

**A STUDY ON THE MOVIE SUBTITLE TRANSLATION  
(BASED ON THE MATERIAL OF THE ANIMATION FILM “COCO”)**

**Abstract.** Translation is not only a simple shift between languages but more a cultural communication. The translation should encourage the collision and integration of diverse cultures to facilitate cultural interchange. As a result, when doing translation activities, the translator must carefully evaluate the language's cultural characteristics. Susan Bassnett is an advocate for cultural translation theory. She formally proposed the concept of “cultural turn” in her book “Translation History Culture”, which she co-compiled with Andre Lefevere. This theory is extremely important for translators' practice and intercultural communication. “Coco” is a Pixar Animation Studios fantasy film distributed by Walt Disney Pictures. “Coco” follows Miguel, a young Mexican kid who dreams of being a musician despite his family's generations-old prohibition on music. After a series of events, Miguel finds himself in the Land of the Dead, where he meets his departed ancestors and learns the truth about his family history. Our study aims to analyze the translation of cultural words from the animation film “Coco” within the framework of the Mongolian and Chinese languages. Not only are cultural components exhibited on-screen to offer the audience a genuine sense of Mexico's local customs and unique cultural attractions, but a large amount of Spanish is reserved in the English subtitles. In this study, we gathered 50 Spanish cultural words from Coco's subtitles and compared them to corresponding Mongolian and Chinese subtitles. We discovered five translation methods for cultural words by studying these words: literal translation, free translation, transliteration, substitution, and omission.

**Keywords:** *Mongolian and Chinese translation, cultural translation, translation methods*

**АНАЛИЗ ПЕРЕВОДА СУБТИТРОВ В КИНЕМАТОГРАФЕ  
(НА ПРИМЕРЕ АНИМАЦИОННОГО ФИЛЬМА “КОКО”)**

**Аннотация.** Перевод – это не только простое переключение между языками, но и культурная коммуникация. Перевод должен способствовать столкновению и интеграции различных культур для облегчения культурного обмена. В результате при выполнении переводческой деятельности переводчик должен тщательно оценивать культурные особенности языка. Сьюзен Басснетт является сторонником теории культурного перевода. Она официально предложила концепцию «культурного поворота» в своей книге «История переводов и культуры», которую она составила совместно с Андре Лефевром. Эта теория чрезвычайно важна для практики переводчиков и межкультурной коммуникации. “Коко” – фантазийный фильм “Pixar Animation Studios”, распространяемый Walt Disney Pictures. «Коко» рассказывает о Мигеле, молодом мексиканском ребенке, который мечтает стать музыкантом, несмотря на давний запрет его семьи на музыку. После череды событий Мигель оказывается в Стране Мертвых, где встречает своих усопших предков и узнает правду об истории своей семьи. Наше исследование направлено на анализ перевода культурологических слов из анимационного фильма «Коко» на монгольский и китайский языки. Мало того, что культурные компоненты выставлены на экране, чтобы дать зрителям подлинное представление о местных обычаях Мексики и уникальных культурных достопримечательностях, но и большое количество элементов на испанском языке представлено в английских субтитрах. В этом исследовании мы собрали 50 испанских культурных слов из субтитров Коко и сравнили их с соответствующими

монгольскими и китайскими субтитрами. Изучая эти слова, мы обнаружили пять способов перевода культурных слов: дословный перевод, свободный перевод, транслитерация, замена и опущение.

**Ключевые слова:** монгольский и китайский перевод, культурологический перевод, методы перевода

The translation is more than simply converting one language into another. To introduce and communicate different cultures, the translation should encourage the collision and blending of these cultures to promote cultural exchange. Susan Bassnett is a cultural translation theory representative. In her co-edited book “Translation History Culture” with Andre Lefevere, she formally introduced the concept of “cultural turn.” Since then, Susan Bassnett, a pioneer of the cultural translation school, has established a significant translation studies school. The cultural turn has caused a gradual shift in the focus of Translation Studies from a purely linguistic perspective to a cultural one.

Peter Newmark discussed twelve procedures for translating cultural words. Among them, (1) transference, (2) cultural equivalent, (3) neutralization (i.e., functional or descriptive equivalent), (4) literal translation, (5) label, (6) naturalization, (7) componential analysis, (8) deletion, (9) couplet, (10) accepted standard translation, (11) paraphrase, gloss, notes, etc., and (12) classifier [1].

Mongolian scholar Eldev-Ochir, G. stated in his work “Methods of Translating Cultural Meaning” that to accurately translate the meaning of national culture, one must have a comprehensive understanding of the nation’s history, culture, and way of thinking [2]. The meaning of national culture can be translated in the following five ways. It includes:

#### 1. Method of direct or literal translation

It refers to the translation that preserves the original article’s content and form. In other words, if there is a culturally equivalent word in another language, it can be directly translated using that word.

#### 2. Method of substitution

Depending on the culture and mentality of a nation, the same thing may have different cultural meanings in its respective languages. Therefore, it is preferable to translate the word with the cultural meaning as closely or at the same level as possible, that is, to replace it with a word from the same vocabulary province.

#### 3. Method of adding footnotes

To give readers and listeners a deep understanding of the country’s culture, customs, and way of thinking, words with unclear national cultural meanings can be directly translated word for word, and additional footnotes and explanations can be added behind the meaning.

#### 4. Method of free translation

Suppose the target language lacks words with corresponding national cultural meanings. In that case, free translation is required to ensure that readers and listeners understand, with a focus on the content and meaning of the translated text.

#### 5. Method of transliteration

It is tough to translate the names of some phenomena unique to a given nation's culture and mentality. Transliteration is the only way to translate such words [2].

In work “the Choice of Cultural Translation Strategies: Evidences from Color Term Translations of Hong Lou Meng,” Chinese scholar Yuan Jin stated that in cultural translation, some methods such as explication, substitution, and omission are frequently used to achieve fluency and naturalness, while literal translation, transliteration, and annotation are used to retain the source text's foreignness [3].

“Coco” is a fantasy film produced by Pixar Animation Studios and released by Walt Disney Pictures. “Coco” tells the story of Miguel, a young Mexican boy who dreams of becoming a musician, despite his family's generations-old ban on music. After a series of events, Miguel finds himself in the Land of the Dead, where he meets his deceased ancestors and learns the truth about his family history. To give the viewer a genuine sense of the local customs, unique cultural components are displayed on-screen, and a significant amount of Spanish is reserved in the English subtitles. In this study we gathered 50 Spanish cultural words from *Coco's* subtitles and compared them with corresponding Mongolian and Chinese subtitles. By studying these words, we identified five translation methods for cultural words, namely literal translation, free translation, transliteration, substitution and omission.

## **1. The use of the translation methods in Mongolian translation**

### **1.1 Literal translation**

#### *Example 1*

Original text:

Mira, mira, they're setting up for tonight!

Mongolian translation:

Kharj baina uu, ted önöö oroiny züiliig beldej baina.

“Mira” is a word in Spanish that means “look” or “watch.” “kharakh” also means “see” or “look.”

### **1.2 Free translation**

#### *Example 2*

Original text:

Ya lo sabía!

Mongolian translation:

Burkhan mini.

“Ya lo sabía” is a Spanish phrase that translates to “I already knew” in English. This phrase is commonly used to express that someone was already aware of a certain fact or piece of information. “Burkhan mini” means “my god.” Therefore, in Mongolian translation, the translator used free translation to transmit the original text's meaning.

### **1.3 Transliteration**

#### *Example 3*

Original text:

They make caquitas everywhere.

Mongolian translation:

Xaa saigüi kakitanuud baigaa.

“Caquitas” may be a slang term in some contexts meaning “feces” or “fool.” It is a less polite word not used in formal or respectful situations. Therefore, when using “caquitas,” you should be aware of your surroundings and environment and ensure the word does not offend anyone. However, the word is translated as “kakitanuud” in Mongolian, which does not accurately express the meaning intended by the original text. So the viewer who does not know the word’s meaning will not understand the meaning expressed in this scene.

#### 1.4 Omission

*Example 4*

Original text:

We had a deal, chamaco.

Mongolian translation:

Bid tokhiroлтsson.

In this translation, the translator has omitted the word “chamaco.” It means “boy” or “teenager.” The translator probably thought that omitting this word would not have much effect on understanding the movie.

**Table 1 - The translation methods used in Mongolian subtitle**

Translation methods	Frequency	Percent
Literal translation	25	50%
Free translation	1	2%
Transliteration	10	20%
Omission	14	28%
Substitution	0	0%
Total	50	100%

## 2. The use of the translation methods in Chinese translation

### 2.1 Literal translation

*Example 5*

Original text:

Oh, you’re a twig, mijo. Have some more.

Chinese translation:

你太瘦了，孩子，多吃点。(Nǐ tài shòule, háizi, duō chī diǎn.)

“Mijo” is a Spanish word used as a term of endearment for a young boy or a friend. The word is commonly used in Spanish-speaking countries and communities and is often used as a playful or affectionate term between close friends or family members. “孩子” (hái zi) is a Chinese word that means “child” or “kids.” In Mandarin Chinese, “孩子” is a commonly used word to refer to a young person or a son or daughter. So the two words have the same meaning.

### 2.2 Free translation

*Example 6*

Original text:

I know your tricks, mariachi.

Chinese translation:

我很清楚你的把戏，臭乐手。(Wǒ hěn qīngchǔ nǐ de bǎxì, chòu yuè shǒu.)

“Mariachi” is a musical genre and performance tradition originating in Mexico. It is characterized by guitars, violins, and trumpets, as well as a distinctive singing and musical composition style. “乐手” (yuè shǒu) is a Chinese word that means “musician” or “player.” However, the word “臭” is a discriminatory word with an aversive connotation. Although “Mariachi” is a neutral word in the original, we can see how much Miguel’s grandmother hates musicians from the film. So the Chinese translation of this word is considered to be free translation.

### 2.3 Transliteration

*Example 7*

Original text:

Alebrijes!

Chinese translation:

爱波瑞吉吗?(Ài bō ruì jí ma)

“Alebrijes” are brightly colored Mexican folk art sculptures of fantastical creatures that are typically made from paper. Today, Alebrijes are made by artisans in Mexico, who create intricate and imaginative designs that often feature a combination of mythical creatures such as dragons, serpents, and other animals. Perhaps the movie scene has already told the viewer what “Alebrijes” is, so the translator directly used the transliteration. The pinyin of “爱皮瑞吉” is “Ài bō ruì jí”.

### 2.4 Substitution

*Example 8*

Original text:

I asked if you would like more tamales!

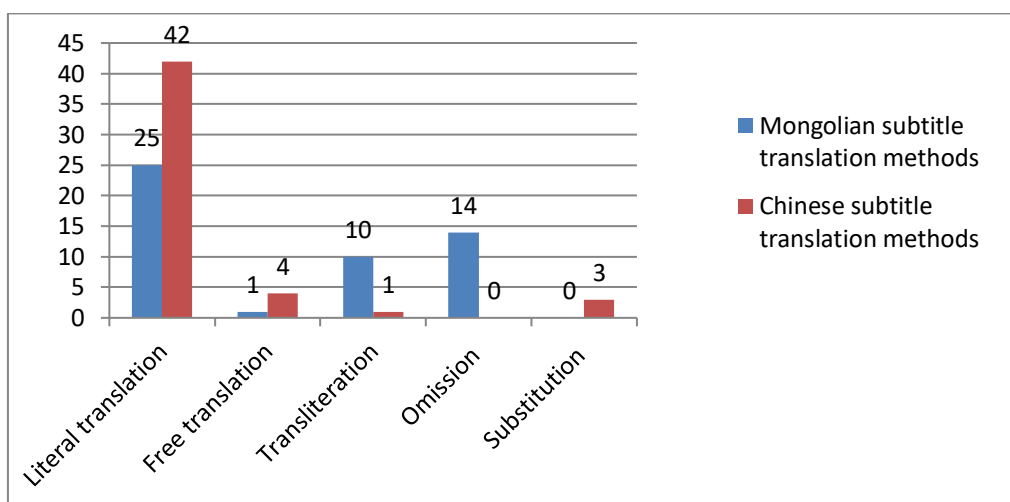
Chinese translation:

我问过你要不要再来点玉米粉蒸肉。(Wǒ wènguò nǐ yào bù yào zàilái diǎn yùmǐ fěnzhēngròu)

Tamales are a traditional Mexican dish made of masa (a dough made from corn flour or masa harina) that is filled with various ingredients, such as meat, cheese, vegetables, or fruits, and then wrapped in a corn husk and steamed. “玉米粉蒸肉” (yù mǐ fěn zhēng ròu) is a Chinese dish that consists of steamed pork with corn flour. In this dish, the pork is typically marinated in a mixture of seasonings, and then coated with corn flour before being steamed. So the translation method used in this word is substitution.

**Table 2 - The translation methods used in Chinese subtitle**

Translation methods	Frequency	Proportion
Literal translation	42	84%
Free translation	4	8%
Transliteration	1	2%
Omission	0	0%
Substitution	3	6%
Total	50	100%



*Fig 1. The translation methods used in Mongolian and Chinese translation*

## Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn based on our study.

In Mongolian subtitle translation, literal translation, free translation, transliteration, omission, and substitution methods account for 50%, 2%, 20%, and 28%, respectively. In Chinese subtitle translation, the literal translation, free translation, transliteration, omission and substitution methods account for 84%, 8%, 2%, and 6%, respectively. By comparing the results, it was observed that:

1. Only 2% of the Chinese subtitle translation uses the transliteration method, compared to 20% of the Mongolian subtitle translation. Mongolian translators frequently transliterate foreign terms.

2. 84% of the Chinese subtitle translation uses the literal translation method, compared to 50% in the Mongolian subtitle translation. The literal translation is used commonly in Chinese translation since it ensures consistency, clarity, and correctness.

3. The Chinese subtitle translation does not make use of the omission. Meanwhile, the percentage of omission in the Mongolian subtitle translation is 28%. It shows that the meaning of some words can blend into the context when translated into Mongolian.

## References

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