

Subtitling in local original series of Netflix: Is “The Protector” protecting culture?¹

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Abstract

Recently online streaming platforms have facilitated the circulation of audiovisual products. Among these, Netflix reaches more than 130 million viewers around the world. In addition to a variety of American movies, TV shows, and documentaries, Netflix has started to offer local original series from Spain, Germany, Italy, and the U.K. In December 2018, Netflix released its first original series in Turkish entitled “The Protector”. Though Turkish soap operas have been drawing great interest around the world lately, a Turkish series produced for Netflix means reaching considerable number of viewers from different cultural backgrounds. The following descriptive study aims to examine English subtitles of “The Protector” in terms of cultural references to determine if the ‘source cultural tone’ is preserved or the meaning is brought closer to target culture for the sake of providing an audience friendly subtitling and whether the Timed Text Style Guide offered to subtitlers by Netflix affects the subtitling process. Results showed that cultural references were highly domesticated by the subtitler for the international audience and Timed Text Style Guide provided by Netflix was also seen to have a target language oriented approach while requiring improvements in certain translation choices. Future studies focusing on a comparative analysis of subtitles of this show in other languages and the subtitling of other local Netflix original series in other languages may provide a fruitful platform for the exchange on the issues discussed.

Keywords: Netflix, subtitling, cultural references, The Protector.

Netflix'in yerel orijinal dizilerinde alt yazı çevirisi: Hakan Muhafız kültürü muhafaza ediyor mu?

Öz

Son zamanlarda, çevrimiçi yayın platformları görsel işitsel yapımların dolaşımını kolaylaştırmaktadır. Bu platformlardan biri olan Netflix, dünyada 130 milyondan fazla izleyiciye ulaşmaktadır. Amerikan yapımı filmler, televizyon programları ve belgesellere ek olarak, Netflix, İspanya, Almanya, İtalya ve İngiltere'den yerel ve özgün diziler sunmaya başlamıştır. 2018 yılının Kasım ayında, Netflix ilk Türkçe özgün dizi olan “The Protector /Hakan Muhafız”ı yayınlamaya başlamıştır. Türk dizileri her ne kadar dünya çapında büyük ilgi görüyor olsa da, Netflix için üretilmiş bir Türk dizisi, tüm dünyada farklı kültürlere sahip önemli sayıda izleyiciye ulaşmak anlamına gelmektedir. Bu betimleyici çalışma, “The Protector/Hakan Muhafız”ın İngilizce altyazılarında kültürel öğelerin çevirisi açısından kaynak kültürün korunup korunmadığı ya da çeviride anlamın

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hedef kültüre doğru yakınlaştırılıp yakınlaştırılmadığını belirlemeyi ve Netflix tarafından altyazı çevirmenlerine önerilen Süreli Metin Biçimi Rehberi'nin çeviri sürecine etkisi olup olmadığını incelemektedir. Çalışmanın sonuçları kültürel öğelerin uluslararası izleyici için çevirmen tarafından büyük oranda yerleştirildiğini ve Netflix 'in Süreli Metin Biçimi Rehberi'nin de belirli çeviri kararları konusunda iyileştirmelere ihtiyacı olmasının yanı sıra hedef kültür odaklı bir yaklaşıma sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Gelecekte bu dizinin diğer dillerdeki altyazı çevirilerinin karşılaştırmalı analizine ve diğer yerel ve özgün Netflix dizilerinin başka dillerdeki altyazı çevirilerine odaklanacak çalışmalar, bu çalışmada bahsi geçen konulara dair fikir alışverişi için verimli bir platform sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Netflix, altyazı çevirisi, kültürel öğeler, Hakan Muhafız

Introduction

Recent developments in technology have enabled access to information on various platforms and this has naturally led to a renewed interest in entertainment tools. Being constrained to what traditional media is able to offer is not an issue anymore as people have numerous content to choose from thanks to online platforms such as video streaming websites, video on demand platforms, and mobile applications. In addition to wide range of contents available, these platforms provide for other personal preferences such as viewing time, place, and frequency of entertainment. As long as online access is provided, people can watch a selected content whenever and wherever they want, even engage in binge-watching. Such a personalized form of entertainment, as opposed to watching traditional TV broadcasting, extends the viewer's watching options and at the same time blurs the boundaries of local productions by paving the way for worldwide circulation. At this point, translation is required to introduce these productions to foreign audiences. Thus, translations of audiovisual products, whether subtitled or dubbed, are as vital as internet access to enjoy this personalized form of entertainment.

Netflix, which has become a prominent streaming platform, presents viewers with the opportunity to watch a number of non-English local films and series. As it provides a rich entertainment platform for individuals around the world with a large variety of subtitled and dubbed options, Netflix can be regarded as the meeting point of audiences and contents from different languages and cultures. Netflix guides the translations of contents, either previously screened films and TV series or Netflix Originals including local content, through a list of norms to be followed by the subtitlers. These norms are listed in the subtitling guidelines which are specifically designed for the languages offered on Netflix ranging from English to other less widely spoken languages. It is believed that when the translation is in the direction of a central and widely spoken language to a peripheral and less widely spoken one, culture is retained (Even-Zohar, 1990). This raises the question of what the tendency is when non-English products are translated into English, particularly on Netflix, where they are accessible to a remarkable number of viewers. Therefore, this paper investigates translators' and service providers' translational choices and tendencies in the case of Turkish to English subtitling of Netflix's first Turkish Original Series “The Protector” by investigating the translation procedures embraced in the transfer of cultural references.

Theoretical background

Among the online streaming services available today, Netflix is one of the leading platforms which is accessible on technological devices such as computers, smart TVs, tablets, and mobile phones through

monthly subscription. Netflix has 130 million viewers from 90 countries today and subscribers coming from a wide ranging background can watch numerous movies, TV shows, and documentaries subtitled or dubbed in their native languages or in other languages available in their region. In this regard, the success of this platform may be attributed to its rich content and the language options it offers. At the beginning, Netflix was only an online based DVD rental platform for users in the USA in 2007 (Jenner, 2014). Then Netflix facilitated the access to entertainment with instant watching, which was initially provided with a monthly subscription in 2010 (Cunningham & Silver, 2012).

In line with the aim of increasing the number of members, Netflix aimed to offer an ever expanding library of contents through the years. Thus, the company improved its business plan by starting to release "Netflix Original Series" in 2012 (Hastings & Wells, 2013). This also followed the release of non-English-language shows to the world in 2018 with the purpose of presenting diverse stories of local productions from Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, where in their own words great stories are created. In the same year, Netflix announced on its official website that more than 100 projects from 16 countries were going to be available on their platform. Local shows on Netflix are reported to have received great number of viewers around the world, to illustrate, German original show *Dark* was unexpectedly viewed in Chile, Bangladesh, and Canada (Netflix, 2018a). This clearly shows how Netflix brings diverse audiences in the world together and contributes to intercultural communication through local productions and their translations into several languages. Translation is the meeting point of source and target languages and cultures, and when coupled with audiovisual content, cultural representation is highly enriched in TV shows and movies. In this regard, Netflix can be utilized as a fertile source for investigating how cultures are represented in the translations of local productions when presented to the world.

Languages involve both words and concepts that may have counterparts in other languages and some culture specific items that may pose translation problems. According to Florin, culture specific items are "realia", which are words or combination of words which denote "objects and concepts characteristic of the way of life, the culture, the social, and historical development of one nation" (1993: 123). Mailhac (1996) views these items as "cultural references" from a broader point of view: "any reference to a cultural entity which, because of its distance from the target culture, is characterized by a sufficient degree of opacity from the point of view of the target reader to constitute a translation problem" (1996: 173). Chiaro even defines culture specific items as "translation hurdles" (2009) indicating that they pose challenging translation tasks. In this regard, analyzing the translation of Cultural References (CRs), such as idiomatic expressions, honorifics, address forms and materials of daily life can help researchers to descriptively investigate translational choices embraced by the subtitler.

Such an analysis may involve the investigation of translation norms which are textual norms involving translation decisions made by the translator and extra textual norms consisting of policies and strategies prescribed by the other agents of the translation process (Toury, 1995). Tendencies in textual norms can be revealed by identifying the strategies employed by the translator when transferring a cultural reference. The two edges of the spectrum of translational choices are referred to as domestication and foreignization by Venuti (1995). He states that if the translation sounds familiar to the target reader or audience and the cultural tone of the original is reduced, then it is a domesticated translation. On the other hand, if the translation carries the linguistic and cultural distinction of the original and "sends the reader abroad", then it is foreignized (1995:20).

Timed Text Style Guidelines (TTSGs) of Netflix (Netflix, 2018b), which is a list of guidelines consisting of technical (line format, timing, character limitation, font information, etc.) and lexical guidelines (abbreviations, character names, quotes, etc.) in 36 languages offered by Netflix to subtitlers, are an example of extra textual norms. In his recent article, Pedersen (2018) has investigated extra textual norms embraced by Netflix taking its TTSGs as the source and the researcher reveals local interlingual subtitling norms for streamed television. Pedersen has concluded that TTSGs are constantly developing through user feedback, leading to a transformation of this prescribed guideline into a localized list of norms. Pedersen suggests further investigation into how actual texts comply with this guideline. In other words, the examination of the conformity between extra textual norms and textual norms has been suggested as a fruitful field of study. Thus, the aim of this paper is to investigate, translation norms and their conformity using the English TTSGs by Netflix as the basis for extra textual norms and English subtitles of Turkey’s first Netflix Original Series *The Protector* as the source and basis for textual norms.

Literature review

A considerable number of researchers have investigated the position, operations, and progress of Netflix as a streaming platform. Netflix has received attention as a new media platform and its progress has been investigated through the lenses of both media and engineering studies. Also, researchers in audiovisual translation field utilized Netflix as a source for data collection (Abuarrah & Salhab, 2018; Arenilla, 2017; Gao, 2018; Ines, 2018; Leinonen, 2018; Orrego-Carmona & Szarkowska, 2018; Raivio, 2018; Reichmann, 2019).

There are relatively few studies on subtitling that directly refer to Netflix. Investigating subtitling on the Greek series *Sto Para 5*, Pasiarde (2018) has concluded that cultural references, specifically references of humor, are translatable, and suggests that Netflix adds this audiovisual product to its local library as it can prove entertaining even if it appeals to a small group of viewers. De Jong (2018) has conducted a comparative study on the retranslations of two films from English into Dutch in terms of VHS (video) and Netflix subtitles of extra linguistic cultural references and has demonstrated that subtitling on Netflix was more foreignizing, despite what the guideline suggests. Reinhoudt (2018) has analyzed English into Dutch subtitling of the series *Modern Family* in terms of humor by following Netflix’s TTSGs and found that character limitation imposed by this guideline resulted in choices leaning towards literal translation. A review of the literature reveals that so far research on subtitling on Netflix either tends to include investigation of interlingual subtitles from English into the researchers’ native language and Netflix is only considered in research as a ‘data collection platform’. To our knowledge, studies investigating English translations of the non-English shows focusing on the influence of Netflix’s TTSGs on the tendencies in interlingual subtitling have not been conducted as of yet. This is especially true for translation from Turkish into English.

Method

The current study adopted a quantitative case study research design. Case study design is followed when the aim of a study is to answer “how” and “why” questions without interfering and when the case is investigated along with contextual components (Yin, 2013). As the current study aims to analyze how culture is transferred into English in a Turkish TV Series, subtitling of Cultural References (CRs) was investigated in terms of the frequency of applied subtitling strategies along with subtitling guidelines offered by Netflix.

Case study: The Protector

The Protector (*Hakan Muhafız*, in Turkish) is the first Netflix Original Series from Turkey. The series consists of 10 episodes and the second season is expected to be released in April 2019. The lead actor Hakan is a young man working at his father's antique shop in the Grand Bazaar. He is unaware that he is a long awaited hero with mystical powers who is to save Istanbul from the threat of the Immortals. The story revolves around his present life and a historical mystery dating back to Ottoman times. The genre of the series can be defined as action-fantasy. *The Protector* has attracted more than 10 million viewers after its release on December 2018. Viewers are from Brazil, Mexico, Canada, Australia, France, and many Latin American and African countries including viewers from Turkey (Retrieved from: <https://www.ntv.com.tr/galeri/sanat/>).

Data collection procedures

In the study, Cultural References (CRs) were identified through a close examination of the first season of *The Protector* consisting of 10 episodes. Collected CRs were categorized in light of the previously offered categorizations in the field of Translation Studies and a corpus-deduced list of categories was developed.

Table 1. Categories of Cultural References

	Category	Specifications of the Category
1.	Address Forms	Kinship terms, terms of endearment, addressing used for intimates or acquaintances, nicknames, social inferiors or superiors and honorifics.
2.	Social Culture	Institutions and related concepts, references to work and leisure, professional titles.
3.	Greetings and Common Expressions	Conceptual expressions such as culture specific greetings, or expressions to be used in specific contexts.
4.	Material Culture	Objects of daily life such as clothing, food and drinks, and accessories.
5.	Idiomatic Expressions	Idioms, phrasal verbs, proverbs, clichés, colloquialisms, expressions, and sayings.
6.	Slang	Informal words and phrases of casual speech which are considered inappropriate in formal occasions.

Data analysis

Each CR within the corpus was categorized and analyzed in light of the subtitling strategies briefly explained on Table 2, and frequency of the strategies were calculated. This quantitative analysis revealed the tendencies in translator choices of the translated product in the context of domestication and foreignization.

Two instruments were utilized for data analysis: The first is subtitling strategies defined by Pedersen (2005) and English Timed Text Style Guide for subtitlers issued by Netflix (Netflix, 2018b). In Pedersen's words, generalization, substitution, and omission strategies, which make the source text more comprehensible and familiar for the audience, are target language oriented strategies, in other words domesticating strategies. On the other hand, retention, specification and direct translation

strategies either retain a CR, make a CR more specific, or translate it literally, thus protecting the cultural tone, are categorized as source language oriented strategies, in other words foreignizing strategies.

Table 2. Summary of subtitling strategies by Pedersen (2005)

	Subtitling Strategy	Explanation
1.	Official Equivalent	A pre-formed official decision for the translation of a CR; thus, it does not cause a translation crisis.
2.	Retention	Retaining a CR as it is, occasionally written in italics.
3.	Specification	Either through specification (specifying the meaning by adding a latent material of the CR) or addition (adding a latent material as part of sense or connotations of the CR).
4.	Direct Translation	Mostly used for names of companies or institutions. Nothing is added to or removed from the CR. Occurs as calque or shifts.
5.	Generalization	Rendering a specific CR with a more general meaning.
6.	Substitution	Either through cultural substitution (replacing the Source Language (SL) CR with a Target Language (TL) CR or paraphrase (Sense transfer or situational paraphrase).
7.	Omission	Removing and not translating the CR.

The second instrument of the data analysis is the English Timed Text Style Guide (Section II) prescribed by Netflix on its official website. Sections of this guide are frequently revised with user feedbacks (Netflix, 2018b). In this study, only parts of the guide (the latest version available as of 28 November 2018) that were relevant to explain the translation strategies used were referred to, which are Character Names, Accuracy of Content, Documentary/Unscripted, Foreign Dialogue, Italics, Numbers, Quotes, Songs, and Special Instructions.

Results and discussion

The results of the investigation showed that English subtitling of *The Protector* was mainly domesticated with considerable use of substitution strategy (71%) and omission strategy (16%). This may imply that the aim was to achieve a greater intelligibility for the international audience who watch the show with English subtitles. Previous studies in the literature which investigated subtitling from other less widely spoken languages into English also found that the translation was domesticated (Espindola & Vasconcellos, 2006; Barasoain, 2008; Yeni, 2014; Nodal, 2016; Kuscü-Ozbudak & Tarakcioglu, 2017; Alwan, 2011). Thus, it is possible to say that results of the present study add to the list of domesticated translations of less widely spoken languages when translated into English.

In terms of previous studies of translation practice on Netflix, results of the studies by De Jong (2018) and Reinhoudt (2018) examining English to Dutch translations on Netflix have shown that the tendency of the translation was foreignization. Considering Even-Zohar’s claim that a central culture is able to protect its culture when translated into a peripheral one (1990), translation on the opposite direction may result in domestication. In other words, when an AV product is translated into a dominant language, i.e. English, the original tone of the source culture may not be retained. Considering the commercial

concerns of rendering a local product appealing to the world audience, domestication seems to be the principle tendency on Netflix. In addition, the other dimension of the study as regards the potential impact of the Netflix guideline also demonstrates that Netflix embraces a domesticating approach.

Table 3. Analysis of CRs according to categories, applied strategies, and tendency

Category	Number Strategies	of Most Frequently used Strategies	Tendency
Address Forms	54	Substitution (79%) Omission (70%)	Domestication
Social Culture	7	Substitution (42,8%) Generalization (28,5%)	Domestication
Greetings and Common Expressions	13	Substitution (100%)	Domestication
Material Culture	3	Retention (75%) Specification (25%)	Foreignization
Idiomatic Expressions	42	Substitution (92,8%)	Domestication
Slang	20	Substitution (90%)	Domestication
Total	139	Substitution (71%) Omission (16%)	Domestication

As can be seen on Table 3, all the CRs in the Greetings and Common Expressions category were treated with substitution strategy which replaces CRs with “either a different ECR or some sort of paraphrase, which does not necessarily involve an ECR” (Pedersen, 2005). For instance, Turkish expression “Kolay gelsin” is generally used with the aim of wishing ease at work in any context where physical or other types of labor are used. In the series, this expression was rendered with its cultural substitution “Have a good/nice day”, which is also used with the same purpose. Another expression in the category “Eksik olma”, denoting contentedness, was translated as “Thank You”, which is a situational paraphrase that replaces a CR with a phrase “that fits the situation, regardless of the sense” (Pedersen, 2005). In this category, the subtitler employed the same strategy for each CR; therefore, it is possible to mention a consistent approach to translation.

Substitution strategy was also the most dominant strategy in the category of Address Forms. The most striking examples were observed when honorifics “Bey” and “Hanım”, which precede the name of the person addressed in Turkish, were transferred in the way they are used in the target language. To illustrate, “Faysal Bey” was translated as “Mr. Erdem”. Although the audience will eventually get to know that the character’s full name is “Faysal Erdem”, it must be confusing in the first episode to hear the name Faysal, but to read Mr. Erdem on the subtitles. Toury (1995) claims that obligatory shifts are inevitable in translation; however, considering the nature of subtitled audiovisual products, where original audial track and audial text appear synchronously, this creates confusion for the audience. Also, Pedersen (2005) claims that when cultural substitution as a form of substitution strategy is employed outside the “official domain” and used with proper names, an anomaly and credibility gap may occur.

In addition, substitution strategy was apparently not the determined translation strategy for honorifics. To illustrate, “Mazhar Bey” was once translated as “Mazhar” by omitting the honorific, then as “Mr. Dragusha”, though both situations require the use of honorific due to the status of the character. In this specific scene, the character referred to is one of the managers in the company and this necessitates the use of English honorific “Mr.” In other examples of address forms, a considerable number of omissions was observed. Certain references, which are actually kinship terms but commonly used after names for showing endearment and respect in Turkish, such as “Abla (Sister)”, “Baba (Father)”, “Abi (Brother)” or other terms of endearment such as “Kuzum (My dear/sweetie)”, “Kızım (My girl/daughter)”, “Oğlum (My boy/son)” were omitted. All these omitted references serve for showing respect or informing about the relationship between characters; thus, removing them leads to the loss of emotion or even the context. As can be seen, the subtitler opted for providing a cultural substitution in the TL or, conversely, removed CRs in this group. It may be that the subtitler did not have a predetermined translation strategy in mind as regards the address forms in Turkish. In the guideline it provides, Netflix only offers that proper names should not be translated unless approved translations are given. Thus, this may suggest that a specific guidance on the honorifics or a certain strategy to be employed is not provided by the guideline.

Other two categories where substitution strategy was used the most with a total of 92, 8% and 90% were the idiomatic expressions and slang categories, respectively. In idiomatic expressions, it was observed that certain expressions, which do not have a cultural counterpart in the TL, were substituted with situational paraphrases. In this form of substitution, every sense of the CR is completely replaced with a fitting phrase (Pedersen, 2005). For instance, the phrase “Kapalıçarşı çocuğuyuz” uttered by Hakan implies that he grew up in Kapalıçarşı (Grand Bazaar) where tradespeople are able to meet various kinds of people and he is well aware of human nature and cannot be fooled. This phrase was translated as “Don’t underestimate me”. However, the same phrase was translated in another scene as “I grew up in Grand Bazaar”, which is a use of direct translation strategy. This direct translation is far from offering guidance to the audience as regards the sense of the idiomatic usage. Also, “Tanrı misafiri” (God’s guest, when translated literally) denotes an unexpected guest who visits by oneself uninvitedly. This expression was clarified for the viewers and translated as “unexpected guest”. These choices of translation strategies completely decrease the cultural tone of the original. On the other hand, the subtitler opted for paraphrase with sense transfer form of substitution strategy, even when there was a cultural counterpart in English. Turkish idiom “Kılını bile kıpırdatmıyorsun” was translated as “Many thanks for not even bothering” though it could have been rendered with “not turn a hair” or “not lift a finger”. Also, an addition of “many thanks” was another strategy use for this CR. Another example, “Elin boş gitme”, which literally means “Do not go empty-handed”, was translated as “Get her something”, which also removes the idiomatic usage.

However, not all idiomatic expressions were reduced to sense or paraphrased according to the situation. There are other examples in this category where CRs were rendered with corresponding TL CRs, which is an act of cultural substitution, such as “Ağzındaki baklayı çıkarsana” as “Let the cat out of the bag”, “İstanbul’un çivisi çıktı” as “İstanbul is out of joint” or “Aşkın gözü kördür derler” as “They say love is blind”. This inconsistent preference of finding the equivalent or paraphrasing the sense of the idiomatic expression may also result from the insufficient guidance by Netflix as the only relevant guidance for such expressions is “Do not simplify or water down the original dialogue”, which was partly neglected by the subtitler.

In the slang category, CRs were highly domesticated with forms of substitution strategy. Netflix guideline suggests, "Slang and other dialectal features should not be changed" and "dialogue must never be censored", which denotes the use of cultural equivalents as much as possible. Conforming to the instruction, the subtitler translated "Hödük" as "Douchebag" and "Kurtardın paçayı" as "You saved your ass". However, the expression "Seni ektiğim için özür dilerim" denoting that "I apologize for flaking out on you" was situationally paraphrased as "I'm sorry about yesterday". "Niye geri vites yapıyorsun?" which means "Why are you bottling out?" was simply substituted with "What changed?". Also, "Bok yoluna harcamış gitmiş kendisini" which means "He got screwed up for nothing" was translated as "He died for nothing". As opposed to what the related guideline suggests for the translation of slang and dialectal features, the subtitler was seen to opt for either cultural substitution (4 out of 18 CRs) or paraphrasing (14 out of 18 CRs). Though both are forms of substitution strategy, the former results in translating a CR with a corresponding CR in the TL and the latter only reduces to sense. This result may again indicate that subtitler did not have a predetermined strategy choice for these kinds of CRs although the related guideline offers the retention of the slang.

Another domesticated category was social culture comprising of names of institutions and job titles. Substitution strategy was applied the most, for instance, "Olay yeri" (short version of Crime scene investigation unit) was rendered with its cultural counterpart "CSI team". In addition, addressing people with their professional titles is a common practice in Turkish, such as "Müdürüm" denoting "My manager" or "Memur Bey" denoting "Mr. Officer". These CRs were translated with the English honorific "Sir". As for names of places, Netflix guideline only offers that "Proper names, such as foreign locations or company names, should not be italicized" and "Use language-specific translations for historical/mythical characters". In line with the guidance, the subtitler translated "Şişli Etfal" (the name of a hospital in Istanbul) as "hospital" and "Belediye" (municipality) as "Public authorities", which are cases of generalization strategy. With the use of generalization strategy, a CR with a specific meaning is rendered with a more general meaning in the TL (Pedersen, 2005). Addition strategy was also observed when "Kılıç Ali Paşa" was translated as "Kılıç Ali Paşa Mosque", adding "mosque" as an explanation. It can be claimed that when the guideline does not provide detailed instruction, the subtitler opts for the domesticating tools to make the meaning clear.

The only category foreignized in the corpus studied was material culture consisting of food names. Traditional foods such as "Simit" (bagel-like bread covered with sesame seeds), "Ali Nazık" (a dish with eggplant puree with lamb stew on top), and "Karnıyarık" (a home-style dish with eggplant) remained the same and were italicized in line with the guideline. This instruction by Netflix is the only case where cultural tone was deliberately retained in the translation and even emphasized through italics.

To conclude, results regarding the calculated frequency of applied subtitling strategies and their conformity to lexical guidelines of Netflix show that Turkey's first Netflix Originals Series *The Protector* was majorly domesticated. Only 14 out of 139 CRs were translated in a source language oriented manner, namely foreignized. The tendency of the applied strategies and relevant lexical instructions of English Timed Text Style Guide employed in line with the aim of the study indicate that the subtitler translated Turkish CRs in compliance with the guideline, which offers an audience friendly, clear, and intelligible, namely a domesticated translation. On the other hand, this approach to translation inevitably resulted in a reduced tone of the culture at times.

Conclusion

Netflix, as one of the dominant streaming platforms today, aims to expand its library by including local content and, in doing so, paves the way for the translation practice of several languages and cultural interaction. Thus, Netflix can be utilized as a fruitful platform by the researchers of Translation and Cultural Studies. In the context of this study, English Timed Text Style Guideline issued by Netflix for subtitlers was examined and it was observed that the guideline favors an audience friendly subtitling, which leads to a domesticated translation. Considerable number of domesticating strategies in the translation of CRs detected in this study imply that the subtitler has a certain approach to translation as a whole, which is target language oriented. However, different strategies were seen to be employed for the same type of CRs, even in the second use of a certain CR in a different scene. This may indicate that the subtitler did not have a predetermined strategy plan to implement in the translation of certain CRs. Also, omission was the second most applied translation strategy in the corpus, though it is not actually an act of translating but removing a CR. Omitted references might have led to a loss in the context and audience might have lost track of the story or even had difficulty in understanding the relationships between the characters.

Subtitler’s conformity with the guideline can be said to be ensured considering the domesticated translation of the show. However, at some points, the subtitler was seen to drift away from the guideline. At this point it is important to emphasize that time and space constraints of subtitling might have forced the subtitler to make certain translation choices. In this study, such constraints and related technical instructions in the guideline were not investigated. Thus, future studies may involve both linguistic and technical instructions of the guideline to conduct a broader investigation of the subtitling practice on Netflix. As for the guideline of Netflix, it is possible to suggest that it needs to be improved in terms of elaborating more on language specific issues such as honorifics in Turkish, or instructions can be made clearer regarding the use of certain strategies in certain categories of CRs. This may both help subtitlers in their decision making and local productions in protecting their cultural tone. Also, it may help the audience explore different cultures and indulge in this foreign experience.

Future studies could expand our understanding on the effect of the Netflix’s guideline on the translations of the languages of other Netflix Originals productions. Furthermore, the guideline could also be entirely investigated by including technical instructions and interviews can be conducted with the decision makers of subtitling on Netflix in future studies to provide further insight into the issue.

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