

## **The Art of Paper Cutting: Strategies and Challenges in Chinese to English Subtitle Translation of Cultural Items**

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### ***Abstract***

Culture is a way of life and embodiment of civilizations that is expressed through a language. The transfer of culture is a significant aspect of audio-visual translation as translators deal with more than just the written texts on surface level. Translating culture-specific items on paper cutting is an intercultural communication. However, translating cultural items in subtitling could cause challenges and problems for translators during the translation process. In this qualitative study, the translation strategies and challenges were explored in the subtitling of a Chinese cultural documentary on the art of papercutting titled *The Life of Paper-cutting* (剪紙人生; Jiǎn zhǐ rén shēng) retrieved from YouTube. The original video was subtitled to identify the challenges in subtitling. The strategies and challenges were first identified and then the process was described. It was found that the most appropriate translation strategies were omission, direct transfer, equivalence, and adaptation. The analysis revealed that the challenges were mainly technical, cultural, and linguistic. The findings can be used as a guide to utilise the translation strategies effectively in subtitling translations of similar audio-visual products to tackle the challenges faced in the Chinese to English translation of culture-specific items.

**Keywords:** challenges, Chinese, English, strategies, subtitling, translation

## 1. Introduction

The art of paper-cutting (剪纸 *jiǎn zhǐ*) originated in China, dating back to the second century CE and following the invention of paper by Chinese inventor Cai Lun during the Han dynasty (Yang, 2012). As paper became more affordable, paper-cutting gained prominence and soon became one of the most significant types of Chinese folk-art types. Papercutting is a traditional folk art that dates to the sixth century. It is a classic Chinese folk-art form with a distinct aesthetic of expressive abstraction. To attain good visual enjoyment in traditional papercut, professionals or amateurs must have a fertile imagination and expert cutting skills (Liu et al., 2018). This Chinese art form comprises elaborate and hollow-style imagery that is designed to transmit cultural symbolism and infer favourable desires. Since the beginning of the craft, many kinds of paper cutting artwork types have grown throughout China (Huang, 2014). Paper-cut spread across China and became the most popular traditional folk art (Wang, 2013).

As one of the oldest folk arts in China, paper-cutting represents a significant part of Chinese culture. However, currently, it is considered an endangered art form. Even though papercuts remain a popular decoration used during special events such as weddings and the Chinese Lunar New Year, mostly the older generation is equipped with the skills and knowledge to produce them. Paper-cut culture is recognized by UNESCO as one of the cultural heritages and is part of the folk-art culture in China. Paper-cutting, as one of the traditional art forms, has its long history and unique artistic personality. The aesthetic taste, wisdom, and artistic features of the people in China are portrayed through a combination of decoration and practicality (Shen, et al., 2016).

To render such culture-specific items appropriately, the phonetic, semantic, lexical, kinetic, and visual constraints should be taken into account by the translators (Kuan, et al., 2019) as these are the main issues faced by translators when adjusting culture-specific items about synchrony (Huber, & Kairys, 2021). These show up in circumstances where there are culturally distinct items, their translations, and synchronisation that must be preserved. Translations are more than just a means of communication; they are also linked to intertextuality, psychological, and narrative competency, as well as being a cultural vector and facilitator of cross-cultural cooperation. It must be stated unequivocally that translation serves as a vector of cultural specificity as well as a trans-lingual vector of meaning (Gita, 2017). Because parts of one culture can be made available to another through translation, it is vital to all nations as it facilitates the transmission of information. A message is delivered across linguistic and cultural boundaries through translation, which is a communicative process (Ling

et al., 2019). New information inherent in the source language and culture is brought to the receptors, broadening their cultural horizons, making them aware that other people may have different practices symbols, and beliefs, and that other cultures should be acknowledged and respected (Al-Sofi, & Abouabdulqader, 2020).

In response to this ‘problem’ (Goh et al., 2022), a translation could function as a means of cultural preservation. The safeguarding of traditional culture in modern society can be achieved through cultural translation (Luo, & Chen, 2016). Cultural translation is a set of discourses that allows the bridging between cultures through crossing cultural borders (Bhabha, 2004).

For the present study, a documentary on the art of paper cutting was selected purposively. To contribute to the preservation of folk art, the documentary was translated from the source language (Chinese) to the target language (English). Certain culture-specific items (CSIs) identified in the documentary proved to be a challenge during the translation. The folk paper cutting conveys the content and nature of traditional culture with its language. The documentary depicts Zhuo Youbing’s passion for paper-cutting which reflects the joys and sadness of real life. She has been teaching paper cutting for nearly 2 decades. She made a few micro-lesson videos explaining how to cut paper in three dimensions, and the students’ feedback was positive. She exhibited her works and has been awarded many times and published two monographs. Since 1991 she has published hundreds of literary works in various newspapers and magazines. She is a member of the Chengdu Folk Artists Association, Chengdu Writers Association, Sichuan Folklore Society and Disabled person’s Federation. The documentary was specifically chosen for these reasons.

Furthermore, Audio-Visual Translation (AVT) was introduced after the establishment of the film industry. The inter-titles used in silent movies represented a form of subtitle during the silent film era (Georgakopoulou, 2012). When sound films were developed, two main types of AVT were introduced; subtitling and re-voicing. According to O’Connell (2007), subtitling acts as a supplement to the original soundtrack by attaching written text to the film. Re-voicing refers to the replacement of the original soundtrack with new ones (Georgakopoulou, 2012). For instance, revoicing methods include dubbing, voice-over, and free commentary.

In recent years, the audio-visual industry has emerged because of globalisation and the development of new and advanced technology. The growing demands for audio-visual products are affected by the development of digital technology as the optimisation of digital devices such as smartphones, tablets or laptops has created new forms of consumption of audio-visual products (Chaume, 2018). In addition, platforms like YouTube and Netflix have also

contributed to the diversity of audio-visual products. Consequently, new types of AVT other than subtitling and re-voicing were introduced to support the rising audio-visual industry. For example, subtitling, re-speaking, and sign language interpreting.

AVT provides a worldwide link to connect people and cultures. Cultures are successfully transmitted through audio-visual products with the aid of AVT by reducing cultural barriers to promoting understanding (Tee et al, 2022). Hence, translators are not merely dealing with written texts, they also hold the responsibility of mediating between cultures (Bedeker, & Feinauner, 2009) because every language is accompanied by its own culture (Kuleli, 2019; Yap & Amini, 2020).

Moreover, languages, behavioural patterns, and ideals are all examples of culture in translation. Educational institutions, arts, architecture, way of life, and philosophy are all examples of culture developed in society. Language and culture can be thought of as two distinct entities. In this regard, translation is a linguistic process that involves translating meaning from one language to another. Second, language is a component of culture that can be altered depending on the situation. Language does not only carry meaning, but it can be negotiated by readers in their cultural context (Ismailia, 2019).

Although AVT is an important factor in promoting cross-cultural communication, it is not without its fair share of challenges. One of the main challenges in AVT is the translating culture, specifically the rendering of CSIs in audio-visual products (Altahri, 2013). CSIs are the elements of a text associated with certain notions in the source culture that are unfamiliar in the culture of the target text (TT) receiver (Aixela, 1996). According to Daghighi and Hashemian (2016), CSIs may lead to difficulties when conveying intended meanings or expressions from one language to another. The translation of CSIs can be considered one of the greatest challenges in AVT due to the addition of visual and audio components as well as conventional problems faced in traditional translation. A translator is then appointed to the daunting task of producing accurate and acceptable translations. To produce better translations, awareness of the complexities of cultural differences is necessary (Daghighi, & Hashemian, 2016).

Many of the Chinese cultural festivals and paper-cuts festivals serve as a major platform for the spreading of the importance of paper-cutting to other countries. To convey the exact cultural meaning the artistic value of paper-cutting should be conveyed through gazing, pondering and appreciating its inherent value. However, the focus is usually on the denotative meaning, while the implied and the cultural meaning of the paper-cutting are often overlooked (Lv, 2018).

Therefore, this study aims to identify the strategies and challenges in the audio-visual translation of a cultural documentary from Chinese to English on paper cutting. Two research questions are proposed:

1. What strategies are used in the audio-visual translation of a cultural documentary from Chinese to English?
2. What are the challenges in the translation of a cultural documentary from Chinese to English?

## **2. Methodology**

The research design of the study is qualitative. A conceptual framework served as a guide throughout the translation process of analysing the documentary and the translation. Tomasziewicz (1993) presented eight subtitling techniques: a) Omission, when the cultural connection is completely left out; b) Literal Translation, when the answer in the target text closely resembles the original text; c) Borrowing, when words from the source text are employed in the target text; d) Equivalence, when the translation has the same meaning and function in the target culture; e) Adaptation when translating to the target language and culture to elicit comparable meanings as the original; f) Replacement of the cultural term with deictics, especially when accompanied with an on-screen gesture or a visual cue; g) Generalisation, referring to the neutralisation of the original; and h) Explication, when a paraphrase is used to explain a cultural concept.

Adaptation, according to Tomasziewicz, is a type of equivalence, whereas equivalence, refers to a translation with a similar meaning and function in the target culture. For Tomasziewicz's adaptation to conjure comparable connotations to the original, the translation must be tailored to the target language and culture, bringing the subtitles solidly to the target culture (Liu, 2012). Tomasziewicz's (2010) audio-visual translation techniques comprising omission, direct transfer, definitional extension and periphrasis, equivalence, and adaptation were employed in the present study. In addition, Cintas' (2012) subtitling guidelines on spatial, temporal, and linguistic considerations were applied to construct the formatted English subtitles appropriately. Then, the original video was edited to include the new subtitles to produce the TT.

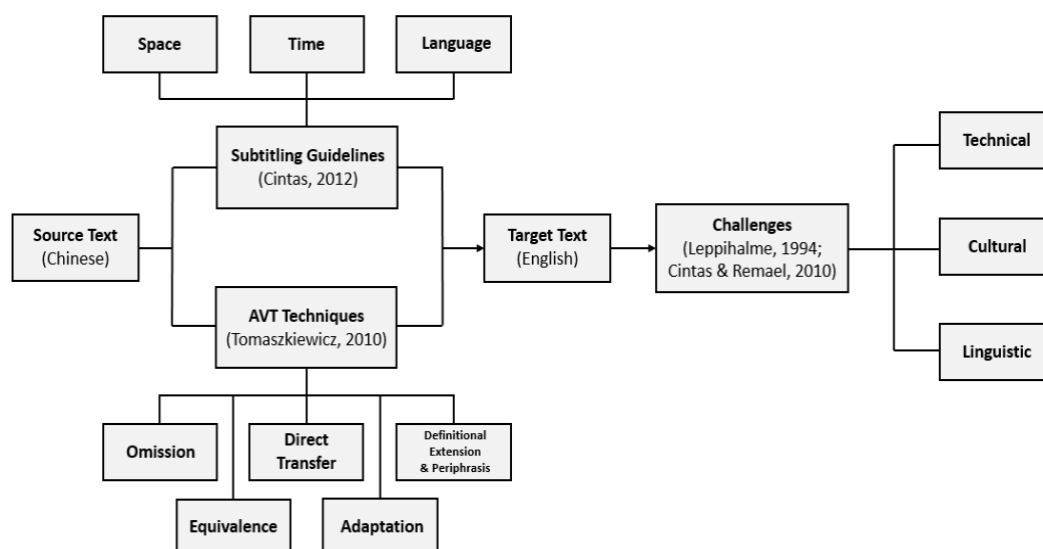


Figure 1: A proposed conceptual framework

Upon completion of the translation and subtitling process, the TT was analysed to distinguish and examine the challenges in the use of the translation techniques. The translator adopted some translation procedures outlined by Tomasziewicz. The documentary was watched and subtitled in English. The items were then analysed as to which strategies had been used to subtitle. The videos were analysed based on lip-syncing (match between sound and mouth movement). The identification of the challenges was based on Leppihalme (1994), and Cintas and Remael's (2010) categories of challenges in subtitling, i.e., technical, cultural, and linguistic challenges.

### 3. Data Analysis

The source text (ST) is a documentary titled *The Life of Paper-cutting* (剪纸人生; Jiǎn zhǐ rén shēng) retrieved from YouTube. A descriptive qualitative research methodology was adopted for this study. The documentary is about six minutes. The language used in the video was Chinese with subtitles. The story follows the life of a Chinese paper-cutting artist, Zhao Youbing (赵幼兵) from Sichuan, China, in her endeavour to promote and preserve the art form; highlighting the obstacles faced in her mission to safeguard this intangible cultural heritage of China. The expressed content is analysed as per the translation strategies identified. The translations were classified according to the categories identified by Tomasziewicz which was chosen as the basis of analysis. The differences in the linguistic dimensions and the cultural connotations between Chinese and English languages were analysed.

## 4. Results and Discussion

In this section, the results and the discussion are presented.

### 4.1 Strategies

During the translation and subtitling of the documentary, the researchers adopted Tomasziewicz's (2010) AVT techniques for the transfer of CSIs, omission, direct transfer, definitional extension and periphrasis, equivalence, and adaptation.

#### 4.1.1 Omission

In cases where redundancy is a recurring element in the source language, omission is employed to avoid awkwardness and confusion in the translation (Nida, 1964). Tomasziewicz (2010) defines omission as the elimination of cultural elements deemed to be irrelevant to the target audience. Sharma (2015) encourages the use of omission when there is an absence of an equivalent word in the target culture.

Table 1: An example of omission used in the study

Source Text	Target Text	Omitted Words
后来在我36岁本命年的时候	Later, when I turned 36	本命年

Table 1 shows an example of the use of omission in the translated text. When translated, the Noun phrase 本命年 (*běn mìng nián*) was omitted from the ST. In Chinese culture, the Chinese lunar calendar is followed in addition to the 12 Chinese Zodiacs. The zodiacs are based on a twelve-year cycle, where each year in the calendar corresponds to one of the twelve animal signs. Individuals born every year are matched with the zodiac of their birth year as well. Therefore, 本命年 refers to an age where a person's animal sign is parallel to the current year's zodiac. While the western astrological signs may be compared to the Chinese Zodiacs as equivalent, the association of the former with birth years are not as prevalent in the western culture. In addition, the core of the message in the ST is the revelation of a situation that occurred at the age of 36, not the fact that the age corresponded to the zodiac of the year. As a result, omission is applied to transfer the message in the TT.

### 4.1.2 Direct transfer

Direct transfer refers to the transfer of an item in the source culture to the target culture with minimal changes in form and meaning. It is closely linked with a literal translation, or word-for-word translation, where the ST is rendered into a grammatically correct and meaningful TT by adhering to the linguistic rules of the target language (Waliński, 2015).

Table 2: Examples of direct transfer used in the study

Source Text	Target Text
陕北的安塞剪纸	<i>Shanbei's Ansai</i> Papercutting
二仙桥学校	<i>ErXianQiao</i> School

Table 2 shows examples of the use of direct transfer for names of a region and a school in China mentioned in the documentary. As highlighted by Tomasziewicz (2010), direct transfer is best applied for “the names of the cities, regions and other administrative units, squares, streets, schools, statues, newspapers or even periodicals”. *Shanbei's Ansai* papercutting refers to a variant of the folk art found in the *Ansai* region of China while *ErXianQiao* School is the name of the institution that hired the main character as an art instructor to teach paper-cutting. Since there are no equivalent forms for the names of these locations in the English language, the direct transfer technique (James et al., 2018) was used to translate the names based on their Chinese pronunciations into their English forms literally (transliteration).

### 4.1.3 Definitional extension and periphrasis

Definitional extension refers to the inclusion of additional information on unrecognisable items from the source culture in the target culture or the replacement of an original term using multiple separate words (Tomasziewicz, 2010). However, it is noted that the procedure is regarded as a form of over-translation, and is thus considered a translation error. The procedure is useful to provide more information on certain CSIs to facilitate better understanding for the TT receivers, therefore, it was not applied in the translation. For example, the explanation for the previously mentioned phrasal noun 本命年 was excluded in favour of omitting the words completely due to maintaining the overall message during translation and space restrictions during the subtitling process. Therefore, definitional extension and periphrasis were deemed impractical here.



#### 4.1.4 Equivalence

The concept of equivalence has existed since the beginning of translational practices, occupying a central position in the field of translation studies (Panou, 2013). Equivalence exists when the function of discourse in the source and target language are identical (Delisle, et al., 1999). Therefore, equivalence indicates some form of “sameness” shared between the ST and the TT.

Table 3: Examples of equivalence used in the study

Source Text	Target Text
喜糖	wedding candy
世界非遗	intangible cultural heritage

Table 3 shows examples of equivalent forms of words between Chinese and English from the documentary. The word 喜糖 (*xǐ táng*) refers to the sweets given to guests at wedding parties. Therefore, the words “wedding candy” serve as an English equivalent in Chinese. Likewise, “intangible cultural heritage” is an established word in the English language which is the equivalent of 世界非遗 (*shì jiè fēi yí*) that refers to practices, representations and cultural spaces considered to be a part of a region’s cultural heritage.

#### 4.1.5 Adaptation

Adaptation refers to the substitution of an element in the source culture with another form in the target language that may differ in meaning (Tomaszkiewicz, 2010). Cultural translation is inextricably linked to adaptation. This strategy is typically employed when a culturally distinctive event occurs in one language and the translator is unable to locate an equivalent in the target culture (Sukmaningrum et al., 2022). The cultural issue in translation is inextricably linked to adaptation. This is a common strategy used by translators to bridge the gap between the source and destination cultures. Translators may eliminate some elements, adjust the setting, and remake them to a more suitable and accepted standard for the target culture during this procedure (Sukmaningrum et al., 2022).

In situations where the original meaning of the ST is lost after translation, translators adapt the core elements of the ST to fit into the target culture.

Table 4: Examples of adaptation used in the study

Source Text	Target Text
淡然一笑	smile lightly
我不为宠而欢不为苦而悲	I never get too emotional these days
我能知天文能晓人生	I've seen worse of what life has to offer

Table 4 shows examples of adaptation used during the process of translation. The Chinese phrases and sentences illustrated are forms of idioms in the Chinese language. However, the equivalent forms could not be identified in the English language. Therefore, the original text was adapted into simple sentences as their English counterparts to provide the intended meanings of idioms to the readers directly.

## 4.2 Challenges

The practice of translation is complex and is accompanied with different challenges. In AVT, the list of possible problems could be long (Karamitroglou, 2000). In this study, three main types of challenges were identified as technical, cultural, and linguistic challenges.

### 4.2.1 Technical Challenges

Technical challenges are more prevalent in AVT, especially in subtitling (Cintas & Remael, 2010). In subtitling, space must be considered to ensure the utmost quality of view. According to Khalaf (2016), technical problems are the most common form of challenges in the subtitling process, and they impose limitations on the translator's work that are not present when interpreting written texts, such as space, time, spotting, and screen location. According to Cintas (2012), the maximum characters per line for subtitles should be between 35 and 39 with two lines of words at most in a single frame or image. In addition, the font (e.g., font type, colour, size, and effect) used should be "appropriate". Too big subtitles will obstruct the view of the audience while poor choice of font colours (e.g., colours that blend into the background of the images) may result in visibility issues. Arial and Helvetica are the common font types used in professional subtitles (Cintas, 2012).

The challenges the translator is confronted with in terms of cultural aspects was highlighted by researchers. Because subtitling works with audio-visual materials, the disparities between cultural norms of different countries emerge by language and translating from one language to another. Humor is the most common type of cultural obstacle for subtitle

translators because in some TV shows, laughter is more crucial than the meaning. Also, taboo and cursing words are often culturally connected words that may be maintained in some subtitles and eliminated from others for a variety of reasons, such as the target culture's prohibition (bloody swear), and highly weighted expressions (Khalaf, 2016). The edited version of a frame from the documentary with English subtitles was produced. In line with Cintas' guidelines, the produced subtitle consisted of two lines of words without exceeding the maximum number of characters. Arial was the font selected for the subtitle.

Temporal considerations are another type of technical challenge in subtitling. According to Cintas (2012), the entrance of a subtitle must correspond to the moment the speaker starts speaking and should disappear from the screen as soon as the speaker stops speaking. Cintas (2012) states that AVT refers to translation practices in which the verbal dimension is only a part of the entire procedure, and the other semiotic layers like visual (images, written text, gestures) and auditory (music, noise, and dialogue) are what makes the translator's job challenging. Imprecise timing or improper synchronisation of subtitles with the utterances may affect the viewer's appreciation yet very few have gone beyond to consider its reception by the audience (Fuentes Luque, 2000). The technical challenges restrict a subtitler, for instance, when the content must be cut down due to space and temporal considerations. It is important to convey the intended meaning from ST to TT accurately and appropriately (Wong, et al., 2019). The challenges are also due to the numbers, figures and calculations involved in the technical translation. There could be a mixture of specialisations, including new terminology, and maintaining accuracy in such translations are time-consuming and tedious. Hence, translators must have the linguistic knowledge, e.g., in using the best choice of words, to present content that adheres to the technical requirements of subtitles.

#### **4.2.2 Cultural Challenges**

Traditions, cultures, beliefs, thoughts, or ideas can be preserved and protected when it is widely accepted and recognised by the international community (Zhang, 2014). To contribute to the preservation of cultures, documentaries help in promoting cultural exchanges and integrating the cultural, linguistic, and communicative dimensions with the support of AVT to appreciate the visual aspects of the documentary. On many levels, translating in culturally specific terminology is difficult. Subtitling, unlike other types of written translation, does not allow for immediate solutions to untranslatable concepts (Abdelaal, 2019). Footnotes, glosses, and a variety of other translation tactics can be used to explain some culture-bound terminology in

other types of translation. As a result of these criteria, there is a risk of misinterpretation. Cultural influences are thus another significant problem that translators encounter.

The cultural environment of the country whose language is being translated by the translators must be taken into consideration as people in some cultures communicate subtly, while others are more straightforward and explicit (Amini et al., 2022; Sathisha, 2020). Moreover, audio-visual translators often experience terminological problems when translating documentaries (Matamala, 2010). It could be concluded that a balance in function and equivalence is required in these contexts where cultural features are at the core of translation, particularly considering the users' expectations of the translations (Yaqubi et al., 2018). Many translators and scholars have agreed that, depending on the purpose of the translation (Daud et al., 2021) and a variety of other factors, the translator may prefer not to translate word for word. Keeping in mind the cultural differences between the source text and the target recipients may adapt the text to make it more comprehensible (Icöz, 2012). A translator must make thousands of judgments regarding selection and arrangement to fit another culture, a different language, a variety of editors and publishers, and, finally, a reading audience (Hu, 2003). In this study, the ST had an abundance of terminology (CSIs) in the register of Chinese art. Consequently, the translation of CSIs was challenging.

Table 5: Examples of cultural challenges found in the study

Source Text – Culture-specific Items	Target Text	Strategies
本命年	-	Omission
喜花	<i>XiHua</i>	Direct Transfer
喜糖	wedding candy	Equivalence
中原的动感	<i>ZhongYuan's zeal</i>	Equivalence
北方的华灵	Northern allure	Equivalence
南方的秀美	Southern elegance	Equivalence

Table 5 shows examples of cultural challenges from the documentary. The first CSI, 本命年, refers to an age where a person's animal sign is parallel to the current year's zodiac. The CSI was omitted due to the absence of the concept in the target culture as well as its insignificance in the overall intended message. Furthermore, 喜花 (*xǐ huā*) refers to the Chinese term for a paper-cut product. The Chinese pronunciation of 喜花 was transferred directly into English as *XiHua*. The strategy of omission was not applied here because the term is important

for delivering the meaning. Additionally, 喜糖 (*xǐ táng*), 中原的动感 (*zhōng yuán de dòng gǎn*), 北方的华灵 (*běi fāng de huá líng*) and 南方的秀美 (*nán fāng de xiù měi*) were translated using the strategy of equivalence.

The differences in cultural norms in different countries may increase the difficulty of translating cultural items from one language to another, especially in AVT (Toury, 1995). By adopting the AVT techniques listed by Tomaszekiewicz (2010), the CSIs were identified and translated. A study by Furgani (2016) stated that because of the conservative Islamic culture in the Arab world and censorship considerations, pose additional obstacles to translating subtitles from English to Arabic. While for the Chinese-English translation, because of the cultural disparities between Chinese and Western civilizations, there will be misunderstandings and even conflicts in the cultural information conveyed through the language as in different language settings, the same word has multiple meanings. Due to this polysemy, there is no one-to-one relationship between Chinese and English vocabulary, which is one of the key reasons why determining the meaning of words in Chinese-English translation is difficult. Furthermore, cultural differences cause semantic conflicts and inconsistencies in semantic associations, which have a significant impact on the translations (Zhang, 2021).

#### 4.2.3 Linguistic Challenges

Linguistic challenges in subtitling are the differences in the use of grammar, syntax, and lexicon between the SL and then TL (Cintas, & Remael, 2010).

Table 6: An example of linguistic challenge found in the study

Source Text	Target Text	Strategy
减少了我摆过地摊	reduced the chance to operate my street stall	Adaptation

Table 6 shows an example of a linguistic challenge. The word 地摊 (*dì tān*) was translated (i.e., adapted) into *street stall* in the TT. 地摊 and street stall are immobile booths that can be easily set up. However, 地摊 cannot be translated directly due to the difference in the lexicon. In Chinese, 地摊 refers to stalls operated by vendors by placing mats on the ground or floor to sell goods and services while the term “street stall” in English provides a more general idea of selling goods on the street where the goods may not necessarily be placed on a protective layer on the ground.

The common challenges in the previous studies are summarised as the non-standard first language input, not having internalised/intuitive grammar, current education paradigm of language teaching, lack of self-knowledge, metalinguistic awareness, and lack of sensitivity to language (Tan et al., 2021). In another research, Yap et al. (2018) on English translations of Malay short stories stated that the difficulties the researchers encountered in translating were the sentences that would be awkward in the target text if literally translated, polysemous terms, proper names, and titles. The first two issues are mostly caused by structural or semantic discrepancies, but the latter is primarily driven by cultural differences (Yap et al., 2018). Furthermore, the translation of onomatopoeias presents challenges for the translator owing to variations in both languages and cultures, which might occur in two stages: detection and transferring the expressive function.

Transferring some of the onomatopoeias is challenging because of no corresponding meaning in the target text. In some cases, translators do not perceive the item as onomatopoeias and ignore the transference of their expressive roles. In other words, translators either translate the onomatopoeias into non-onomatopoeias or used non-translation to avoid translating them (Yaqubi et al., 2018). In an English to Chinese translation of song lyrics by Ng and Amini (2019), most of the difficulties encountered throughout the translation were connected to lexical and syntactic structures, generating a ‘faithful’ translation in terms of form, and meaning, presenting the message fluently, and having a logically unified translation. It is also difficult to express cultural terminology in the Chinese translation while maintaining completeness, which resulted in omissions or additions (Ng & Amini, 2019).

## **5. Conclusion**

In this study, Tomasziewicz’s (2010) audio-visual translation techniques were employed in the AVT of a selected cultural documentary from Chinese to English. The most suitable translation strategies were identified as omission, direct transfer, equivalence, and adaptation. Definitional extension and periphrasis were excluded due to subtitling considerations and to avoid over-translation. All CSI items were analysed in terms of their source or target culture orientation. Retention was the most common strategy for the CSIs in subtitling.

The main challenges identified in the AVT were technical, cultural, and linguistic challenges. The findings of the study correspond to a similar review of challenges and strategies in subtitling by Khalaf (2016). Audio-visual translators deal with more than just written texts, but also the visual and audio aspects of audio-visual products, leading to an increase of

restrictions and complications during the translation process. Therefore, an audio-visual translator should master the knowledge of the source culture and the target culture in addition to their respective languages as well as achieve competence and proficiency in subtitle translation. The linguistic challenges that the translators face in terms of linguistic choice in subtitling is not random. The characters in audio-visual programmes or films convey certain effects through their grammar, syntax, lexicon, annotation, and other means that carry connotative as well as denotative meanings. For example, accent and pronunciation, as well as grammatical errors in dialogue that must be corrected in the subtitles, necessitate specialised knowledge and skill from the subtitler and translator, (Khalaf, 2016).

However, there are a variety of approaches to dealing with subtitling issues. The findings of this research may serve as a guide to assist the efforts of documentary translators and cultural translators in translating CSIs from Chinese to English. Considering the limitation of the present study, the strategies and techniques explored may also be applied to the translation of other languages. In addition, the technical aspects of subtitling discussed in this study contribute to the work of audio-visual translators in the film industry. The guidelines may be useful in the production of quality subtitles for any audio-visual products. The theoretical framework adopted enumerates the steps to analyse the words and expressions that have a certain cultural connotation. The conclusions about the macro-strategies and micro-strategies could have some theoretical implications. Micro-strategies deal with translation problems on the word and sentence levels, whereas macro-strategies constitute the overarching framework of the translation. The macro-strategies could assist the translator in determining the best way to translate the source text. In the present study, the micro-level strategies were used for linguistic-oriented items and the macro-level were used for items that include linguistic, cultural, and social factors.

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