

An Analysis of Translation Procedures of Thai Cultural Terms in English Subtitles: A Case Study of *Mae Yua* (*The Empress of Ayodhya*)

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the translation procedures used in translating cultural terms in the subtitles of *Mae Yua* (*The Empress of Ayodhya*). The analysis of cultural categories and the translation procedures used in this study was based on Newmark (1988). A total of 338 cultural terms were identified. *Material culture* was the most frequently found with 33.14%, followed by *Social culture* with 30.18%, *Organization, Customs, Activities, procedures, and Concepts* with 27.22%, *Gestures and habits* with 6.8%, and *Ecology* with 2.66%, respectively. The results of the analysis of translation procedures showed that the *Literal Translation* procedure was the most frequently used with 44.97%, followed by *Neutralization* with 22.19%, *Transference* with 16.27%, *Couplet* with 9.76%, *Deletion* with 2.37%, *Paraphrase* with 2.37%, *Cultural Equivalent* with 1.48%, and others with 0.59%, respectively. In addition, the analysis of the overall translation tendency is based on the concepts of *Foreignization* and *Domestication* as proposed by Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2016). The study found that *Foreignization* at 69.53% was the most used strategy, followed by *Domestication* at 28.40%. This suggests that the translator was more inclined toward *Foreignization* than *Domestication* to preserve the foreignness of the cultural terms in the drama.

Keywords: Translation, Translation procedures, Cultural terms, *Mae Yua*

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1. Introduction

Translation has been part of human society from the past to the present. In the past, translation was usually connected with the spread of religion and trade across countries. However, translation is not only beneficial for religion and trade (Kelly, 1988, p. 8), but also plays a major role in daily life. In scientific and technological contexts, it is applied to translating international research to develop products and innovation. Translation is also used in entertainment such as in novels, TV programs, films, and series through subtitles. Beyond that, translation not only serves as a tool of general communication but also serves as a tool for cross-cultural communication.

Among various forms of translation, subtitling has become increasingly important, especially with the growth of global streaming platforms. Subtitling translation is particularly remarkable because it is not only concerned with translating across significantly different cultures but is also concerned with space and time limitations. Subtitling translators need to translate in order to make audiences understand the context, storyline, characters' feelings, and cultural terms of the media under the limitations of time and space. Consequently, when translators translate subtitles containing cultural terms, the difficulty arises when some cultural terms are not available in the target language.

Cultural terms are related to the ways of living, beliefs, customs, politics, and geography of each society and are used within specific groups. When cultural concepts or objects are unfamiliar or have never appeared in the target language, there are no exact terms to describe their particular meanings in the same way as the source language (Pinmanee, 2003, p. 297). Translating cultural terms, therefore, is a challenge for translators since each culture carries different concepts that may not exist in other societies. *Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhaya)* is a Thai drama that contains notable Thai cultural terms that are worth noticing, such as job title terms, royal terms, foods, political terms, religious terms, and beliefs and customs in the middle Ayodhaya era, which are difficult to understand even for Thai audiences. Furthermore, *Mae Yua* received the 16th Nataraja Award and the 39th TV Gold Awards 2024, reflecting its cultural significance and wide audience.

Therefore, this study investigates the translation procedures used to transfer Thai cultural terms in *Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhaya)* into English, taking into account the limitations of time and space in subtitles.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the most frequently used translation procedures in the English subtitles of *Mae Yua*
2. To examine the use of Domestication and Foreignization strategies in translating Thai cultural terms in the Thai–English subtitles of *Mae Yua*

2. Literature review

2.1 Translation

In general, translation is the activity of converting a word or text from one language into another language. Several academics who specialize in this field have defined the term "translation" in various ways. Munday (2016, p. 8) stated that translation is the process between two languages that involves shifting the source text in the source language into the target text in the target language. Similarly, Newmark (1988, p. 5) pointed out that translation is the process of transferring the meaning in the source text to another language with concern for the intention of the text. He also noted that the original text cannot be perfectly translated into another language; hence the translator must face various challenges such as word ordering and grammatical structuring. In short, translation involves transforming a source language text into the target language while preserving the equivalence and intended meaning of the original.

2.2 Subtitling

Subtitling refers to adding words or text to media to represent a message that is being spoken or displayed on the screen. Díaz Cintas & Remael (2014, pp. 8-9) described subtitling as a form of translation that presents a written text, typically at the bottom of the screen, conveying the message of the source language along with the dialogue and other discursive elements. Subtitled content generally consists of three components — speech, image, and subtitles — which work together.

Díaz Cintas (2012) highlighted that translators must consider three primary factors when translating subtitles. In terms of spatial considerations, subtitles are displayed horizontally at the bottom of the screen with a maximum of two lines. In terms of temporal considerations, subtitles should synchronize with speech, with a maximum duration of six seconds for two-line subtitles. In terms of linguistic considerations, reduction strategies such as condensation and deletion are commonly applied since speech is often too fast for audiences to read in full. Non-standard or emotionally charged language is also adjusted or removed. Díaz Cintas & Remael (2014) also noted that strategies for subtitling cultural-specific terms range from literal translation to complete recreation. In summary, translators must carefully balance space, time, and language demands to help audiences process the conveyed message within a short time.

2.3 Translation Procedures

Baker (1992) discussed the translation of cultural terms translation by providing eight translation strategies to overcome non-equivalence at the word level. However, Newmark (1988, p. 81) also discussed how to solve non-equivalence in a similar way to Baker, but specifically for cultural terms. Newmark distinguished between translation methods and translation procedures. The translation methods are used to translate the whole text, while the

translation procedures are applied to translate sentences and smaller units such as words or phrases. In this study, the term translation procedure refers to the specific technique applied to translate individual cultural terms at the word or phrase level, following Newmark (1988). The term translation strategy refers to the broader approach to translation, namely Foreignization and Domestication, as proposed by Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2016). The term translation tendency refers to the overall direction or inclination of the translator toward either Foreignization or Domestication as observed from the frequency of translation procedures used. To translate cultural terms, Newmark (1988, p. 103) suggested twelve translation procedures as follows:

1. Transference is done by using loan words or transliteration.
2. Cultural Equivalent is used to translate a cultural term in the source language using a cultural term in the target language that has an approximate meaning.
3. Neutralization is used to translate the cultural terms by using more neutral terms through adding culture-free words that are related to the overall meanings of the terms.
4. Literal Translation is used to translate the corresponding terms that share the same or similar meanings.
5. Label is used specifically for the new institutional terms and should be indicated using commas.
6. Naturalization is used to transfer the cultural terms from the source language to the target language using the normal pronunciation of the target language.
7. Componential Analysis is used to translate the cultural terms from the source language by utilizing one of the meaning features of the terms.
8. Deletion is used to remove the cultural terms from the source language when they carry insignificant meaning.
9. Couplet is the use of more than one translation procedure to translate a single cultural term.
10. Accepted Standard Translation is used to translate the cultural terms that are officially well-known worldwide, especially in institutional terms.
11. Paraphrase, Gloss, and Notes are used to translate the cultural terms by explaining their meanings or by using footnotes.
12. Classifier is used when translating more specific cultural terms from the source text to a superordinate term in the target language.

2.4 Cultural Categories

According to Newmark (1988, p. 94), culture is defined as the ways of living and actions that are distinct in each society that uses a specific language. Specific terms used in particular societies, known as cultural terms, are the terms with cultural features that are problematic in

translation, such as *monsoon* and *steppe*, whereas universal or general terms are the terms recognized by all communities, such as *die*, *love*, and *star*. In addition, Newmark (1988) segmented cultural terms into five cultural categories as listed below:

2.4.1 *Ecology* — this category includes the cultural terms that refer to the local ecology and geography that are significant in each society, such as *prairies* and *tundras*.

2.4.2 *Material culture* — this category refers to the culturally significant concrete items of each society, such as foods, clothes, and transport.

2.4.3 *Social culture* — this category refers to cultural works, sports, and leisure activities, such as *charcuterie* and *patisserie*.

2.4.4 *Organization, customs, activities, procedures, and concepts* — this category refers to the terms that indicate a sense of organization, ideas, or concepts related to the political, artistic, or religious aspects of a society, such as *The Age of Enlightenment* and *Riksdag* (Sweden's parliament).

2.4.5 *Gestures and habits* — this category refers to the actions or gestures that are significant in one society but have different meanings in other societies, such as the thumbs-up sign and the OK sign.

2.5 Foreignization and Domestication

The concept of foreignization and domestication was proposed by Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2016, pp. 225-229) as strategies for examining how cultural terms are translated into the target text. Domestication reduces the foreignness of the source language by using a fluent tone, focusing on the target culture, and making the translated text easy to understand for target readers. In contrast, foreignization preserves the foreignness of the source language by highlighting the source culture and making target readers aware of the foreign nature of the translated text. These strategies also reflect translators' ethical choices about how much cultural understanding they wish to offer target readers. The textual effect of domestication is fluency, allowing readers to engage with the text as if it were originally written in the target language, while the textual effect of foreignization is resistancy, where the foreignness of the source text is retained and challenges the target readers' comprehension.

2.6 Related Studies

Several studies have examined the translation of cultural terms in subtitles and other text types using Newmark's framework. Studies that found literal translation as the dominant procedure include Subrata and Jumanto (2023), who studied cultura-specific term translation in subtitle of the Disney animation movie *Coco* from English-Spanish into Indonesian. Wang (2024) similarly found literal translation to be dominant in the Chinese novella *The Song of King Gesar*, though the overall tendency leaned toward domestication. In the Thai context, Chaleegul (2017) also found literal translation to be most frequently used in the translation of

cultural words in the novella *Jan Dara* during the Rattanakosin period, using Newmark's (1988) framework.

However, some studies have shown different results. Khan (2021) explored translation of cultural expressions in the Urdu short story *Ten Rupees* and found that descriptive equivalent was most frequently used, as the narrative text type allowed more space for explanation rather than literal translation. Likewise, Mettraipan (2023) found that the translator prioritized target audience comprehension in translating cultural words related to beliefs and the supernatural in the Thai film *The Medium*.

From the related studies, it is evident that different text types and cultural contexts influence the choice of translation procedures. In Thai-related studies, cultural terms have been examined mainly within the Rattanakosin period. However, cultural terms specific to the middle Ayodhya period, which has distinct cultural words compared to other Thai periods, remain largely overlooked. Moreover, the concept of Foreignization and Domestication given by Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2016, pp. 225-229) has been neglected in Thai cultural-specific studies. Beyond the gap in historical period, there is also a broader conceptual gap worth noting. As Thai historical dramas reach global audiences through streaming platforms like Netflix, the question of how translators balance cultural authenticity with readability for foreign audiences becomes increasingly important. In this sense, the subtitle translator plays a role not only as a language converter but also as a cultural representative who decides how much of the source culture to preserve or reduce for target audiences. Therefore, this study selects *The Empress of Ayodhya* to examine the cultural terms of the Ayodhya period and applies the concept of Foreignization and Domestication to analyze the overall translation tendency.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate translation procedures and their tendency. Qualitatively, the cultural terms were identified, categorized, and analyzed based on Newmark's (1988) framework. Quantitatively, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency, and percentages in order to determine the tendency of Foreignization and Domestication, and translation procedures in translating cultural terms in *Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhya)*.

3.2 Data

The data were purposively chosen based on the following criteria. First, the audiovisual media, particularly a Thai drama or a Thai TV series, had to contain diverse Thai cultural terms following Newmark's cultural classification (1988). Second, the audiovisual media had to contain English subtitles. Third, the chosen audiovisual media had to have received a

recognition award in the Thai entertainment industry or have been recognized among Thai audiences. Finally, the chosen audiovisual media had to be tested with a pilot study to confirm its feasibility by examining the first four episodes. Each episode was required to contain at least 15 cultural terms worth examining in order to ensure sufficient data for exploring the translation procedures used.

Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhya), directed by Sant Srikaewlaw, was selected as the data source for this study, which focuses on analyzing translation procedures following Newmark (1988) and the tendency between Foreignization and Domestication following Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2016), as applied to the Thai-English subtitles of the drama. The drama was officially broadcast on One HD 31 and released in 2024 on the Netflix platform with subtitles. It is based on the historical events of the middle Ayutthaya period and contains a great number of cultural terms. The storyline is inspired by the life of Thao Srisudachan, a queen of Ayutthaya, in her attempt to reclaim her dynasty's throne. The drama has also received recognition from prestigious Thai entertainment awards, winning the 16th Nataraj Award for Best Drama in the Short Form Series category (less than 13 episodes) and the 39th TV Gold Awards for Best Art Composition.

3.3 Data Collection

Thai cultural terms were collected from the Thai-to-English subtitles of *Mae Yua* on the Netflix platform, using the official translation provided by Panupong Baikawon. In this study, a cultural term refers to a word or phrase that carries culture-specific meaning related to the ways of living, beliefs, customs, politics, or geography of a particular society, as defined by Newmark (1988). These terms may consist of a single word (e.g., ไชย론, ท้าบุญ) or a multi-word phrase (e.g., กฎมณเฑียรบาล, พระสนมจิตรวดี). A total of 338 cultural terms were gathered from all 10 episodes. The following criteria were applied to sort the cultural terms: 1) Thai cultural terms that were repeated with the same translation were not counted. 2) Cultural terms that were repeated but translated differently were counted. 3) A slightly misspelled cultural term that could still be understood was counted.

3.4 Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the cultural categorization framework by Newmark (1988) was applied as the main framework to classify the cultural terms found in *Mae Yua*. The classified cultural terms were then analyzed using Newmark's (1988) 12 translation procedures: Transference, Cultural Equivalent, Neutralization, Literal Translation, Label, Naturalization, Componential Analysis, Deletion, Couplet, Accepted Standard Translation, Paraphrase, and Classifier.

The findings are demonstrated in the form of descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentages. The frequency of each translation procedure was then used to analyze the

translation tendency between Foreignization and Domestication. The findings are presented in the following section, examining the translation procedures used in translating *Mae Yua* and the overall translation tendency between Foreignization and Domestication.

4. Findings

4.1 Results of Cultural Categories

A total of 338 cultural terms were identified across 10 episodes of *Mae Yua* (*The Empress of Ayodhya*). The cultural terms were categorized using the five categories provided by Newmark (1988), including *Ecology*, *Material culture*, *Social culture*, *Organization, etc.*, and *Gestures and habits*. The results are shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 cultural categories collected in *Mae Yua* (*The Empress of Ayodhya*)

Cultural Categories	Data	Percentage (%)
Ecology	9	2.66
Material culture	112	33.14
Social culture	102	30.18
Organization, customs, activities, procedures, concepts, etc.	92	27.22
Gestures and habit	23	6.8
Total	338	100

The findings showed that the majority of the data were *Material culture* due to the content of the drama being related to places, household items, buildings, and food. On the other hand, the least frequently found category was *Ecology*, as the content does not focus on environmental, geological, or fauna and flora terms.

4.2 Results of Translation Procedures

The 338 Thai cultural terms in *Mae Yua* were analyzed using Newmark's (1988) twelve translation procedures. Only seven procedures were identified: *Transference*, *Cultural Equivalent*, *Neutralization*, *Literal Translation*, *Deletion*, *Couplet*, and *Paraphrase*, while *Naturalization*, *Classifier*, *Label*, *Componential Analysis*, *Gloss and Notes*, and *Accepted Standard Translation* were not found. The results are shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Quantitative analysis parameters for translation procedures in 10 episodes of *Mae Yua* (*The Empress of Ayodhya*)

Translation procedures	Data	Percentage (%)
Transference	55	16.27
Cultural equivalent	5	1.48
Neutralization	75	22.19
Literal translation	152	44.97
Deletion	8	2.37
Couplet	33	9.76
Paraphrase	8	2.37
Others	2	0.59
Total	338	100

As shown in Table 4.2, the findings showed that the translator relied heavily on *Literal Translation*, which was most frequently applied to *Material culture*, *Organization*, *customs*, *activities*, *procedures*, and *concepts*, and *Social culture* terms. These data were mostly related to items, places, royal terms, hierarchical ranks, the Thai political system, and Buddhist concepts. Using *Literal Translation* to transfer cultural terms can convey their meanings to the target language when the visual on the screen provides sufficient context, making further explanation unnecessary. However, some cultural terms require more explanation because their context can evoke additional meanings. The space and time limitations of subtitles also influenced the translator's choice of procedure.

Transference

Transference involves the use of transcription or transliteration. It was used for translating Thai cultural words related to place names, political positions, or species names that do not exist in the target language.

Example 1

Source text ด้วยท้าวศรีจุฬาลักษณ์ลอบมะแขว่น

Target text It was Thao Si Chulalak who secretly added Makwaen.

The translator transferred the pronunciation of มะแขว่น into *Makwaen* using the Romanization of Thai by Kanchanawan (2006). Since *Makwaen* does not significantly affect the story context, the translator chose to transliterate it rather than elaborate on its meaning, due to the space and time constraints of subtitles. The image of *Makwaen* is also shown on the screen, so audiences can understand it from the visual context.

Example 2

Source text พระเมืองเกษเกล้า เมืองเชียงใหม่

Target text The King of Chiang Mai, Phra Muang Ketklao

พระเมืองเกษเกล้า was the king of the kingdom of Chiang Mai. The translator transferred the pronunciation to *Phra Muang Ketklao* in order to keep the original pronunciation, since it is a proper name referring to a specific person. Translating the proper name could fail to convey its meaning as a royal name or official title, potentially confusing the target audience into mistaking it for a common noun.

Cultural Equivalent

Cultural Equivalent is a procedure where a cultural term in the source language is replaced in the target language with a term of comprehensible or similar meaning, even though it may not convey all the features and meaning components of the original term.

Example 3

Source text ท่านเจ้ากรมวังมีอะไร

Target text Lord Chamberlain, what is the matter?

According to the Office of the Royal Society (2011), *กรมวัง* refers to one of the four ministries in the Ayudhaya, Thonburi, and Rattanakosin governments, whose duty was to supervise the palace. The translator rendered *กรมวัง* as *Lord Chamberlain*, which the Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines as a British official responsible for supervising the royal household and managing royal ceremonies. Both terms share the characteristic of overseeing the royal household, but differences arise due to cultural distinctions.

Example 4

Source text ข้าจะหนีตามไปอยู่กับลูกข้าที่สุพรรณ แล้วจะไปบวชให้หมดเรื่อง

Target text I will flee to Suphan to be with my children. Then become a nun to end all this.

บวช refers to the act of ordaining as a Buddhist nun. The word *ชี* is translated as *nun*, which is functionally equivalent in the target language context. While *nun* carries the key feature of the source term, it is not a full equivalent to *ชี* due to cultural differences between Christianity and Buddhism, resulting in partial loss of cultural meaning.

Example 5

Source text คุณพระช่วย ดูนั่น

Target text My goodness, look!

คุณพระช่วย is a Thai exclamation that expresses strong emotion such as surprise or shock. It also contains the cultural word *พระ*, meaning monk. *My goodness* is an English interjection that similarly expresses surprise and mild alarm. Despite the cultural differences in religion, both expressions are interchangeable in meaning.

Neutralization

Neutralization was used to translate cultural terms by replacing them with culture-free terms that contain their overall meanings. This procedure was applied when the visual context was sufficient for audiences to understand the terms from the images shown in the scenes.

Example 6

Source text ม้าเร็วมารออยู่ด้านนอกแล้วเพคะ

Target text A messenger awaits outside.

The translator translated ม้าเร็ว into *messenger* to neutralize its meaning. The term is a metaphor referring to a horse rider assigned by an army to send messages during war, according to the Office of the Royal Society (2011). Since the visual shows a person riding a horse serving as a messenger, audiences can understand the term without further explanation.

Example 7

Source text นายเอ็งทำผิดจึงต้องโทษตามกฎหมายมณเฑียรบาล

Target text Your mistress committed a crime and must be punished according to the law.

The translator translated กฎมณเฑียรบาล into *the law*, using only the key function of the source term to convey its overall meaning, as there is no exact equivalent. กฎมณเฑียรบาล refers to a Thai special law applied in the palace area, according to the Office of the Royal Society (2011). The context indicates a character violating palace law, allowing audiences to understand that *the law* refers specifically to palace law.

Example 8

Source text ขุนท้าวลองถามพวกโซลนดูเผื่อมีใครพบเห็นมันบ้าง

Target text Madame, you can ask the guards if anyone has seen her.

The translator translated โซลน into *guards*, which refers to women who served as guards in a palace area. Translating the term into *guards* — meaning a group of people who protect people or places, according to the Cambridge Dictionary — omits the feminine gender component. However, since the visual clearly shows female guards, audiences can understand the term from the image without explanation.

Literal Translation

Literal Translation is a procedure where a cultural term is translated with a direct meaning that preserves the original meaning of the source language.

Example 9

Source text พอลูกขอกลับลพบุรีมาเยี่ยมพ่อแลทำบุญ...

Target text so when I requested to return to Lopburi to visit my father and make merit...

ทำบุญ is a Buddhist practice encompassing several activities. It was directly translated as *make merit*, where *make* corresponds to *ทำ* and *merit* to *บุญ*. The target text preserves the meaning of the source text.

Example 10

Source text พี่ก็ไม่ขอขึ้นสวรรค์อีกแล้ว

Target text I will no longer wish to ascend to heaven.

ขึ้นสวรรค์ is a Buddhist concept referring to reaching heaven through good deeds in life. The term was translated word-for-word, where ขึ้น was translated as *ascend to* and *สวรรค์* as *heaven*, retaining the meaning of the original term.

Example 11

Source text ให้พิจารณาเลขสังกัดสมพันธ์ โดยให้ปลุกจวนเป็นที่ว่าราชการ...

Target text To review the assigned ranks and affiliations and establish an administrative residence...

According to the Office of the Royal Society (2011), *จวน* refers to an accommodation of a high-level government official. *จวน* was translated as *an administrative residence*, which corresponds with the meaning of the source term.

Deletion

Deletion removes cultural terms from the target text when their meanings are considered insignificant to the overall context.

Example 12

Source text ตรงกับวันเสาร์ขึ้น 12 ค่ำ เดือน 11 เพลาสามเริงหน้าบาทพระเจ้าค่ะ

Target text It will be on Saturday, the 12th day of the waxing moon in the eleventh

month, at the third hour.

ห้าบาท is a Thai unit of time in which one *Baht* equals six minutes; therefore, ห้าบาท means 30 minutes. As the characters are discussing an auspicious time for a battle plan, translating ห้าบาท would be overly detailed given the space and time constraints of subtitles. Therefore, the translator chose deletion to manage these constraints.

Example 13

Source text เมื่อทรงสดับแล้วพระทัยสงบ พ้นจากความทรมาน

Target text He found peace, free from suffering,

สดับ, a Thai royal term defined by the Office of the Royal Society (2011) as *listening carefully*, was omitted from the target text because the previous context had already explained that the King had ordered a character to recite chants. Therefore, audiences could interpret that the King had listened to them from the earlier dialogue.

Paraphrase

Paraphrase is used to explain cultural terms with important or complex meanings when no exact equivalent exists in the target language.

Example 14

Source text ในวังหลวงมีเทวดาอารักษ์คอยรักษาเศวตฉัตรจะกระทำย่ำยีไม่ได้

Target text In the Royal Palace, guardian spirits protect the white umbrella of state. We cannot defile it.

According to the Office of the Royal Society (2011), เศวตฉัตร refers to a white umbrella associated with the monarch. The translator paraphrased it as *the white umbrella of state* to convey that เศวตฉัตร belongs to the King who rules the state. Since the actual image is not shown on screen, and the term carries significant symbolic meaning, Paraphrase was necessary to help audiences understand its cultural significance.

Example 15

Source text เขากันว่าพญาฉัททันต์ท่านร้องเตือนภัย

Target text They say the Lord of the White Elephant is warning us.

The translator paraphrased พญาฉัททันต์ as *the Lord of the White Elephant* to explain that it refers to the King of the white elephant in Thai mythical belief. Since the term carries

important meaning in the context and no visual of it appeared in the scene, Paraphrase was used to explain its key aspects to help audiences understand that it was the white elephant warning the characters.

Example 16

Source text พระปรางค์องค์นี้เสมือนตัวแทนของข้า อยู่เป็นมิ่งขวัญชาวอยุธยาสืบไป

Target text This prang stands as a symbol of myself, a beacon of hope and prosperity for the people of Ayodhaya, for generations to come.

มิ่งขวัญ was paraphrased as *a beacon of hope and prosperity* to explain its sense of being a symbol of hope and prosperity for the people of Ayodhaya. This was necessary because there is no specific equivalent term in English to capture the same feeling.

Couplet

Couplet involves the use of two translation procedures combined to translate a single cultural term. Three types of Couplet were found: *Literal Translation* and *Transference*, *Cultural Equivalent* and *Transference*, and *Neutralization* and *Transference*.

Example 17

Source text ใช่ ข้าได้ยินว่ามีเห็ดไคขึ้นที่นี่ ข้าเลยใคร่อยากกิน

Target text Yes, I heard Kai mushrooms grow here, so I wanted to try some.

เห็ดไค is a type of mushroom that grows in tropical rainforests and is found in northern and northeastern Thailand. The name ไค was transcribed as *Kai*, while เห็ด was literally translated as *mushrooms*. Although the two procedures do not provide the full cultural meaning, the term does not affect the main content of the drama. The combination allows audiences to quickly understand it as a type of mushroom.

Example 18

Source text ไปเฝ้าพระสนมจิตรวดี

Target text to meet Lady Chitrawadee

พระสนมจิตรวดี is one of the main concubines of King Chairachathirat. พระสนม — an appointed high-ranking woman and concubine of the King — was translated as *Lady*, which the Cambridge Dictionary defines as a title given to high social rank women in British usage. The name จิตรวดี was transcribed as *Chitrawadee*. Although *Lady* cannot convey the exact meaning of พระสนม, the audience can understand the social status from the word *Lady* since it conveys the same concept of upper class.

Example 19

Source text ให้เด็ดสายธูร่า

Target text Cut the Thuram necklace

สายธูร่า is a sacred thread symbolizing Brahmins that is worn across the chest. The name ธูร่า was transcribed as *Thuram*, while *necklace* — an accessory worn around the neck with a similar functional meaning — was used as a Cultural Equivalent to help the audience visualize it as something worn across the body. The image of สายธูร่า is also shown on screen, so audiences have no difficulty understanding the term.

Others

This section covers cultural terms that could not be identified by any of Newmark's translation procedures.

Example 20

Source text ในกลั๊กนี่คือผงที่บดมาจากเมล็ดโกฐกัลลิ่ง

Target text This powder is ground from gok galangal seeds

เมล็ดโกฐกัลลิ่ง refers to poisonous seeds from the Nux-vomica Tree. While เม็ด was correctly translated as *seeds*, the term โกฐกัลลิ่ง was adjusted to *Gok Galangal*, which does not correspond to the meaning or pronunciation of the source term. The Cambridge Dictionary defines *Galangal* as a tropical plant's root used in spice seasoning, which is different in function and characteristics from เม็ดโกฐกัลลิ่ง. Furthermore, โกฐ was not romanized correctly; according to the Sanskrit romanization guide by Kanchanawan (2006), 'ฐ' equals *t* as a final consonant, making the correct form *Kot*. As a result, the translation cannot be identified by any of Newmark's procedures.

Example 21

Source text ตั้งแต่วันที่ปล่อยโคมขึ้น

Target text Since the day we release the sky lanterns

The Office of the Royal Society (2011) defines โคม as an object with wind shields that provides light, which was translated as *lanterns*. The translator also added *sky* to describe their functions. However, the image shown on screen depicts a lantern floating on the water, not the sky. Since the translation does not correspond to the visual, it cannot be explained by any of Newmark's procedures.

The procedures not found in this drama include *Naturalization*, *Classifier*, *Label*, *Accepted Standard Translation*, *Gloss and Notes*, and *Componential Analysis*. *Naturalization* was not identified, as most cultural terms retained their original pronunciations without adaptation. *Classifier* was not identified in the data. *Label* was not found as the drama's content does not involve new institutional terms. *Accepted Standard Translation* was not found as the drama does not correspond to any institutional terms. *Gloss and Notes*, which are paired with *Paraphrase*, are not suitable for subtitles due to space and time limitations. *Componential Analysis* was excluded as it was not possible to determine whether the translator was selecting one specific meaning component from the cultural terms.

4.3 Results of Foreignization and Domestication

The translation strategies of *Foreignization* and *Domestication* were used to examine the overall translation tendency in the drama. *Foreignization* refers to translating cultural terms in a way that preserves their foreignness rather than adapting them for audiences from different cultures. Therefore, *Literal Translation*, *Transference*, and *Couplet* were grouped under *Foreignization*, resulting in 69.53%. *Domestication* refers to translating cultural terms in a way that reduces their foreignness for audiences from different cultures. Therefore, *Cultural Equivalent*, *Neutralization*, *Paraphrase*, *Deletion*, *Couplet*, and *Classifier* were grouped under *Domestication*, resulting in 28.40%. The Couplet pairs of *Cultural Equivalent* and *Transference*, and *Neutralization* and *Transference* were not grouped under either strategy, as they overlap both *Foreignization* and *Domestication*, making classification unclear.

Table 4.3 quantitative analysis parameters for Foreignization and Domestication in 10 episodes of Mae Yua (*The Empress of Ayodhya*)

Translation Strategies	Translation Procedure	Ecology	Material Culture	Social Culture	Organizations, etc.	Gesture and habits	totaling	Percentage (%)
Domestication	Cultural Equivalent	-	1	1	2	1	5	28.40
	Neutralization	-	27	22	24	2	75	
	Paraphrase	1	1	-	5	1	8	
	Deletion	-	1	2	4	1	8	
Foreignization	Literal Translation	2	48	36	48	18	152	69.53
	Transference	2	22	27	4	-	55	
	Couplet	4	9	10	5	-	28	

	(Literal translation + Transference)							
Couplet (Domestication and Foreignization)	-	1	4	-	-	5	1.48	
Other	-	2	-	-	-	2	0.59	
Total	9	112	102	92	23	338		
Percentage (%)	2.66	33.17	30.18	27.22	6.8		100	

As shown in Table 4.3, the English subtitles of *Mae Yua* showed a tendency toward *Foreignization* through the use of *Literal Translation*, *Transference*, and *Couplet*, which retain Thai cultural linguistic features in the target text.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

The findings revealed that *Literal Translation* was the most frequently used translation procedure for transferring cultural terms, especially in subtitle translation which is highly restricted in space and time. This is closely connected to the fact that *Material culture* was the most frequently found category, as most cultural terms in this category can be visually identified on screen, meaning audiences can understand them from the images without needing further explanation. The space and time constraints of subtitles further reinforced the use of *Literal Translation*, as it allows the translator to maintain a manageable number of characters while preserving the original meaning of the terms. This suggests that *Literal Translation* in subtitle translation does not work alone — it relies on the visuals on screen to carry part of the meaning. In other words, the images function as a complementary layer that supports the translated text, allowing the translator to keep the terms close to the source language without needing to explain them further.

This finding is consistent with Subrata and Jumanto (2023) and Wang (2024), both of whom found *Literal Translation* to be the dominant procedure in their respective studies. However, it contrasts with Khan (2021), who found *Descriptive Equivalent* to be the most frequently used procedure in translating the Urdu short story *Ten Rupees*. This difference may be attributed to the nature of the text type; narrative texts allow more space for explanation, whereas subtitles are constrained by time and space, making *Literal Translation* a more practical choice. Similarly, Mettraipan (2023) found that the translator of the Thai film *The Medium* prioritized target audience comprehension, which led to a greater reliance on domesticating procedures. This suggests that the genre and content of the source material, as well as the translator's purpose, play a significant role in determining which translation procedures are employed.

The overall tendency toward *Foreignization* suggests that subtitle translation allows cultural differences to be retained rather than adapted. This is consistent with Khan (2021), whose study also found that *Foreignization* was used to handle the difficulties in translating cultural terms, despite involving a different text type. This aligns with Venuti (as cited in Munday, 2016), who stated that the most favorable strategy for rendering cultural elements from one culture to another while preserving both linguistic and cultural differences is *Foreignization*. In the context of this drama, Foreignization appears to be enabled by the visual redundancy of the medium — because the images on screen already show what the cultural terms refer to, the translator could afford to preserve the foreignness of the terms without risking the audience's comprehension. In terms of the cultural implications, the heavy use of Foreignization suggests that international audiences are exposed to Thai cultural terms in a form that retains their original linguistic and cultural features. This approach allows the target audience to encounter the distinctiveness of Thai culture, particularly the cultural elements specific to the middle Ayodhya period, rather than receiving a fully adapted version that conforms to Western cultural norms. As a result, the translator functions not merely as a language converter but also as a cultural mediator who introduces foreign cultural elements to the global audience. However, this approach may also present challenges for audiences who are unfamiliar with Thai culture, as the preserved foreignness of the terms may require additional effort to comprehend. The findings therefore confirm that the translator of *Mae Yua* was more inclined toward *Foreignization* than *Domestication* when handling Thai cultural terms in the English subtitles.

5.2 Conclusion

This study investigated the translation procedures applied to cultural terms in the subtitling translation of *Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhya)*. The most frequently found cultural category was *Material culture*, reflecting the drama's content, which is largely centered on concrete, visible cultural items. The most frequently used translation procedure was *Literal Translation*, which was appropriate because most cultural terms could be understood through the visual context on screen, making further explanation, neutralization, or deletion unnecessary. The overall translation tendency leaned toward *Foreignization*, indicating that the translator chose to preserve the foreignness of the cultural terms rather than adapting them to the target culture. This approach was appropriate given that the visuals in the drama provided sufficient context for audiences to understand the terms as foreign cultural elements.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

It should be noted that this study has certain limitations. The analysis was based on a single drama series, *Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhya)*, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other Thai historical dramas or other audiovisual media. The cultural terms

examined were also specific to the middle Ayodhya period, and the translation procedures identified may not fully represent how translators handle cultural terms from other historical periods or cultural contexts. These limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this study.

This study focused on the translation of Thai cultural terms in the middle Ayodhya era as found in *Mae Yua (The Empress of Ayodhya)*. Several directions remain open for future research, and the following recommendations are offered for researchers who are interested in pursuing related topics.

First, future studies can expand the scope by examining cultural terms in other contexts, such as Thai cultural terms from different regions of Thailand, Thai cultural terms in the modern era, or cultural terms in other languages. Each cultural context carries its own unique vocabulary and translation challenges that may lead to different findings in terms of translation procedures and overall translation tendencies. Comparing results across different cultural periods or text types could also provide a broader understanding of how translators handle culture-specific items.

Second, another direction would be to examine the translation of idioms in *Mae Yua*, as idioms present a different kind of translation challenge that was not covered in this study. Unlike cultural terms, idioms often carry figurative meanings that cannot be understood from their individual words alone, as they may require different translation procedures and strategies. Examining how idioms in a historical Thai drama are translated into English could offer additional insights into the challenges of cross-cultural translation in audiovisual media.

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