equivalent	He claims it is done based on a <u>UNESCO</u> study	هو يدَّعي بأنها أجريت بناء على دراسة أجرتها <u>اليونيسكو</u>	06:30 –> 06:31 [3]
Direct Translation	And this is how we discovered <u>tea</u>	هكذا اكتشفنا <u>الشاي</u>	00:25 –> 00:26 [46]
	Chocolate only existed in <u>Mesoamerica</u>	وجدت الشوكولاتة في وسط <u>أمريكا الوسطى</u> فقط	00:17–>00:21 [36]

Four translation strategies were implemented to transfer culture-specific items in the selected TED talks. Retention and specification are employed to keep the SL CSI as it is in TL by specifying the term to target viewers. This is the case for the words curry and the Aztecs which are subtitled into حضارة إمبراطورية الأزتيك and طبق الكاري by making sure that target viewers understand it despite their cultural specificity. Marking the source CSI in the subtitle is used to show the foreignness of the term to target viewers; however, the visual non-verbal code plays a vital role in familiarizing target

viewers with the cultural specificity of the terms. This is the case in transferring the Maya into (المايا) حضارة. Concerning retention, it is deployed to transfer Mecca, Kaaba, matcha, the Quran, Imam, and Wasabi into مكة, الكعبة, ماتشا, القرآن, الإمام, and الوسّابي respectively. These CSIs are kept as they are in Arabic without substituting them into familiar CSIs to target viewers to keep a similar source effect on target viewers. Interestingly, the context and the visual non-verbal code help target viewers understand the subtitled CSIs as in the examples Matcha and Wasabi whereby matcha drink and wasabi plant are presented on screen.

As for official equivalent, which is also named recognized translation, it is deployed to transfer culture-specific items that refer to institutions and organizations [25] as in the example UNESCO which is transferred into اليونسكو. Moreover, direct translation is a translation strategy characterized by keeping the same semantic load of CSIs [32], and it is used in subtitling tea and Mesoamerica into الشاي and أمريكا الوسطى respectively.

4.2.2. Equivalence above word level

Table 7. Examples of translation strategies above word level

Translation Strategies	ST	TT	Timing
Cultural Substitution	My relationship with God, it was not love at first sight.	علاقتي بالله لم تكن حبا من أول نظرة	02:16 –> 02:18 [24]
Direct Translation	My father had to sit in a Friday sermon	كان على والدي أن يجلس في خطبة الجمعة	02:05 –> 02:06 [3]
	Osman was the first in a line of Ottoman rulers	كان عثمان من الصفوف الأولى من الحكام العثمانيين	00:55–>00:57 [23]
	At first, Britain paid for all this Chinese tea with silver	بداية دفعت بريطانيا الفضة مقابل الشاي الصيني	03:12–>03:13 [46]
	This beylik outmaneuvered more powerful neighbors to become the vast Ottoman empire	تفوقت هذه الإمارة على جيران أكثر قوة لتصبح الإمبراطورية العثمانية الشاسعة	00:17–>00:22 [23]
	In Osman's time, the Anatolian peninsula was a patchwork of Turkic principalities	في عصر عثمان, كانت شبه جزيرة الأناضول مزيجا من الإمارات التركية	00:28–>00:32 [23]
	Bringing people, future generations, together through Arabic calligraphy is what I do	التقريب بين الناس و أجيال المستقبل معا من خلال الخط العربي هو ما أقوم به	01:58 –> 02:04 [12]
	And it becomes worse when it's enshrined in religious fatwas based on wrong interpretation of the religious laws	و يكون هذا أسوأ عندما تتكرس بالفتاوى الدينية المبنية على التفسيرات الخاطئة للقوانين الدينية	07:40 –> 07:49 [3]
Paraphrase + Cultural Substitution	People of faith and no faith, who had come not to attack us, but to stand in solidarity with us	من يؤمنون بالله و من يكفرون به الذي أتوا لا ليهاجمونا و لكن ليتضامنوا معنا	14:01–>14:07 [24]

Three translation strategies were implemented to transfer the selected CSIs above word level. Cultural substitution is deployed in the example my relationship with God which is rendered into علاقتي بالله whereby the word "God" is transferred into الله to adapt it to the target viewers' culture, which are

Arabs. In the same vein, direct translation is employed when source culture-specific items have corresponding equivalents in the target language. This is illustrated in the transfer of several examples such as Friday sermon, the Ottoman rulers, the Ottoman empire, Arabic calligraphy, and religious laws which are transferred literally into خطبة الجمعة, الحكام العثمانيين, الإمبراطورية العثمانية, الخط العربي, and القوانين الدينية respectively. Paraphrase overtly shows the translator's intervention in the translation process [7] by changing the wording of words and expressions. This is shown in subtitling people of faith and no faith into من يؤمنون بالله و من يكفرون به. In this example, paraphrase is coupled with cultural substitution to bridge the cultural gap between source and target viewers.

5. Discussion

Based on the analysis, different translation strategies are deployed to render culture-specific items related to the history of tea, the rise of the ottoman empire, and aspects of the Arab culture in the selected TED talks from English into Arabic. Accordingly, Figure 1 illustrates the most and least used translation strategies in more detail:
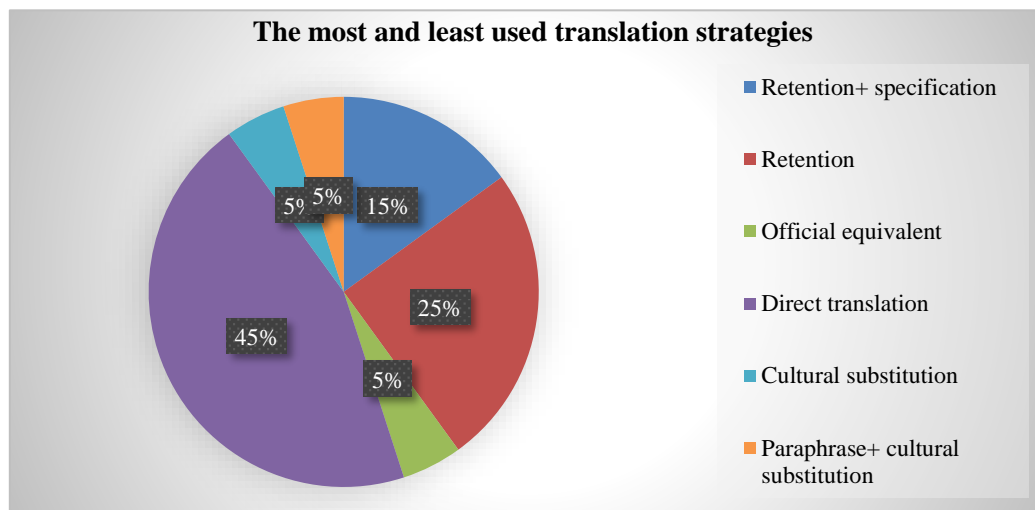

Figure 1. The most and least used translation strategies in the selected TED talks

As Figure 1 entails, the most used translation strategies are direct translation with 45% followed by retention with 25 %, and retention and specification with 15%, whereas the least used translation strategies are cultural substitution, official equivalent, and paraphrase and cultural substitution with 5% each. In this sense, direct translation is employed to transfer religious CSIs as well as CSIs that are part of art, media, and culture. This translation strategy maintains a balance between the source and target viewers who are familiarized with the CSIs directly. This strategy further contributes to clarity and unambiguity in meaning, with reference to the context of the selected items. Cultural substitution is a translation strategy that serves as a translation solution to the cultural specificity of items. It is implemented to transfer religious culture-specific items as "God" which is transferred into الله to adapt it to the Arab culture and to fill the cultural gap between the source and target cultures.

In some cases, subtitlers have opted for the use of retention, especially to transfer religious CSIs and CSIs related to food as in the case of Imam which is transliterated into إمام and matcha into ماتشا. This translation strategy is deployed to keep a similar exotic effect on the target viewers. Furthermore, subtitlers have combined two translation strategies to transfer CSIs which are retention and specification, and paraphrase and cultural substitution. Retention and specification are employed in case CSIs are alien to the target viewers. However, these CSIs are understood because specific terms are added in the subtitles as in the example curry which is subtitled into طبق الكاري, not to mention the

role of the context and the non-verbal visual code on screen that helps target viewers to understand the translated term, and therefore, grasp the meaning of the plot.

Paraphrase and cultural substitution are employed when the subtitler needs to transfer CSIs by using different words in case no corresponding equivalent is present in the target language, with the necessity to adapt these items to the TL culture. This is illustrated in the example people of faith and no faith which is rendered into من يؤمنون بالله و من يكفرون به. Official equivalent is used to transfer names of organizations and institutions conventionally as the case of UNESCO which is rendered into اليونسكو.

In this regard, subtitlers who transferred the selected TED talks from English into Arabic have tried to bridge the gap between the source and target languages and cultures by implementing different translation strategies. The latter creates a balance between the source and target languages and cultures for a better understanding of the plot. Within the context of audiovisual translation in general and subtitling in particular, cultural interchangeability is employed in subtitling CSIs as SL items are substituted for other corresponding TL items. It can be implemented in the domains of education, government, titles, and food and beverages [33]. In the present study, cultural substitution is utilized to transfer religious CSIs into Arabic. Also, direct translation is the most used translation strategy in the selected TED talks in order to conform to the regulations and guidelines of TED company which favors the direct transfer of SL culture-specific items into TL so that they are clearly understood by different target viewers[4]. In case no equivalent CSI is found in TL, retention is preferred, and this illustrates the implementation of this translation strategy to transfer CSIs related to food, religion, and local plants. Equally important, TED organization stresses the importance of the target audience comprehensibility of subtitled videos and emphasized that subtitled videos should be less confusing even if they do not render SL words and expressions into their exact equivalents in TL[5].

6. Conclusion

To conclude, the application of various translation strategies in the selected TED talks has helped the subtitlers to convey the source culture to target viewers in a way that makes them understand its unfamiliarity. In this way, the subtitlers have taken into account the fact that target viewers are not familiar with certain culture-specific items. This is shown in the implementation or the combination of two translation strategies as in the case of retention and specification, and paraphrase and cultural substitution. In some instances, subtitlers have employed direct translation to transfer culture-specific items from English into Arabic, while in other instances, CSIs are exposed directly through transliterating them, or by adding more information through specification. Even if subtitlers have a certain freedom to deploy certain translation strategies that depend on their cultural background and the target viewers', it is worth mentioning that TED talk organization makes the final decision concerning which subtitled videos will be posted on the official website. This organization follows certain guidelines and regulations that need to be respected to produce a good translation quality. Indeed, some regulations are related to the technical dimension that include subtitles' structure, number of characters, and lines[5]. Other guidelines are linked to the actual subtitling practice. Accordingly, this raises questions related to patronage and culture in the subtitling practice and the extent to which subtitlers are restrained by the institutions' decisions despite their limited freedom.

Although the selected TED talks in this research do not represent all culture-specific items related to the history of tea, the Ottoman Empire, and aspects of the Arab culture, further research can be conducted in the framework of equivalence of culture-specific items through the investigation of various audiovisual modalities such as dubbing. Equally important, other models that deal with the equivalence of culture-specific items in subtitled programs can be implemented to enrich this research scope. Also, research can be extended to a reception study on the impact of subtitling CSIs on specific target viewers.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1   https://www.ted.com/about/programs-initiatives/ted-talks, Accessed in July, 29th, 2024.
2   https://www.ted.com/about/programs-initiatives/ted-translators, Accessed in July, 29th, 2024.
3   https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2013/08/unesco-united-nations-educational-scientific-and-cultural-organization/, Accessed in August, 1st, 2024.
4   https://www.ted.com/participate/translate/guidelines, Accessed in August, 1st, 2024.
5   https://www.ted.com/participate/translate/subtitling-tips, Accessed in August, 1st, 2024.

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Biography

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