

Translation of Culture-Specific Terms in the English Subtitles of the French Romantic Comedy Film *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*

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Translation from one language to another is as much a compromise between two lexicons as it is a negotiation between two cultures. Translating culture is no easy feat, but when this is done in the context of film, and the constraints of subtitling come into play, the difficulty of the process is exacerbated. This article analyzes the strategies which have been utilized to translate into English the French culture-specific terms in Jean-Pierre Jeunet's French romantic comedy *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*. In so doing, the study seeks to ascertain how foreign culture is represented in the film and whether the English-subtitled version of the original diminishes the experience or whether it adds another dimension to it. To this end, the study relies on Jan Pedersen's taxonomy of ECR transfer strategies as well as his classification of cultural domains. It is found that the English subtitle version's main aim was to render the movie comprehensible to the Anglophone viewer and less so to reflect French culture, a job left mainly to the cinematography and the music of the film. The translator manages nevertheless to maintain a level of cultural authenticity by using a specific translation strategy. The result is one which allows the non-French speaking viewer not only to comprehend a relatively complex dialogue and plot, but also to experience the French cultural magic intended to be conveyed.

Keywords: subtitle translation; culture; Pedersen; translation strategies; *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, there is an ever-increasing propensity for communication between people of different languages and cultures. As a result, translation is developing almost as rapidly as the technology which facilitates it.

Audio-visual translation (AVT) is a type of translation which is booming because of technology and consists of two major fields: dubbing and subtitling. This article will only be focusing on subtitles. Jorge Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael define subtitling as “a translation

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practice that consists of presenting a written text . . . that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards, and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack” (2007, 8). Subtitling is also a less costly type of translation and achieves similar results to dubbing (Kapsaskis 2008), so it is no wonder that this field of translation is flourishing.

Twenty-two years after the release of the popular French romantic comedy *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*, Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s movie continues to resonate with viewers throughout the world thanks to subtitling.¹ It tells the story of Amélie, a socially awkward waitress with a huge imagination who loves the simple pleasures of life in Paris. She lives in a small apartment in *Montmartre* and works as a waitress at a local café, *Café des Deux Moulins*. One day, she decides to make it her mission to improve the lives of the people with whom she comes into contact. Jeunet sets the story in the 1997 charming and magical Paris which has become synonymous with French culture, a city full of nostalgia² for early twentieth-century France (Oscherwitz 2011, 505). Consequently, the movie is brimming with French and Parisian cultural references, not only in the dialogue but also in the music and sound effects. David Martin-Jones, in an article in *Senses of Cinema*, Australia’s oldest film publication, stated that the film “[wears] its national [French] identity on its sleeve” (2012) and, for that reason, has appealed to audiences of mainstream movies as well as those of arthouse ones all over the world.

Translating culture-specific terms in this movie is, however, no easy feat as the challenge is exacerbated by the fact that the translation is done in the form of subtitles. In other types of translation, footnotes, in-text notes, or glosses can be used to explain difficult culture-specific terms. In subtitling, however, all these solutions are unavailable (Zojer 2011, 402). The Council of the European Union’s brief for the translation of subtitles contains strict rules and demands that “the text be concise [a maximum of two lines per subtitle and a maximum of 45 characters per line] and [that it] convey the intended meaning and flow naturally” (2021). Due to time constraints (only one line is to be used if the subtitle is displayed for 3 seconds or less,

¹ *Amélie* has been released with French, English, and Spanish subtitles.

² Jeunet left France in 1997 to live in California, a temporary career move. By the time he filmed *Amélie*, he had already returned home to *Montmartre* but he had obviously not forgotten how homesick he was when he was in the USA and went about creating a “fairy-tale Paris” which he had imagined, a city distant from reality (Chen 2023).

and two full lines if the subtitle is displayed for 3–6 seconds), the text may also not be “an exact transcription of the spoken dialogue.” It adds that “[s]implified wording and paraphrasing may be used to keep the text within the parameters . . . but [that] the core message must still be conveyed” (2021).

France represents less than one percent of the world’s population but has a huge influence in many domains, from culture, cuisine, literature, and fashion to the sciences. France’s rich history has left many beautiful landmarks that are enjoyed by tens of millions of foreign visitors every year; in fact, by more visitors than there are people in France. Most academic articles which analyze cultural translation use language pairs that are culturally very different. However, comparatively little is said about language pairs that have several cultural similarities and a source language (in this case French) the culture of which has been shared so openly with the world.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Taxonomies of Translation Strategies of Culture-Specific Terms

Since translation of culture-specific terms (CST) has always posed a problem for translators, several translation theorists and researchers have tried to remedy the situation by proposing taxonomies of translation strategies particularly created for cultural references: Mona Baker (1992), Teresa Tomaszewicz (1993), Javier Franco Aixelá (1996), Eirlys E. Davies (2003), Roberto Valdeón (2008), Jan Pedersen (2011), and Ana Fernández Guerra (2012), to name but a few.

2.2 Classification of Cultural Domains

Translating culture from the SL to the TL “implies replacing words, phrases and expressions specific to a given language and culture with suitable words, expressions and phrases from another language and culture” (Neshkovska and Kitanovska-Kimovska 2018). In order to do so as systematically and comprehensively as possible, many translation theorists and practitioners have produced typologies of the different types of CSTs: Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1977), Peter Newmark (1988), Henrik Gottlieb (2004), Jan Pedersen (2011), Ana Fernández Guerra (2012), etc.

2.3 Applied Studies on the Translation of Culture

As mentioned earlier, numerous applied studies have been made on subtitling translation of culture in many language pairs. For example, Gülhanım Ünsal's article entitled "Subtitle Translation: Cultural Components in the Translation of the Film *Qu'est-Ce Qu'on A Fait Au Bon Dieu?*" (2018) used Lawrence Venuti's domestication and foreignization theories to conclude that French idioms were translated into Turkish through domestication while cultural components were translated through foreignization. Furthermore, Nouredin Mohamed Abdelaal (2019) applied both Pedersen's typology (2011) of subtitling strategies and his (2017) quality assessment model to the CSTs in the American movie, *American Pie*, to conclude that most of Pedersen's translation strategies were utilized and that the general quality of the subtitle translation into Arabic was good. Ong Ee Lau et al.'s article "Translation of Chinese Culture Specific Items to English in the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*" (2022) concluded that Aixela's (1996) translation strategies could be used to simplify the translation process because the Chinese language is exceptionally challenging due to its numerous CSTs. In the same year, Abeer Alfaify and Sara Ramos Pinto's article "Cultural References in Films: An Audience Reception Study of Subtitling into Arabic" (2022) examined the impact of domestication and foreignization methods on Saudi-Arabian viewers. The findings of that study showed that domestication strategies were more helpful to foreign viewers than foreignization strategies. Monica Rosalia Subrata and Jumanto Jumanto's recent article (2023) entitled "Subtitling Strategies Used in Translating Cultural Words in the Subtitle of Disney Animation Movie: *Coco*" arrived at the conclusion that the transfer strategy is the most appropriate in a case where English and Spanish are the combined source languages and Indonesian is the target language. Faiz Akbar Leksananda and Beatrice Phoebe Gantari Manusu's (2023) is another very recent article with very useful conclusions when it comes to the balance between faithfulness and naturalness of the target translation in the English-Arabic language pair.

There is, however, a lack of applied cultural translation studies using the English-French language pair. Apart from Roger Baines's (2015) use of the pair to study subtitling restricted to taboo language and Ceri Pollard's (2019) research on aesthetic subtitling, no research has been done on the translation of culture-specific terms using French-English/English-French examples. This article addresses this lacuna by analyzing the translation of culture-specific terms in the English subtitles of the French film *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*.

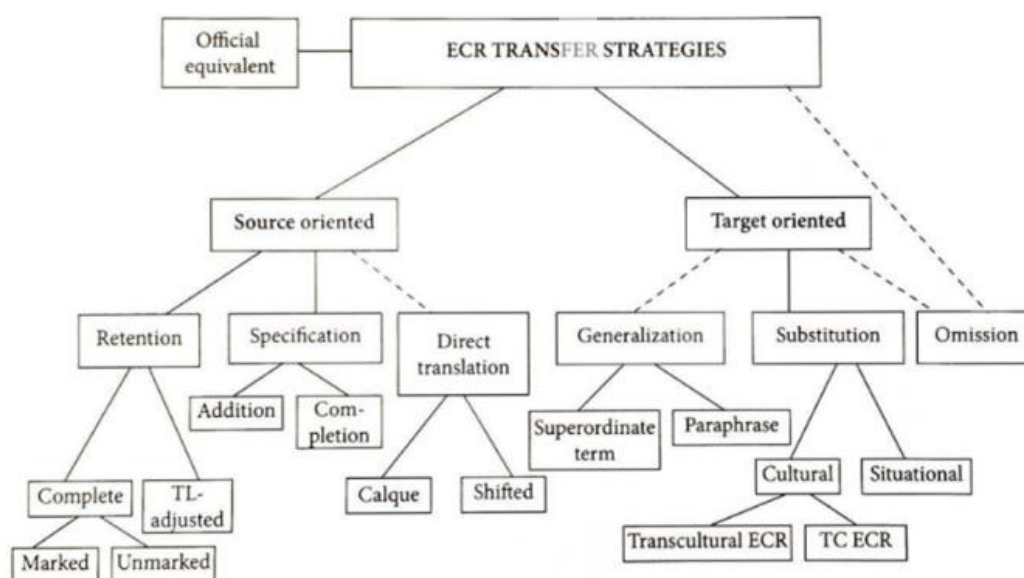
3. Research Objectives

This article aims to identify, classify, and analyze the strategies which have been utilized to translate the French culture-specific terms in the film's dialogue to the English subtitles in order to ascertain whether the English subtitle version of the film successfully reflects the French culture portrayed in the original French version. In other words, how did the subtitle translator³ decide to represent the foreign culture? Lastly, the article will attempt to evaluate whether watching the English subtitle version diminishes the experience or whether it adds another dimension to the experience.

4. Research Theory

In order to analyze the data contained in the dialogue and transcript of the above-mentioned film, the researcher has used Pedersen's taxonomy of ECR transfer strategies in his book entitled *Subtitling Norms for Television: An Exploration Focussing on Extralinguistic Cultural References* (2011, 78–97). The reason for this choice is that Pedersen's taxonomy is the most comprehensive classification of subtitle translation techniques to date.

Figure 1. Pedersen's taxonomy of ECR transfer strategies



³ The “subtitle translator plays an effective role as ‘cultural representative’ [and] decides how to represent another culture and which strategies to be followed” (Ünsal 2018, 76).

As can be seen from figure 1, the “official equivalent” (when the cultural reference in the source text is replaced with an established, ready-made translation) and the “omission” (when the cultural reference is not rendered at all) strategies are given a different status from the rest. They are considered as translation strategies but are not classified as either source-oriented or target-oriented. For this reason, they shall be analyzed separately at the conclusion of the analysis.

The groups of source-oriented strategies are as follows:

(i) “Retention” takes place when the cultural reference in the source language is transferred into the target language in an unchanged (complete retention) or slightly adapted (target language adjusted) form. Sometimes the copied culture-specific term/s in the source language are in quotation marks or italics and are then classified under the sub-strategy “Marked Complete Retention,” otherwise they are classified as “Unmarked.”

(ii) “Specification” refers to extra information which is not present in the source text being added to a cultural reference in its untranslated form, thus making the reference more specific. This strategy is further sub-divided into either “Completion” (a strategy which expands or explains what is implicit in the source text) or “Addition” (which provides more details about the cultural reference).

(iii) “Direct translation” is a strategy which can be equated to literal translation and is also divided into two subgroups. The first one is a “calque,” a word-for-word or morpheme-for-morpheme translation, and the resulting target text will probably sound odd to the audience. The second one is the “shifted” sub-strategy and refers to a freer translation in the target culture so that the audience is familiar with it.

The groups of target-oriented strategies include:

(i) “Generalization” (“Superordinate term” or “Paraphrase”) takes place when the cultural reference is rendered less specifically in the target text than in the source text.

(ii) “Substitution” (cultural or situational) occurs when the source cultural reference is replaced by another.

As far as the classification of cultural references is concerned, the researcher has utilized Pedersen’s (2011, 59–60) classification of cultural domains below because it is the most comprehensive list allowing for expansion, which was necessary in this study:

- Weights and measures
- Proper nouns (personal names, geographical names, institutional / brand names)
- Professional titles
- Food and beverages
- Literature
- Government
- Entertainment
- Education
- Sports
- Currency
- Technical material
- Other

5. Analysis

Due to space constraints, only some examples of culture-specific terms in the film are analyzed. A comparative table is nevertheless provided at the conclusion of the study to allow for more generalized conclusions.

5.1 Source-Oriented Strategies: Retention

5.1.1 Proper Names (Sub-category: Unmarked Complete Retention). A person's name is often associated with the language and culture of their heritage. This is most probably why, in the English subtitles, almost all the French character names in the film have been kept in their original form, even though the translator could have used the equivalent name in the English-speaking culture. For example, the first name "Amélie" could have been replaced by its English equivalent "Amelia," "Adrien" by "Adrian," and "Suzanne" by "Susan." The *umlaut* in the name "Raphaël" could have been removed to adapt to the spelling of the English name. Nino Quincampoix, Amélie's love interest, Dominique Bretodeau, the owner of the mystery box which she discovers in her apartment, Amandine, Amélie's mother, Raymond Dufayel, the artist, Collignon, the grocer, Lucien, his employee, and Georgette, Amélie's colleague, are all stereotypical French names which were kept in their original form so as not to seem like there

are English characters in a story set in Paris, which would be confusing to Anglophone viewers. They were also kept to preserve the French cultural element as much as possible in the English translation of the film. Haute cuisine is part of French culture, so it is no surprise that the original French gastronomical names are kept.

5.1.2 *Food Names (Sub-category: Unmarked Complete Retention)*. The examples below are typical expressions of French gastronomy, heard at the *Café des Deux Moulins*.

Table 1. Examples of food names in the film

SL = TL
1. <i>Crème brûlée</i>
2. <i>Sautées/sauté</i>
3. <i>Endives au gratin</i>

These examples were most likely chosen to reinforce the French and Parisian cultural aspect of the film. They were kept in the English translation since they are elements that are also used in the English-speaking world but are at the same time recognized as being of French origin. David Bellos argues that translations “can only retain an element of the original language to maintain a foreign aspect if that element is in fact not so foreign” (2013, 37). These three examples belong to the French language and culture, but they are now also part of the English vocabulary. They are understood as if they were English words while still having a French connotation, so the exotic aspect is naturally preserved.

The first two examples have equivalent English translations: “crème brûlée” could have been translated as “burnt cream” or “trinity cream,” and “sautéed” as “fried.” These translations are as well understood as the borrowings, but the latter are more often used in English than the English equivalents. In addition to this, the use of English equivalents would have removed some of the exotic character, while forcing a translation that was unnecessary due to the already present general knowledge of the borrowings.

In the case of example 3, the use of an equivalent would not have been possible, since it is the name of a French dish that has no equivalent in English.

5.1.3 *Currency (Sub-category: Unmarked Complete Retention)*. French currency has understandably also been kept in the source language in the English subtitles.

Table 2. Example of currency in the film

SL = TL
79 francs

The subtitle translator chose to keep the French currency of the time—the franc—instead of adapting it to English-speaking culture with the dollar or the pound. It was probably done for the same reasons as the borrowing of the original names of the characters: to keep the French cultural flavor, but also not to confuse the viewers with a mixture of cultural elements. If dollars instead of francs had been included, for example, viewers would not only have been confused using US currency in France, but the British, who use pounds, would have been even more confused (and vice versa).

5.1.4 *Locations (Sub-category: Unmarked Complete Retention)*. There are also several references to locations in the film.

Table 3. Examples of locations in the film

SL = TL
1. rue Mouffetard
2. rue Lecourbe
3. Café
4. Métro

In examples 1 and 2, instead of translating the word “rue” as “street,” it has been borrowed from the French to keep the local flavor of Paris. The film often insists on street names, and since it focuses on the culture and locations in Paris, the use of “street” instead of “rue” would have removed some of the exotic aspect. Examples 3 and 4, “café” and “métro” are borrowings that have now also been assimilated into the English language. The word “métro” could have been translated as “underground” and “café” as “coffee shop.” In the context of the metro and café in France, it was more appropriate to keep the French expressions since they are understood by the English-speaking viewers without any problem.

There is only one instance where a location name is not left in its original form.

5.2 Source-Oriented Strategies: Specification

No instances of the use of this strategy were found in the study.

5.3 Source-Oriented Strategies: Direct Translation

No examples of the use of this strategy were found in the study.

5.4 Target-Oriented Strategies: Generalization

5.4.1 Literature (Sub-category: Superordinate Term)

Table 4. Example of literature in the film

SL	TL
<i>Le Malade imaginaire</i>	Hypochondriac

The title above refers to Molière's play *Le Malade Imaginaire*, which tells the story of a hypochondriac. The average French speaker is familiar with this expression which is often used instead of the word "hypochodriaque" in French, but since it is an expression that belongs to the literary culture of France (the play being written by a French playwright and being one of the best known and studied in France). In the Anglophone world, however, the play is known as "The imaginary invalid," but as it is likely that the average English viewer will not be familiar with the play, the translator has used the general term "hypochondriac" to make it more accessible.

5.4.2 Brands (Sub-category: Superordinate Term). The four examples below are examples of brands specific to French-speaking countries.

Table 5. Examples of brands in the film

SL	TL
1. Tac-o-tac	Scratch card
2. Spéculoos	Ginger biscuits
3. TF1	TV
4. Catalogue des 3 suisses	Lingerie catalogue

Brand names 1 and 2 are often used instead of the name of the product in question; one would tend to call a scratch card a *tac-o-tac*, and traditional cinnamon cookies *spéculoos*. Apart from foreigners who know French culture, most English-speaking viewers would not understand these references. The translator therefore translated these elements by describing them or using a more general term. On the other hand, the *spéculoos*, in the second example, is a typically French, Dutch, and Belgian biscuit that is not really found outside of Europe. It is simply called *spéculoos* and has no other name, since it is the name of the brand, which is untranslatable. The English translation chosen is “ginger biscuits,” to give an equivalent of a popular biscuit that Anglophone viewers can understand. Yet *spéculoos* are not ginger cookies, but rather traditional cookies. They have a mixture of cinnamon taste with a slight ginger taste. The English subtitles have therefore focused on the closest taste in terms of comprehension for English-speaking viewers, but it is a loss of meaning in terms of total equivalence.

Example 3, *TF1*, has also been translated by the description of the concept in a general way. The translator could have used an equivalent of an English television channel, but this would have confused the viewers due to the mixture of cultures.

In the case of example 4, Mr. Collignon speaks of the “chapter of the nighties” in the *Catalogue des 3 Suisses*. By translating this to “lingerie catalogue,” the translator combined the two elements, that of the nighties and that of the catalogue, to give the general idea to the English-speaking public and also to use a shorter expression, which is better suited to the length criteria of the subtitles.

5.4.3 Footwear (Sub-category: Superordinate term).

Table 6. Example of footwear in the film

SL	TL
Baskets rouges	Red shoes

The example above includes the important detail: *baskets* because the sneakers are the only thing that Amélie sees of the character hidden behind the curtain of the photo booth. These are not just red shoes; the detail of the type of shoes is given. The English translation, however, does not include this detail; it simply says “shoes.” This is a loss since this translation does not give as much detail as in French. There are two ways to translate *baskets* into English:

“trainers,” which is the British translation, and “sneakers,” which is the American translation. It is possible that the translator decided not to include one of the two equivalents, precisely because they are specific to the countries in question, and the use of the word “trainers” would have Anglicized the translation just as “sneakers” would have Americanized it. This would have implied that the subtitles were intended for American or British viewers, while it is intended for English-speaking public in general. The use of the general word “shoes” therefore avoids this problem.

5.5 Target-Oriented Strategies: Substitution

5.5.1 Locations (Sub-category: Cultural).

Table 7. Example of location substitution in the film

SL	TL
Salle des pas perdus	Ticket hall

Salle des pas perdus refers to a large lobby. This expression is used to describe the main hall of a public building, such as a town hall or a train station, i.e., the largest room of a public building. In this case, it is the room where the ticket offices are located. The expression *salle des pas perdus* originated in French history at the time of Napoleon I.⁴ It is used by the French and not by Anglophones, who would not understand it. The translator is therefore content to translate it by its English name, “ticket hall.”

5.5.2 Expressions

Table 8. Examples of expressions in the film

SL	TL
1. Courants d'air	Howling gale
2. Les coups de foudre	True love

⁴ See “Salle des pas perdus,” *Linternaute*, accessed September 12, 2023, <https://www.linternaute.fr/expression/langue-francaise/13900/salle-des-pas-perdus/>.

The two examples above are the only two in this study where the translator has not shown a faithful translation of the French original text.

The term in example 1 is used when there is air or wind coming in from outside through a door or window. In the context of the film, the door of the *Café des Deux Moulins* is ajar, and Georgette feels the wind coming in. She asks her customers to close the door because there are *courants d'air*. The English expression that is used in the subtitles is “howling gale,” which is not an accurate translation. A “howling gale” in French would be *un vent à décorner les boeufs*, i.e., a violent wind. We see that it is not at all this kind of wind that is felt in the film, since it is only a slight draught.

Example 2, *les coups de foudre*, is a phrase that refers to a love that is born immediately after meeting someone. The translation used here is “true love,” which would be best translated as *le grand amour* and refers to the most intense love. These expressions do not have the same meaning as they are describing two very different types of love. The expression *les coups de foudre* would have been better translated by the equivalent English expression “Love at first sight,” which also refers to a love that is born immediately at the first sight of a person. This choice can perhaps be explained by the limit of the number of characters allowed in the subtitles; “true love” being shorter than “Love at first sight,” which shortens the translation and makes the text easier to read.

5.6 Target-Oriented Strategies: Official Equivalent

The translator does not miss an opportunity to make use of the ‘official equivalent’ strategy to translate the French culture-specific terms in the English subtitles. As mentioned earlier, as far as Pedersen is concerned, this strategy is in a category of its own because translation using an official equivalent “is bureaucratic rather than linguistic,” that is, “when [an equivalence] exists, it is highly unlikely that [one] would have a translation crisis point, as there is a pre-fabricated solution to the problem” (Pedersen 2005, 3). In other words, it remains the preferred strategy unless the translator has a specific reason to depart from the official equivalent like time and space constraints of subtitling or not wanting to depart from the source culture to offer the viewer an experience of foreign culture immersion.

5.6.1 *Proper Names*. A few examples of official equivalence are found in the translation of proper nouns. Several well-known names are used in the film.

Table 9. Examples of proper names in the film

SL	TL
1. Toutankhamon	Tutankhamun
2. Don Quichotte	Don Quixote
3. Le père Noël	Santa Claus
4. Blanche Neige	Snow White
5. Le Déjeuner des Canotiers	The Luncheon of the Boating Party

Examples 1 and 2, “Toutankhamon” and “Don Quixote,” have been phonetically translated, since they are iconic people, whose names are fixed in both languages. The spelling of the two names is simply different to cater for their pronunciation in both languages.

Le Père Noël, example 3, is a popular character whose name is also fixed. There are two well-known equivalents in Anglophone culture: “Father Christmas,” the British equivalent, and “Santa Claus,” the American equivalent. The name “Santa Claus” has overtaken the popularity of the name “Father Christmas,” which is considered by many as rather archaic and stilted.⁵ This is probably the reason why the translator chose to use this equivalent rather than “Father Christmas,” even though the latter is a literal translation of *Le Père Noël*.

Example 4, *Blanche Neige*, was translated by its only English equivalent, “Snow White.” These are both known proper names, as in the case of example 3, and cannot be changed since they are the fixed names of a popular fictional character.

Le Déjeuner des Canotiers, example 5, is the title of a famous 1881 painting by French impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir. This title has a fixed English equivalent, “The Luncheon of the Boating Party,” which is not a literal translation since the English translation of the word “canotier” is “boater.” The literal translation of the title of the painting would have been “The Luncheon of the Boaters,” a clumsy and less sophisticated translation than the title it was given.

⁵ See English Language & Usage Stack Exchange: <https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/142575/is-father-christmas-unwelcome-in-the-united-states>.

5.6.2 *Weights and Measures.* There are certain specifically French measures in the film, which were translated into their English equivalents.

Table 10. Examples of weights and measures in the film

SL	TL
1. 20/20	10/10
2. Hectopascals	Millibars

Example 1 refers to the marking system. In France, grades are out of 20 (especially in schools), while in Anglophone countries, they are out of 10. Georgette shouts “20/20!” sarcastically because Amélie spills drinks on her, and Georgette is shocked and angry. “20/20” implies something perfect, which is the opposite of what Georgette feels at the time of the incident. The translator therefore chose to give the equivalent “10/10” to keep the effect of “the perfect mark” and thus to keep Georgette’s sarcastic tone in the English text.

Example 2 refers to the unit of pressure. It is found in the last sentence of the film, where the narrator describes in detail the environment in which Amélie and Nino find themselves, including the atmospheric pressure of the precise moment. The Pascal is the unit of measurement that is used in France, but the Bar is used in many other countries. The translator probably chose to use the Bar instead of the Pascal so that most Anglophone viewers would better understand.

5.6.3 *Proverbs and Expressions.* The proverbs and expressions below are also examples of equivalence. This process refers to a “phraseological repertoire of idioms, clichés, proverbs, substantival or adjectival locutions” (Vinay and Darbelnet 1977, 52), i.e., it is a translation whose equivalence is fixed in both languages and are thus the expressions and proverbs that form an integral part of both cultures.

Table 11. Examples of proverbs and expressions in the film

SL	TL
1. Pierre qui roule n'amasse pas mousse	Rolling stone gathers no moss
2. Qui vole un œuf vole un bœuf	It's a sin to steal a pin
3. Bredouille	Empty-handed
4. En plein dans le mille	Bull's eye
5. Nom d'un chien	For Pete's sake
6. Pleurer comme une madeleine	Like Mary Magdalene

Examples 1 and 2 are proverbs that have been translated into their English equivalents. The English equivalent is very similar for the first proverb, while in the second, the idea is the same, but the structure is different, while keeping the same meaning.

Examples 3, 4, and 5 are everyday French expressions that have equivalents, as in the case of proverbs. For expression 3, *bredouille*, there is no other equivalent in English than the expression “empty-handed,” so it is the only possible translation for this context. As for example 4, there are several English equivalents for *en plein dans le mille*. “Right on target” and “spot-on,” however, do not convey the same level of enthusiasm as the French expression, and the other, “to hit the nail on the head,” has an inappropriate meaning in the context of the film scene which makes “Bull's eye” the best expression to use in this case. In the case of expression 5, two other English equivalents are most often used for *nom d'un chien*: “for goodness' sake” and “for heaven's sake.” It is likely that the translator used “for Pete's sake” because it is a shorter expression that better suits the length criteria of subtitles.

The last example is a more complex expression which includes the name of a biblical character. The expression *Pleurer comme une Madeleine* has its origin in the biblical account of Mary of the city of Magdalene (Mary Magdalene), who confessed her sins to Jesus by weeping at his feet, washing them with her tears, and wiping them with her hair (Luke 7:38). At the occasion of Jesus's resurrection, Mary Magdalene is also found crying outside the tomb because she thought that somebody had stolen Jesus's body (John 20:11). A person is said to “cry like a madeleine” when his/her crying is found to be excessive. The reason the character in the film is named Madeleine Wallace is that she cries a lot, due to her sadness and discomfort after the cheating and departure of her husband. His surname is Wallace; the Wallace fountains are found throughout Paris, and the use of this name as a surname again refers to water, and therefore to tears; she says she was “destined for tears.” In English, there is no such expression,

but the connection is still established when Madeleine introduces herself to Amélie. She says, “Like Mary Magdalene. She wept, right?” The translator has therefore managed to keep the biblical reference by giving the equivalent of Madeleine (Magdalene) and explaining that she was crying, which may not be explicit in the English language, which does not have an expression such as this one. As for her English surname, “Wells” was chosen to keep the equivalent of “Fountains,” referring to water, and thus, once again, to tears. The two surnames are very similar and begin with the same letter; it is therefore a very successful translation which reflects the translator’s level of skill and creativity.

5.6.4 *Food Names*. When it comes to food names, there is only one instance where it made sense to use the official equivalent.

Table 12. Example of a food name in the film

SL	TL
Sot-l’y-laisse	Oysters

The above example is a circular piece of “dark meat on the back of the chicken’s thigh, near the backbone” (Al-Hatlani 2023). “When the chicken is cooking, the juices move to the center of the body. This means that the oysters roast in the natural juices and don’t suffer much damage due to the heat. The oysters are therefore described as the best part of the chicken” (ibid.). “In French, chicken oysters are called *sot-l’y-laisse* which translates literally to ‘the part only a fool leaves behind’. The French expression literally means that ‘only a fool’ would set this piece aside without eating it” (ibid.). This expression is obviously specific to the French language and culture and has therefore been translated by its English equivalent “oysters,” which at least all gourmet Anglophone viewers will know.

The next two examples show that the equivalence strategy is utilized in the swearwords cultural domain.

5.6.5 Swearwords.

Table 13. Examples of swearwords in the film

SL	TL
1. Connerie	Bullshit
2. Foutaises	Crap

Example 1 takes place in a conversation between Gina and Joseph. He asks her whether “this type of cooing is prenuptial or post-coital,” which provokes her to respond with, “What about your bullshit, is it congenital?” which contains the same kind of provocation and includes the word “bullshit” to refer to his personality and what he says. She says it rudely because she is angry. This anger and rudeness are transferred to the English translation “bullshit,” which is the equivalent of *connerie* in terms of rudeness. The rude and familiar aspects could therefore be preserved.

Foutaises, example 2, is used by the “failed writer” Hipolito at the *Café des Deux Moulins*. He says: “I also write crap.” The swearword *foutaises* is used to say that he writes badly, and the translation of this word as “crap” expresses the negative feeling he has regarding the quality of his work while retaining the casual register, since it is a close equivalent of the French expression.

5.7 Target-Oriented Strategies: Omission

This strategy, as Pedersen points out, may be used for the correct or incorrect reasons: “a translator may choose omission responsibly, after rejecting all alternative strategies, or irresponsibly, to save him/herself the trouble of looking up something s/he does not know” (Leppihalme 1994, 93).

5.7.1 Location. There are some details that do not necessarily add much to the meaning and message of the original text. They contribute to the beauty of the text, but since they are not necessary for the understanding of the message, they can be excluded from subtitles. But these elements can also be deleted for other reasons. These are developed below.

Table 14. Example of location omission in the film

SL	TL
Il faisait le père Noël à la Samaritaine	He was a Santa Claus

This example is part of Nino's colleague's speech. She talks about him and describes what he did before he started collecting passport photos. She says that "il faisait le père Noël à la Samaritaine." English-speaking viewers will generally not know that *La Samaritaine* is a large department store in Paris, and they do not need to know since it is not an important part of the story. The only thing that matters is the fact that Nino was Santa Claus before working at Porno Video Palace, and where he worked is not crucial. It has therefore been removed from the translation.

5.7.2 *Swearwords*. Swearwords are not necessarily part of everyday language, but they are certainly part of colloquial language. Some swearwords are specific to the French language, and others have English equivalents.

Table 15. Example of swearword omission in the film

SL	TL
Putain	What... ?

In this example, Amélie is sabotaging her neighbor's television antenna while he is watching a football game. He gets angry and shouts: "Putain" because he is annoyed that the TV channel cuts itself off every time something interesting happens in the match (which is of course Amélie's fault as she does it on purpose). The word *putain* is a swear word that literally means "whore" or "slut." This means that a direct translation of the word is not an option because neither of the two words is a swearword in English. The closest equivalent in terms of meaning and vulgarity would be "fuck," which the translator has decided not to use. The character also shows that he is confused by what is happening. The translator therefore chose to show the character's confusion rather than his anger and, consequently, his vulgarity. It is therefore a successful translation, even though it could have been just as successful if equivalents were used.

6. Conclusion

Quantitative presentation of translation strategies for all cultural domains.

Table 16. Summary of translation strategies utilized in the film

Translation strategy	Quantity	Percentage
Retention	18	26%
Specification	0	0
Direct translation	0	0
Generalization	6	9%
Substitution	4	6%
Official equivalent	34	49%
Omission	7	10%
Total	69	100%

In the subtitle translation of the film *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* from source language French into target language English, the translation strategies were classified into the following cultural domains: proper names, weights and measures, proverbs and expressions, food and beverages, swearwords, currency, brand names, locations, literature, and footwear.

Based on the findings of this study, Pedersen's taxonomy of transfer strategies worked very well and could be applied to all the culture-specific terms in the film. His classification of cultural domains was also very useful as most of the domains required were listed. Only three others were added: locations, proverbs and expressions, and swearwords.

There are 69 instances of culture-specific terms in this film. It is clear from table 16 that the most common strategy adopted by the subtitle translator of this film was "official equivalent" at 49%. The translation of the culture-specific terms is therefore mainly target-oriented because all the target-oriented strategies utilized add up to a total of 74%.⁶ This means that only 26% were source-oriented. The translator has chosen a simplified method of translation, making use of a total of only five translation strategies: one for the source-oriented terms (retention) and four for the target-oriented terms (generalization, substitution, official equivalent, and omission).

The first research objective was to describe to what extent the subtitle translator represents the foreign culture in his/her translation. The soundtrack and the cinematography of

⁶ The researcher has classified both "official equivalent" and "omission" as target-oriented strategies as both of these have target-oriented characteristics.

this film could not reflect French culture any more magically and idealistically than it did. As a result, the English subtitler did not have to work too hard at making sure that French culture was reflected in every sentence. One can thus conclude from the above that the aim of the English subtitle translation was, above all, to be comprehensible to the Anglophone viewer. Authenticity was, however, still maintained with the use of the “retention” strategy. The subtitler retained all the film characters’ French names, French gastronomy which is known to most Anglophone viewers, French currency, and French locations but left the rest to the music and images to showcase.

The second objective was to evaluate whether watching the English subtitle version diminished or added another dimension to the experience. There is no doubt that the subtitled version added value to the experience. Very few Anglophones would have been able to fully experience the cultural masterpiece created by Jeunet if it had not been for the English subtitles. Although there will always be loss in translation, what is lost is made up for by enabling the viewers to experience a culture different from their own.

Even though these results are limited to one film in the French-English language pair, we believe that this study paves the way for more comprehensive future research in the field of translation of culture in subtitling. Researchers might want to focus on this language pair to ascertain the best balance between authenticity and comprehensibility of the source culture in the translation of the film’s subtitles for the target audience.

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