

## RENDERING VERSE ON SCREEN: SUBTITLING POETRY TRANSLATION IN *KELEBEĞİN RÜYASI*\*

*Şiiri Ekrana Taşımak:  
Kelebeğin Rüyası 'nda Şiir Çevirisinin Altyazısı*

Seda KUŞÇU ÖZBUDAK\*\*  
Aslı Özlem TARAKCIOĞLU\*\*\*

**ABSTRACT:** This study explores the subtitling of poetry in *Kelebeğin Rüyası* (The Butterfly's Dream, 2013), a Turkish film featuring Garip-style poetry as a core narrative element. Employing a comprehensive framework, the research analyzes how poetic form and meaning are conveyed in English subtitles through André Lefevere's poetry translation strategies, Öztürk Kasar and Tuna's Systematics of Designificative Tendencies, and Chaume's cinematographic signifying codes. The corpus includes 10 couplets and 4 poems. Findings reveal a dominant use of literal translation, attributed to the simple, unrhymed nature of Garip poetry. However, meaning shifts such as over-interpretation and omission were frequent, often aiming to clarify implicit content or accommodate audiovisual constraints. Full poems were visually and acoustically marked (e.g., italics, music), whereas most improvised couplets were not, diminishing their poetic visibility. Also, an interview with the production company highlighted the poet-director's influence on preserving poeticity in subtitles. The findings demonstrate that subtitling poetry requires careful negotiation between fidelity to form, meaning, multimodal context, and poetic awareness.

**Keywords:** Poetry Translation, Audiovisual Translation, Subtitling, Garip Movement, Turkish Film

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\*\* Asst. Prof. Dr., Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Translation and Interpreting, Ankara, seda.kuscuozbudak@hbv.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0003-3503-0958

\*\*\* Prof. Dr., Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Translation and Interpreting, Ankara, asli.tarakcioglu@hbv.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0001-8353-5526



**ÖZ:** Bu çalışma, Garip şiirini temel anlatı unsuru olarak kullanan bir Türk filmi olan Kelebeğin Rüyası'nda (2013) şiirlerin altyazı yoluyla çevrilmesini incelemektedir. Kapsamlı bir kuramsal çerçeveye dayanan araştırma, şiirsel biçim ve anlamın İngilizce altyazılarda nasıl aktarıldığını André Lefevere'in şiir çevirisi stratejileri, Öztürk Kasar ve Tuna'nın Anlam Bozucu Eğilimler Sistematığı ve Chaume'un sinematografik gösterge kodları aracılığıyla analiz etmektedir. Çalışmanın derlemi, 10 beyit ve 4 şiirden oluşmaktadır. Bulgular, Garip şiirinin sade ve kafiyesiz yapısı nedeniyle en çok kelimesi kelimesine çeviri stratejisinin tercih edildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bununla birlikte, örtük anlamları açıklamak veya görsel-ışitsel kısıtlamalara uyum sağlamak amacıyla aşırı yorumlama ve eksiltme gibi anlam kaymaları da sıkça görülmüştür. Şiirler genellikle görsel ve işitsel olarak (örneğin italik yazı, müzik) belirginleştirilirken, doğaçlama beyitlerin çoğunda bu tür işaretler yer almamış ve bu durum, onların şiirselliklerinin görünürlüğünü azaltmıştır. Ayrıca, yapım şirketiyle yapılan bir görüşme, şair-yönetmenin altyazılarda şiirseliğin korunmasına yönelik etkisini de ortaya koymuştur. Çalışma bulguları, şiir çevirisi altyazısının biçime, anlama, çok modlu bağlama sadakat ve şiirsel farkındalık arasında dikkatli bir denge kurmayı gerektirdiğini göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Şiir Çevirisi, Görsel-İşitsel Çeviri, Altyazı, Garip Hareketi, Türk Film

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### Introduction

Poetry is a literary form that involves distinctive stylistic elements such as rhyme, meter, and alliteration and captivates the reader with its unique word choice, which encompasses multiple meanings to which each reader can attach their own knowledge and feelings. As Aksan puts it, content, essence, and presentation of poetry elicit fascination and moving emotions (2006:8). Considering the intense stylistic character and expression of powerful feelings through a limited number of words, poetry translation is among the most challenging tasks within translation studies, as it necessitates maintaining equivalence of meaning while adapting poetic structures in the target language. With these characteristics, poetry translation has been the subject of a long-standing debate on translatability. Some scholars advocate that poetry is untranslatable, which initially reminds us of Robert Frost's famous saying, "Poetry is what gets lost in translation" (as cited in Gentzler, 2001:27). In a similar vein, Roman Jakobson believes that poetry is untranslatable by definition, and if it is translated, it is only an act of creative transposition (2000:118). J. C. Catford further expands the issue of linguistic and cultural untranslatability and believes that it is impossible "to build functionally relevant features of the situation into the contextual meaning of the target language text" (1965: 3-94). Some scholars touch on the task of the translator in this debate. Nida believes that, as it is impossible to preserve both form and meaning in poetry translation, translators typically favour meaning over form (1964). Benjamin (2000)

ascribes to the translator a task as noble as that of the poet, because he thinks that the translator also creates a poem. However, Bassnett (1998) considers the untranslatable label as an approach that sanctifies poetry, and when poetry is translated, it is reborn in another language. In the end, although opinions vary on translatability, it can be said that translating poetry walks a fine line between fidelity and creativity, requiring both linguistic and poetic sensitivity to bring it to life in another language.

Film translation, like poetry translation, is not only about textual elements. Audiovisual texts involve “the sheer variety of possible content and the multiple signifying codes operating simultaneously, that are involved in the production of significance” (Chaume 2004:12). Poetry and film are multimodal; poetry combines elements of form, such as rhyme, meter, and sound, with meaning, and film combines auditory, visual, and verbal elements with theme. In both cases, translation seems to be an act of finding a creative balance between these components. Both are embedded in their source cultural contexts, thus involving metaphors, symbols, and references that often pose translation challenges. Moreover, such elements are presented in quite compact forms in both, just a line in a poem or a few words in a film dialogue. At this point, it would be useful to narrow the subject to subtitle translation, which is one of the most frequently used methods of audiovisual translation in today's technology and the subject of this study. Simply defined, subtitling is “the translation of the spoken source language text of an audiovisual product, generally movie dialogues, into a written text, which is superimposed onto the image of the original product, usually at the bottom of the screen” (Luyken et al., 1991:31). Subtitling is the presentation of culture-intensive narratives consisting of concise and succinct expressions rather than lengthy texts, accompanied by audiovisual channels, within the constraints of time and space. This is where the shared aspects of poetry translation and subtitle translation become clear. The task of the translator in both is to preserve meaning and tone; there are poetic elements to adhere to in poetry, and screen time and character limits to consider in subtitling. Multimodality is certainly common to both. Poetry may involve rhyming of sounds, and subtitles are surely integrated with auditory and visual elements. Taken together, there is no doubt that translating poetry into subtitles is a multifaceted and challenging task.

Poetry is used in films as a tool to deepen the emotional impact of the story or to highlight character development. A number of highly successful films come to mind in this sense, for example, in the film titled *The Hours* (2002), references to T.S. Eliot's poetry are found; in *Four Weddings and a*

*Funeral* (1994), W. H. Auden's poem "Funeral Blues" is recited at the funeral scene, boosting the emotional weight of the scene; and in *Interstellar* (2014), "Do not go gentle into that good night" by Dylan Thomas is recited to express feelings of survival and hope. Poetry is sometimes integral to the film's theme and placed at the heart of the story. To illustrate, in *Il Postino* (The Postman) (1994), Pablo Neruda's poetry is the central motive for the main character's development, and *Bright Star* (2009) tells the life story of the poet John Keats, making his poetry central to the main theme. One of the first examples that comes to mind of poetry-themed films is, of course, *Dead Poets Society* (1989). A study on the film's subtitles was conducted by Yue and Chen (2024) to examine naturally poetic elements in film, such as metaphors, although the analysis of poetry translation in subtitling was not included. While it is possible to list films that use poetry as a cinematic element or place it at the center of the story, studies focusing on the translation of poems are very few in the literature. Macrea and Arias-Badia (2022) examined the subtitling of slam poetry for d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences, highlighted translation challenges, and offered solutions. Yuan (2023) investigated Chinese-to-English subtitling of Tang poetry in the movie titled *Chang An* within the framework of eco-translatology and concluded that informed choices can be made to transfer linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions of poetry translation, which enhance the global appeal and accessibility. Though these studies provide useful insights, they focus on specific aspects of the issue. With an emphasis on how poetic meaning is transformed within the multimodal constraints of subtitling, the current study adopts an integrated approach by combining structural, semantic, and cinematographic perspectives.

This paper investigates poetry translation in the English subtitling of the Turkish film *Kelebeğin Rüyası* (The Butterfly's Dream, 2013), which uses poetry as an integral narrative element in its period drama storyline. The film tells the true stories of young poets Muzaffer Tayyip Uslu and Rüştü Onur, alongside their mentor, Behçet Necatigil, in wartime Türkiye during the 1940s. The film features poems from the Garip movement, a crucial poetic movement in Turkish literature that promoted free verse and everyday language while rejecting traditional poetic elements, such as rhyme, meter, and ornate language. This poetic style presents both benefits and difficulties for translation, as modifications to poetic details may alter the intended message or tone. The film contains extensive literary and historical content, enabling researchers to analyze how subtitled poetry functions as a cultural

translator between languages and text formats, particularly when addressing lesser-known poets' historical trauma and socio-literary movements.

By working on this case study, answers are sought to the questions of how poetry translation is conveyed in subtitles and how cinematographic elements are effective during this transfer. In addition, the study incorporates data from an interview with the film's production company to gain a deeper understanding of the context in which subtitling decisions were made. The study is believed to contribute to the field by addressing a relatively underexplored area, poetry translation in audiovisual contexts, and by offering insights into the Turkish-English language pair, which has received limited attention in previous research.

### 1. Method

This research employs an interdisciplinary methodology which unites poetry translation strategies and cinematographic codes with institutional insights to investigate how poetic language gets adapted in subtitled films and how its aesthetic and cultural functions evolve during this process. To that end, a case study design was employed by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze poetry in *Kelebeğin Rüyası*. According to Creswell and Plano Clark, “the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone” (2007:5).

In the study, quantitative data were obtained from the frequencies of poetry translation strategies by Lefevere (1975) and Systematics of Designificative Tendencies by Öztürk-Kasar and Tuna (2017), which were analyzed along with Cinematographic Language by Chaume (2004).

Qualitative data were collected through a set of open-ended interview questions addressed to the BKM Film Department, the production company for the film, to explore institutional and creative factors influencing poetry translation in subtitles. The questions aimed to gain insight into the subtitling process, decision-making practices, and the role of different agents involved in production. The responses were collected via e-mail and analyzed descriptively. Rather than being treated as generalizable findings, the interview data were used here as supporting insights that help shed light on how and why certain translation decisions may have been made.

#### 1.1. Data Analysis

The poems were identified through a comparative process that involved watching the film with target language (TL) subtitles while consulting the

printed source language (SL) script. The dataset for the broader doctoral research comprises a larger corpus of 10 couplets and 11 poems identified throughout the film. In this article, a representative subset of 10 couplets and 4 poems is selected for analysis due to space limitations. The selection aims to present recurring translation strategies, meaning shifts, and multimodal instances found across the dataset. In addition, the selected poems include the opening, contemporary, and closing poems of the film, to ensure structural and thematic representativeness. It should also be noted that the frequency distributions presented in this study are based on the full dataset to offer a more systematic overview of translation tendencies. Following data collection, the texts were segmented to facilitate detailed analysis. The segmentation of the poems was a flexible process because the poems are written in free verse, with no fixed structural pattern. Some lines were treated as individual units, while others were grouped to form coherent analytical units.

#### 1.1.1. Poetry Translation Strategies

This study employs André Lefevere's (1975, 1992) seven poetry translation strategies to analyze both original and improvised poems in the film *Kelebeğin Rüyası*. Lefevere claims that poetry translation is a process of finding a middle ground between form and meaning, and that translators often choose to preserve rhyme and meter rather than syntactic or semantic accuracy, leading to "unsatisfactory renderings" (1975: 99). His model provides a systematic and descriptive way of evaluating poetic translations in terms of a range of stylistic and formal features. Lefevere's seven strategies are as follows (1975: 19-84):

1. Phonemic Translation: The source text is reproduced in the target language in terms of sound, but the meaning is lost.
2. Literal Translation: Word-for-word translation, which maintains semantic accuracy but disrupts syntax and style.
3. Metrical Translation: Preserving the original meter, which can result in padding or altering the meaning.
4. Poetry into Prose: Translating poetic texts into prose, which results in the loss of poetic form and a lessened aesthetic effect.
5. Rhyme Translation: Prioritizing rhyme in the target text, frequently requiring significant lexical and syntactic alterations.
6. Blank Verse Translation: Maintaining metrical rhythm without rhyme, a balance between structure and content.

7. Interpretation (Version and Imitation): From moderately faithful versions that preserve themes to freer imitations that recreate poems loosely inspired by the original.

As the film is poetic in character, where poetry is used to develop character and express emotion, Lefevere's strategies are appropriate to analyze the translation choices made in subtitles. They enable a close examination of how sound, rhythm, meaning and form are transferred or transformed in an intersemiotic and multilingual cinematic context.

#### **1.1.2. Systematics of Designificative Tendencies**

Alongside Lefevere's strategies, the research employs Öztürk Kasar and Tuna's (2017) Systematics of Designificative Tendencies, which draws from Jean-Claude Coquet's "Theory of Instances of Enunciation." The combination of Lefevere's formal strategies with designificative analysis provides a comprehensive evaluation of the transformation of poetic meaning during interlingual and intersemiotic translation processes. The model shows how translators operate between receiving the source text and generating the target text, while providing a systematic approach to studying meaning changes in translation, particularly in poetic translation, which must preserve both semantic content and stylistic features. The system presents nine designificative tendencies which display varying degrees of semantic deviation that group into three main signification fields. The peri-meaning field includes sliding of meaning (introducing unintended but possible meanings), alteration (replacing the original with a related but inaccurate meaning), and opposition (stating the opposite of what was intended). Under meaning includes over-interpretation (adding excessive explanation), darkening (making clear meanings ambiguous), and under-interpretation (providing insufficient meaning). Finally, meaninglessness encompasses more severe distortions: perversion (producing irrelevant meaning), destruction (removing meaning while leaving a trace), and wiping out (erasing meaning entirely). These tendencies help assess how the intended meaning of a source text may be reshaped in translation. The features of Garip poetry may naturally result in literal translation, yet Tuna (2017) explains that even literal approaches can produce semantic changes. Thus, the analysis of subtitled Garip-style poetry benefits from using Lefevere's structural model alongside the designificative framework to study meaning preservation, alteration, and loss.



### 1.1.3. Signifying Codes of Cinematographic Language

Chaume's signifying codes (2004) is a comprehensive framework for analyzing audiovisual translation, emphasizing that meaning in film emerges from the interplay of visual and acoustic elements beyond just language. These include the linguistic code, which involves translating written dialogue to sound spontaneous and natural; paralinguistic features like pauses or tone conveyed through punctuation and formatting; and musical or special effects codes that require differentiating song lyrics or poetic lines, often using italics. Sound arrangement codes signal off-screen voices, while iconographic and photographic codes address symbols, lighting, and visual cues that may or may not need translation depending on narrative relevance. Planning and mobility codes deal with shot types, character distance, and movement, which influence subtitling decisions. Graphic and syntactic codes guide how written genres and narrative flow are handled through translation. In this study, these signifying codes are used to trace the translator's choices in rendering poetry, shedding light on how audiovisual meaning is constructed and adapted across languages.

## 2. Analysis

### 2.1. Literal Translation

Literal translation stands as the dominant approach. The corpus contains couplets that were translated literally in nine out of ten instances. The short, seemingly simple couplets contain deep meanings that the poets convey through spontaneous verse in their everyday conversations. The poetic lines in the source language depend on intonation and figurative language for their meaning, but these cues may be lost on the target audience unless cinematographic elements, such as tone and visuals, provide support. The use of literal translation preserves meaning but sometimes makes couplets less meaningful and indistinguishable from regular dialogue, potentially rendering them invisible in the translated text. In this section, Table 1 shows seven examples of literal translations of couplets. Tables 2, 3, and 4 were selected from a total of 11 literally translated poems due to word limitations in the article. All poems and their translations can be found in the doctoral dissertation from which this article is derived.

|   | Turkish                                                                                                 | English                                                                    |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | O kadar beyazsınız ki<br>hanımefendi,<br>Gelinlik giydiğinizde hiçbir<br>şey giymemiş gibi olacaksınız. | Madam, your skin is so pale<br>That you'd look naked in a<br>wedding gown. |

|   |                                                                    |                                                                           |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | Gülüşünüz desem hanımefendi<br>Gülüşünüz haset veriyor<br>kuşlara  | Your laugh, madam<br>Your laugh is begrudged by<br>birds                  |
| 3 | Sen çok güzelsin<br>Sebepsiz de gülebilirsin.                      | You're so beautiful.<br>You can laugh for no reason<br>too.               |
| 4 | Yaşadığına sevinenler iyidir.<br>Ölmediğine sevinenler değil.      | Anyone glad to be alive is fine<br>Not those glad not to be dead.         |
| 5 | Güzel olan yaşadığımızdır<br>Bir gün öleceğimiz değil.             | What is beautiful is that we are<br>alive<br>Not that one day we will die |
| 6 | Bir güzele güzelliğini<br>hatırlatmak isterdim<br>Aynalardan evvel | I wish I could remind a beauty<br>of her beauty<br>Before mirrors spoke   |
| 7 | Saadet, biliyorsun ki<br>karanfilim,<br>Kaybedilenler arasındadır  | Happiness, as you know, my<br>carnation<br>Is a thing lost                |

**Table 1:** Literal Translations of Couplets*Source: Author's doctoral dissertation*

The analysis of seven couplets from the film reveals various translation strategies and designificative tendencies that affect how poetic meaning is transferred in subtitles. In the first couplet, the term "beyaz" (white) is rendered as "pale," altering the meaning, while an implicit expression is over-interpreted as "look naked." The couplet's poetic nature is not marked with italics despite its improvisational context. In the second couplet, the omission of the word "desem" (if I were to say) represents a wiping out of meaning, as it removes the speaker's tentative tone, while the term "haset vermek" is accurately rendered as "begrudge." The third couplet loses its rhyme in literal translation, blending into ordinary speech despite visual and acoustic cues suggesting its poetic nature; yet italics are absent again. The fourth and fifth couplets are more straightforwardly and accurately translated due to their simple language, but they, too, lack poetic marking, causing them to fade into regular dialogue. The sixth couplet shows a literal translation with added wording, making the implicit idea of "mirrors speaking" explicit, a case of over-interpretation, though this time, it is correctly subtitled in italics. The seventh couplet demonstrates both under- and over-interpretation: while the first line is literally translated, the second line's nuanced idea of lost happiness is reduced to "a thing lost," distorting its emotional depth. Overall, the analysis reveals that, while literal

translation is commonly used due to Garip poetry's accessible style, issues such as omission, ambiguity, and the lack of poetic formatting often obscure the poetic function and emotional tone in the target text.

| Line # | Turkish                                        | English                              |
|--------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1      | Gidiyorum bu şehirden...                       | I'm leaving this town.               |
| 2      | Rutubet ve kasvetin,                           | After years on the edge              |
| 3      | kömür ocaklarında<br>muhabbetin,               | Of damp and gloom                    |
| 4      | varlığın, yokluğun,                            | Of conversation in coal<br>mines     |
| 5      | büyük savaşın kıyısında<br>yaşadığım           | Of affluence and poverty             |
| 6      | senelerin ardından...                          | Of another world war                 |
| 7      | Gidiyorum.                                     | I'm finally leaving.                 |
| 8      | Önümde Rüştü ve<br>Muzaffer'in yazdıkları.     | I have before me the poems           |
| 9      | Sana onlardan kendine<br>acıyan şikayetnameler | Rüştü and Muzaffer wrote.            |
| 10     | gibi yazılmış mektupların<br>birinde           | I may have mentioned them            |
| 11     | belki bahsetmiş olmalıyım.                     | in one of my letters.                |
| 12     | Veyahut ben de herkes gibi                     | Or doubtless, like everyone<br>else, |
| 13     | onları tümünden unutmuş,                       | I'm guilty of the injustice          |
| 14     | düpedüz ayıp etmiş<br>olmalıyım.               | Of forgetting them<br>altogether.    |

**Table 2:** Literal Translation of the Opening Poem

*Source: Author's doctoral dissertation*

The opening poem of the film, read by the character Behçet Necatigil, acts as a narrative prelude. The first four lines are translated literally. However, in line five, “büyük savaş” (great war) is over-interpreted as “another world war.” Similarly, line six includes the added word “finally,” not present in the source. In line eight, “yazdıkları” (things written by Muzaffer and Rüştü) is rendered more specifically as “poems,” shifting the

meaning. Lines nine and ten “sana onlardan kendine acıyan şikayetnameler gibi yazılmış mektupların birinde bahsetmiş olmalıyım...” (I must have spoken of it to you in one of those letters, written like plaintive petitions of self-pity.) are condensed to “I may have mentioned them in one of my letters,” omitting the metaphor of self-pitying indictments, likely due to space constraints. In the final three lines, the phrase “ayıp etmek” is softened from “disgracing” to “being guilty of injustice.” Despite these shifts, the poem is italicized in the subtitles, and its delivery is supported by the film’s musical and visual codes.

| Line # | Turkish                                 | English                                      |
|--------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1      | Sana onları neden anlatmadım bilmiyorum | I don’t know why I didn’t tell you all these |
| 2      | Belki herkes kendi telaşına düştü       | Maybe everyone had their own worries         |
| 3      | Belki sen yoktun                        | Maybe you weren’t around                     |
| 4      | Belki bu mektup hiç yazılmadı           | Maybe this letter was never written          |
| 5      | Belki de bir kelebek                    | Maybe a butterfly                            |
| 6      | O kadar memnun ki rüyasından            | Was so happy dreaming                        |
| 7      | Hiç uyanmak istemiyor uykusundan        | That it didn’t want to wake from its sleep.  |

**Table 3:** Literal Translation of the Contemporary Poem

*Source: Author’s doctoral dissertation*

The poem in Table 3, written by the poet-screenwriter Yılmaz Erdoğan, is the only contemporary poem in the corpus. Although modern, it carries the stylistic echoes of Garip poetry. Structurally, it resembles a letter composed in verse form. Its poetic features are simple, relying on internal rhyme through the repetition of “belki” (maybe) and employing metaphorical imagery such as the butterfly and its dream, the central motif that inspired the film’s title. The first four lines of the poem are translated literally without any loss of meaning. To maintain semantic cohesion, the subtitler grouped the final three lines, which form a complete sentence, and translated them together. These lines evoke the central butterfly metaphor, representing the two young poets in the film, and describe a butterfly so content with its dream that it does not wish to wake as “Perhaps a butterfly is so delighted with its dream that it never wishes to awake from its sleep”. In translation,

this is slightly altered: the butterfly is said to be “happy about dreaming,” which reflects a sliding of the meaning. Furthermore, the tense shifts from present to past, altering the temporal nuance of the original. Despite these shifts, the poem is italicized and accompanied by musical cues, reinforcing its poetic function through cinematographic codes.

| Line # | Turkish                                | English                                  |
|--------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1      | Yılların çarmihında<br>vücudumu günler | As I lie on the cross of years           |
| 2      | Taşa tuttu.                            | The days stone my body                   |
| 3      | Çivilenip kaldı ufkumda,               | Nailed to my horizon                     |
| 4      | Mevsimler var, yağmur<br>bulutu.       | Seasons come and go,<br>rainclouds       |
| 5      | Kapalı kaynar tencerem<br>bilinmez,    | Who knows whether my lidded<br>pot boils |
| 6      | Et mi pişer, dert mi pişer.            | With meat or misery?                     |

**Table 4:** Literal Translation of the Closing Poem  
*Source: Author's doctoral dissertation*

The final poem, translated using a mostly literal strategy, is heard in a scene where Behçet Necatigil walks alone in the rain, accompanied by music. The poem is italicized, and the tone of voice highlights its poetic nature. The first and second lines are translated literally, with the added phrase “As I lie,” which is not present in the original and amounts to overinterpretation to clarify the context for viewers. A more significant transformation occurs in the fourth line: the original phrase “mevsimler var, yağmur bulutu” (there are seasons, rain clouds nailed to my horizon) is split and mistranslated, leading to an altered meaning. Additionally, the fifth and sixth lines, originally stating that it is unclear whether the closed pot is boiling meat or misery, are merged and made more explicit in translation. The subtitler uses “lidded pot” and adds a question mark, thus changing both form and tone.

To sum up, the Garip poetry movement predominates, favoring simple language, free verse, and themes centered on the everyday lives of working-class people. This simplicity offers an advantage to translators, as words often carry direct dictionary meanings. However, poetry inherently allows for layered meanings, and translators must remain alert to potential subtext.

As seen in the examples above, subtitlers often rely on literal translation for straightforward wording but sometimes over-interpret, under-interpret, omit, or shift meanings, common forms of transformation that risk narrowing the communicative value of the original. These compromises often stem from efforts to maintain accuracy or accommodate spatial constraints. Regarding cinematographic codes, the subtitler consistently italicized full poems when they appeared onscreen, supported by musical cues that marked their poetic function. However, couplets were only occasionally italicized, leading to inconsistent emphasis and diminished poetic visibility in those instances.

## 2.2. Rhymed Translation

Rhymed translation aims to reproduce the original rhyme in the target language, requiring both semantic accuracy and poetic creativity. In this study, only two examples of rhymed translation were found, reflecting the Garip movement's rejection of rhyme. These instances still follow a literal translation strategy at the semantic level.

|   | Turkish                                                      | English                                                                             |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Sen kafana takma<br>Muzaffer...<br>Senin savaşın sana yeter. | Never mind about that,<br>Muzaffer<br>Your own battle needs all your<br><b>care</b> |
| 2 | Tek yaptığımız tutanak<br>tutmak<br>Gerisi takdir-i mutlak   | All we know is to keep a <b>record</b><br>The rest is the will of the <b>Lord</b>   |

**Table 5:** Rhymed Translations of Couplets

*Source: Author's doctoral dissertation*

The first rhymed couplet, improvised during the announcement of the Second World War, preserves the original “-er” rhyme but alters meaning: “Do not burden yourself, Muzaffer...The war within you is burden enough” becomes “...needs all your care,” with “own” added for emphasis, leading to over-interpretation. Its lack of italics on the screen downplays its poetic nature. The second couplet challenges Lefevere's claim that rhyme and meaning cannot coexist (1975, 50), as the translator successfully retains both. In the second couplet, which literally translates as “All we do is keep the record; the rest lies in the absolute will of fate,” though “tek yaptığımız” becomes “all we know,” involving semantic shifts (“tek” to “all,” “do” to “know”), the context justifies the transformation. Again, the absence of

italics weakens visual marking, but the rhyme helps the couplet stand out in the scene.

| Line # | Turkish                          | English                                |
|--------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1      | Acıyı çağırma,                   | Don't invite misery                    |
| 2      | Bizde ondan çok var.             | We have plenty of it already.          |
| 3      | Sen şiirine bak,                 | Keep up your poetry,                   |
| 4      | Bizden bir şey olmayacağı belli. | We're obviously good for nothing else. |

**Table 6:** Interpretation Strategy in a Poem

*Source: Author's doctoral dissertation*

The original poem, shaped by the Garip movement, avoids rhyme and uses simple language to convey hardship. However, the subtitler introduced a rhyming pattern, creating a version of the poem with several meaning shifts. For example, “already” was added to rhyme with “misery,” and “sen şiirine bak” was altered to “keep up your poetry,” changing its tone. While some rhymed couplets exist in the corpus, most Garip poems reject rhyme. As Lefevere stresses, translators must consider time, place, and tradition, factors overlooked here in favor of rhyme (1975: 84).

### 2.3. Poetry into Prose Translation

Poetry into prose translation involves rendering a poetic text into prose, often resulting in the loss of its sense, communicative impact, and artistic form. While this strategy tends to blur poetic elements, Lefevere (1975: 42) argues that it can be more accurate and faithful to the source text than verse translation. Table 7 illustrates this approach through the prose rendering of a couplet.

|   | Turkish                                               | English                                                                                 |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Okuması yazması yoktu ama şiirin kıymetini biliyordu. | I'll be sure to mention you in a poem. For valuing poetry despite being unable to read. |

**Table 7:** Poetry into Prose Strategy in a Couplet

*Source: Author's doctoral dissertation.*

In this scene, Muzaffer improvises a couplet, “He was illiterate / But he appreciated poetry”, while speaking to a street seller. Though poetic in nature, the subtitler renders it as ordinary prose, ignoring its improvised verse form. As Lefevere notes, prose translators often add explanation but

risk losing poetic effect (1975:45). Here, with no visual or auditory cues to mark the couplet, the poetic tone is lost in translation. While the meaning is preserved, the verse's form and impact are diminished. Quotation marks or formatting could have helped signal its poetic nature to the viewer.

#### 2.4. Phonemic Translation

Phonemic Translation aims to reproduce the sound patterns of the source text in the target language. It is particularly challenging across linguistically distant pairs, such as Turkish and English. This strategy, as Lefevere notes, rarely achieves acceptable results (1975:48). In the current corpus, only one instance appears, a couplet by Behçet Necatigil, which is also discussed under rhymed translation.

| Line # | Turkish                      | English                                |
|--------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1      | Sen kafana takma<br>Muzaffer | Never mind about that<br>Muzaffer      |
| 2      | Senin savaşın sana yeter     | Your own battle needs all your<br>care |

**Table 8:** Phonemic Translation in a Couplet

*Source: Author's doctoral dissertation*

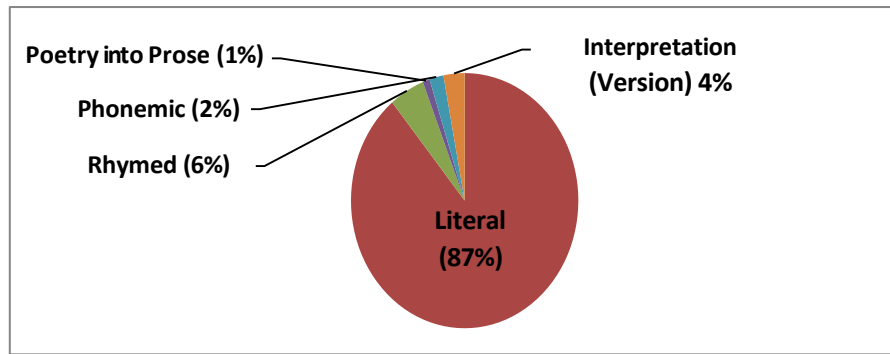
According to Lefevere, phonemic translation is hardly ever effective, except for cases like proper names (1975: 23). In the studied couplet, the name “Muzaffer” was repeated, which provided a natural phonemic match in the target language. Although “yeter” was translated as “care”, a semantic distortion, the rhyme “-er” was preserved, which is in line with Lefevere's view that this strategy is “a type of translation that is a fairly constant distortion of the sense of the source text” (p. 72). The lack of italics did not prevent the phonemic and poetic qualities of the translation from making the couplet stand out in the dialogue.

#### 3. Results and Discussion

The study examines the subtitling of poetry in a film where poetry functions as a central thematic and narrative element. The analysis is based on a corpus of 10 couplets and 4 poems. Lefevere's (1975) seven strategies for translating poetry served as the theoretical foundation, though metrical and blank verse translation were excluded due to the Garip movement's rejection of metrical schemes. The remaining five strategies, literal translation, phonemic translation, rhymed translation, poetry into prose, and interpretation, were applied. Notably, literal translation dominated, reflecting the plain, unembellished style of Garip poetry. It should also be noted that



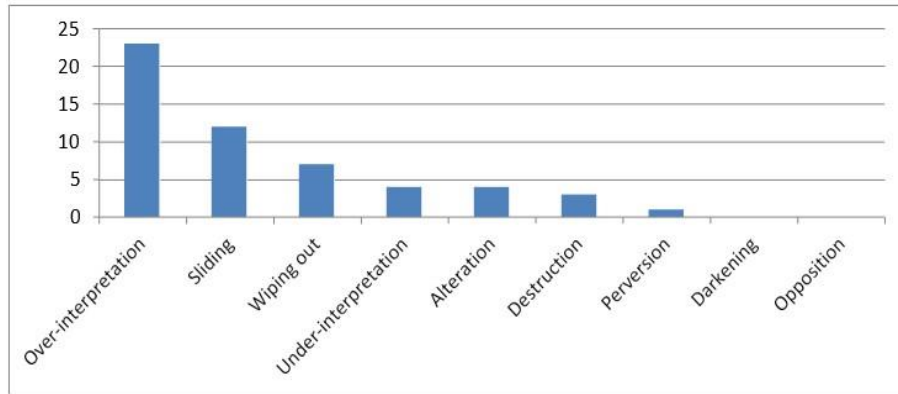
the percentages given in Figures 1 and 2 reflect the full corpus from the author's doctoral dissertation (10 couplets and 11 poems), not the reduced subset analyzed in this article. As seen in Figure 1, literal translation accounts for the majority of the strategies used, while the other strategies appear only marginally. This pattern indicates that the stylistic elements of the original poem and the limitations of subtitling, which prioritize directness and clarity above poetic creativity, have a significant influence on translation decisions.



**Figure 1:** Distribution of Poetry Translation Strategies

*Source: Author's doctoral dissertation*

Despite the dominance of literal translation, the study identifies numerous semantic transformations using the framework of Öztürk Kasar and Tuna's (2015) *Systematics of Designificative Tendencies*, which classifies distortions into meaning, peri-meaning, and meaningless categories. The most frequent distortion was over-interpretation (Figure 2), in which implicit meanings in the source were made explicit in the target. The sliding of meaning followed, yielding translations that offered an alternative but plausible reading. Less frequent were wiping out (omission), under-interpretation, alteration, destruction, and perversion, suggesting an overall carefulness in preserving the poetic message. These shifts may have been necessary to avoid the inadequacies of word-for-word translation, which can obscure intended poetic nuance. While analysts can only speculate about whether such choices were deliberate or incidental, in this case, the use of literal translation seems to align naturally with the nature of the source poetry. Supporting this, Tuna (2017) argues that the Garip movement free translators from concerns about preserving complex poetic devices.



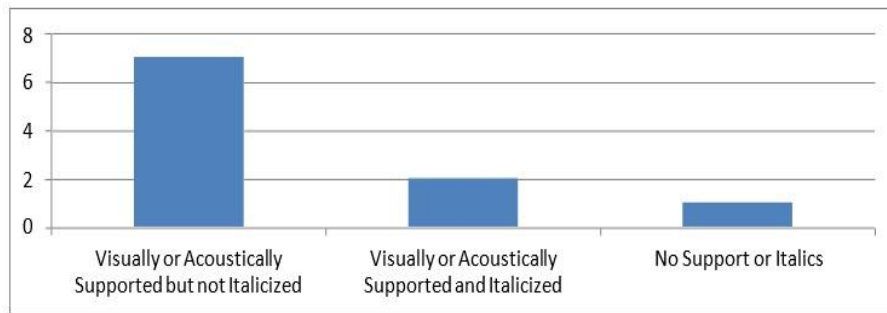
**Figure 2:** Distribution of Designificative Tendencies

*Source: Author's doctoral dissertation*

These shifts in meaning seem to be shaped by the subtitling constraints rather than emerging randomly. For example, over-interpretation frequently appears to serve as a means of making implicit meanings more understandable to the target audience, given the time and processing limitations of subtitles. Similarly, cases of sliding of meaning may be an attempt to balance clarity with interpretive flexibility. On the other hand, omissions (wiping out) are mostly associated with time and space constraints that necessitate the reduction of poetic content. When taken as a whole, these patterns imply that these shifts are context-dependent and influenced by the multimodal nature of audiovisual translation rather than simple distortions.

To contextualize these strategies within the audiovisual medium, the study draws on Chaume's (2004) model of signifying codes in cinematographic language. Poetry was analyzed according to visual (iconographic), auditory (musical), and paralinguistic (ortho-typographical) cues. It was seen that the subtitler consistently used italics and musical or vocal cues to distinguish full poems from the surrounding dialogue. This typographic and acoustic support ensured that poems stood out as distinct narrative elements. Unlike full poems, only two out of ten were italicized, even when verbally signalled within the dialogue. As seen in Figure 3, the majority of couplets are visually or acoustically supported but not italicized, while only a small number receive both typographic and audiovisual emphasis. This lack of typographical emphasis may have led the audience to overlook these poetic instances, particularly given the simple, unrhymed style of the Garip tradition. Since poetry functions as a key thematic and expressive device in the film, the omission of italics for couplets may

obscure their significance. Thus, the study concludes that italicizing translated poetry in subtitles is advisable to preserve its visibility and narrative function. Similarly, the study by Maresova (2013) underscores that the use of signifying codes increases the quality of translation. Thus, it is possible to view the regular application of these codes as a key strategy for preserving the multimodal integrity of poetic meaning in subtitling.



**Figure 3:** Distribution of Signifying Codes in Couplets

*Source: Author's doctoral dissertation*

Overall, the quantitative data of this study reveal a subtitling approach that leans heavily on literal translation due to the stylistic demands of the poetry, while selectively adapting or omitting elements based on cinematic cues and audience accessibility. The analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of how poetic content can be preserved, reshaped, or diminished in the subtitling of a film.

These findings are further supported by information gathered from the interview conducted with the production company's film department. The answers indicate that Yılmaz Erdoğan, the director and screenwriter, actively contributed to the translation process, especially by highlighting the need to preserve poeticity in subtitles. This influence seems to be consistent with the analysis's largely foreignizing tendencies. Furthermore, comments from international screenings indicate that the translation's fluency was well received. These observations highlight the wider effects of translation choices beyond the textual level, even if reception was not thoroughly examined in this study.

Overall, these findings highlight the complex relationship among poetic structure, meaning, and the technical constraints of subtitling, thereby establishing poetry translation as a highly challenging yet intriguing area within audiovisual translation.

### Conclusion

This study developed a methodological framework for poetry translation in subtitling, drawing on textual, contextual, and cinematographic perspectives in the relatively understudied Turkish-English language pair. The results indicate that although literal translation is prevalent due to the stylistic simplicity of Garip poetry, modifications in meaning, such as overinterpretation and omission, serve a practical purpose in adapting poetic material to the limitations of subtitling. The interview findings support the analysis by emphasizing the influence of key agents in determining translation choices, especially for preserving poetic elements in subtitles.

The single-case research design limits generalizability but establishes a basic framework for future audiovisual translation (AVT) studies using Turkish as the source language. It invites further inquiry into subtitling practices with broader corpora and diverse cultural and literary forms, including poetry, song lyrics, etc., while also encouraging reception-based research that considers the target audience's interpretation. Given the increasing international reach of Turkish films and series, expanding such research across different target languages and cultural contexts remains a promising direction for future scholarship.

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