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Reference:

Jankowska Anna.- Using annotated pivot templates to transfer culture specific references in audio description : translators' performance, strategies, and attitudes
Perspectives : studies in translatology - ISSN 1747-6623 - 32:5(2024), p. 780-796
Full text (Publisher's DOI): <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2023.2281972>
To cite this reference: <https://hdl.handle.net/10067/2010120151162165141>

Using Annotated Pivot Templates to Transfer Culture Specific References in Audio Description: Translators' Performance, Strategies, and Attitudes

This article investigates the use of pivot templates in audio description (AD), focusing on AD template translators' performance, strategies, and attitudes. Data was collected in a study where six participants, five audiovisual translators, and one describer, were asked to translate audio descriptions for five Spanish clips from a pivot English template into Polish. Following common subtitling practice, the templates were time-coded, and culture specific references (CSR) were not localized but explained in annotations. Three data types were collected: screen recordings, scripts translated into Polish, and post-task interviews. Quantitative analysis of the scripts revealed that the translated scripts retained most CSRs and, on average, transferred 94% of the CSRs from the pivot template and that translators rendered them via tactics known from subtitling. Thematic analysis of the interviews revealed that when deciding about a given tactic, translators took their own and the audience's frame of reference into account. They also considered how helpful the tactic might be in visualizing culture specific references. While the participants found CSRs to be the most challenging part of the task, they considered the task feasible mainly because of the identification and annotations, which they thought to be the main advantage of pivot templates.

Keywords: audio description; pivot templates; culture specific references, media accessibility, audio description translation

1. Introduction

Audio description (AD) is a translation-based media accessibility service that renders the content of (audio)visual media through a verbal description (Greco & Jankowska, 2020). In many cases – e.g., films, series, online multimedia, museums, etc. – AD is delivered to the target audience as a pre-recorded audio track. However, a script must be prepared before the audio is recorded. Two audio description script production workflows exist: AD-writing and AD-translation (López Vera, 2006). In the first, describers choose the relevant visual elements and turn them into text. In the second, translators or describers-translators receive an AD written in one language and translate and adapt it to another. Drawing on the classical Jakobsen's (1959) tripartite division of translation, AD-writing is usually defined as intersemiotic translation, which translates key audio-nonverbal, visual-verbal, and visual-nonverbal signs into audio-verbal signs (Greco & Jankowska, 2020). However, AD can also be classified as interlingual translation when created through AD-translation. In this sense, AD

is also a pivot or indirect translation since the translated source text is an intermediate translation (Jankowska, 2015; Remael & Vercauteren, 2010).

AD-translation was suggested as an alternative AD script production workflow very early on (López Vera, 2006; Matamala, 2006; Orero, 2007). Despite initial criticism (Hyks, 2005), AD-translation was embraced by the industry. Still, it has been mainly used to provide AD and/or train describers in countries with emerging access services where professional describers are more challenging to find (Georgakopoulou, 2009; Remael & Vercauteren, 2010; S. Yousaf, personal communication, November 2, 2016, and November 22, 2018;). Nonetheless, researchers point out that AD-translation could be a feasible solution to many of the industry's shortcomings beyond the mere shortage of trained professionals. Proposed benefits of AD-translation include increased availability of audio described content, reduced costs and time required to produce scripts, maintaining quality, and avoidance of cultural loss (Jankowska, 2015; Jankowska et al., 2017; López Vera, 2006; Matamala, 2006; Oncins, 2022; Orero, 2007; Remael & Vercauteren, 2010). So far, only some of these possible benefits have been researched, i.e., time consumption, overall feasibility, and acceptance by the target audiences (Fernández-Torné & Matamala, 2016; Herrador Molina, 2006; Jankowska, 2015; López Vera, 2006; Remael & Vercauteren, 2010). The findings indicate that while the translation of audio description is generally feasible, it is not without its challenges and particularities, such as, for example, the need to adapt lexical and syntactical aspects to align with the conventions of the target language and potentially with the local styles of audio description; potential loss of information; dealing with culture specific references and inaccuracies or errors in the original descriptions (Bourne & Hurtado, 2007; Remael & Vercauteren, 2010). However, despite these challenges, research also shows that audio descriptions created via translation are well-received and accepted by target audiences (Herrador Molina, 2006; Jankowska, 2015). Regarding time consumption, the results are inconclusive, revealing contrasting outcomes. Jankowska (2015) suggests that translating AD can be more time-efficient than writing AD from scratch. Conversely, other studies indicate that there may be no significant time difference (Fernández-Torné & Matamala, 2016; López Vera, 2006). Regarding cost-efficiency, there have been suggestions that the translation of audio description can be a viable solution (Jankowska, 2015; López Vera, 2006). However, it is essential to note that this claim has not been confirmed. The relevance and possibility of achieving cost-efficiency in audio description translation may vary from country to country due to the disparity in translation and audio description rates. The common denominator of all these studies is that they only investigated translating AD from

English to other languages and used AD scripts or transcriptions of a pre-recorded ADs rather than annotated templates, commonly used in subtitling.

There are no studies on AD-translation's benefits in avoiding cultural loss, even though this potential benefit of AD-translation has been mentioned from the beginning and linked to the intercultural competence of describers. As Remael and Vercauteren (2010) noted, whether and how culture specific references are rendered in audio description largely depends on the encyclopedic knowledge of the describer and their ability to recognize and identify the culture specific reference in question. In other words, unless a describer can single out and name a culture specific reference, it might be labeled incorrectly or ambiguously if not altogether omitted. In this sense, López Vera (2006, p. 9) argues that translating AD might prevent cultural loss both because "an original AD¹ gives the appropriate cultural background and accordingly is more informative than the AD for the same film done from scratch" and because "translators are better trained to address culture specific references and to adapt them to the target audience." Jankowska et al. (2017) question whether all describers are, in fact, equally suited to act as intercultural mediators, which is especially relevant since not all describers have an educational background in translation and their AD training is not carried out within translation studies context (ADLAB PRO, 2018). As Jankowska et al. (2017) notice:

[...] While all describers are trained in describing the image, many are not trained in intercultural competence. This competence – essential to any translator – seems to be overlooked when it comes to describers who are not only intersemiotic translators but very often also intermediaries between different cultures. As a result, describers are faced with tasks they are not fit to perform, such as creating audio description for films embedded in a culture distant from theirs (p. 2).

Jankowska et al. (2017) also suggest that training describers in intercultural competence is essential but not sufficient since "it is perfectly feasible to raise describers' awareness of intercultural issues, it seems impossible to expect a describer to gain intercultural competence in all cultures" (p. 3). They also suggest that AD scripts could be created locally and then

¹ The term "original AD", as used by López Vera (2007), specifically pertains to audio descriptions written in English for English-speaking media. However, it should be noted that within the scope of this study, "original AD" is also understood more broadly to refer to audio descriptions written in the film's original language or audiovisual content under consideration. The purpose of using this term is to differentiate between AD that is created in the same language as the original content and AD that is produced in a language different from the original language of the film or audiovisual material being described.

translated into English to avoid significant cultural loss when it comes to the less known cultures. Their case study explores this by examining the possible approaches to translating audio description from Polish into English for the Polish film *Ida* (Pawlikowski, 2013).

This study is part of a larger project exploring the feasibility of using annotated pivot templates in the AD-translation workflow to avoid cultural loss. Pivot templates are widely used in modern subtitling workflows to provide subtitles in multiple languages (Georgakopoulou, 2019; Kapsaskis, 2011; Nikolić, 2015; Oziemblewska & Szarkowska, 2022). They consist of “a subtitle file containing a time-coded transcription of the dialogue, onscreen text, and sometimes also annotations for translators” (Oziemblewska & Szarkowska, 2022, p. 1). As highlighted by Oncins (2022), audio description (AD) on streaming platforms is often limited to the film’s original language despite these platforms offering translations in numerous languages. Even when AD is provided in multiple languages, each AD is typically created from scratch for each language. Introducing templates inspired by subtitling practices could potentially revolutionize the provision of AD in various languages.

2. Current study

The present had two goals. Firstly, to explore whether participants transfer culture specific references and what influences their decision on strategy and tactics. We were also interested in participants’ general feelings about using annotated pivot templates. Due to spatial limitations, this article focuses on the study’s first goal. It only touches upon the second, focusing mainly on the usefulness of annotations. A more thorough account of participants’ attitudes towards annotated pivot templates is discussed in a separate article (Jankowska, forthcoming).

2.1. Participants

Participants² were recruited through a net of personal contacts and an announcement on a social media group for audiovisual translators in Poland. The recruitment criteria were at least two years’ experience in audiovisual translation from English to Polish, not knowing Spanish, and unfamiliarity with Spanish culture. Experience in audio description was not required. Participants received financial remuneration for taking part in the study.

² The study followed the ethical rules of empirical research with human participants and was approved by the Ethics Committee for the Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Antwerp (SHW_2022_32).

A total of six participants were recruited (Table 1). One participant had extensive experience in audio description. Three participants completed some audio description training – two as part of their studies, and one attended a vocational AD course organized by one of the NGOs in Poland. The remaining two participants heard about audio description but had no AD training or practice.

Table 1. Participants

Years of experience	Weekly average of translated AV content in the last 12 months	Experience with AVT types
15	< 1 hr.	subtitling
2	< 1 hr.	subtitling, voice over
9	3 – 4 hrs.	subtitling, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing
3	20 hrs.	subtitling, live subtitling, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing
8	6.5 hrs.	subtitling, voice-over, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing
11	4.5 - 6 hrs.	subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, audio description

2.2. *Materials: clips*

Participants were asked to translate audio descriptions from English pivot templates into Polish. The templates were created for five short clips from films embedded in the Spanish culture (see Table 2). The same clips were used in a previous study looking into describing culture specific references³. Each clip was approximately one minute long (see Table 2). Clips 2 and 5 were cut from the films directly without further manipulation. Clips 1, 3, and 4 were an edited compilation of a narratively coherent sequence of scenes. This was done to ensure the clips are rich in culture specific references. To avoid additional variables, namely, to ensure a comparable time for inserting AD, all clips were presented without sound.

Table 2. Clips used in the study

No	Film	Duration	Template length (characters)
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³ The study involved seven describers from Poland and five from Spain. Each describer was asked to prepare descriptions for ten film clips: five containing references to Polish source-culture and five with references to Spanish source-culture.

1	<i>Ocho apellidos catalanes</i> (Martínez-Lázaro, 2015)	1 min 1 sec	798
2	<i>Vicky, Cristina, Barcelona</i> (Allen, 2008)	1 min 10 sec	949
3	<i>Ocho apellidos catalanes</i> (Martínez-Lázaro, 2015)	0 min 58 sec	883
4	<i>Dieta mediterránea</i> (Oristrell, 2009)	1 min 3 sec	940
5	<i>18 Comidas</i> (Coira, 2010)	1 min 6 sec	978

Since the clips were taken out of context, participants received additional information, including a brief description of the film plot and the particular scene (see Example 1).

Example 1. Clip description as presented to the participants

Clip 5 *Ocho apellidos catalanes* / Spanish Affair (2015, dir. E. Martinez Lazaro)

Film: Amaia (Clara Lago) falls in love with a Catalan named Pau (Berto Romero) after breaking up with Rafa (Dani Rovira). Pau, as well as his entire family, are supporters of Catalan independence. Amaia's father, Koldo (Karra Elejalde), decides to dissuade his daughter from marrying her new boyfriend. To that end, he travels to Seville and persuades his daughter's former partner to return and make her fall in love with him again.

Clip: Rafa, Koldo, Pau, and Amaia arrive in Pau's home village, where preparations for the wedding are underway. Pau has mobilized the entire village to make his grandmother believe that Catalonia has become independent and that his wedding will be the first to occur in an independent country.

2.3. *Materials: templates*

The templates were created by compiling scripts prepared by Spanish describers in Spanish in the previous study. The resulting files were then translated into English. The average length of the AD templates was 910 characters (see Table 2). The different scripts were compiled to include all the culture specific references spotted by Spanish describers.

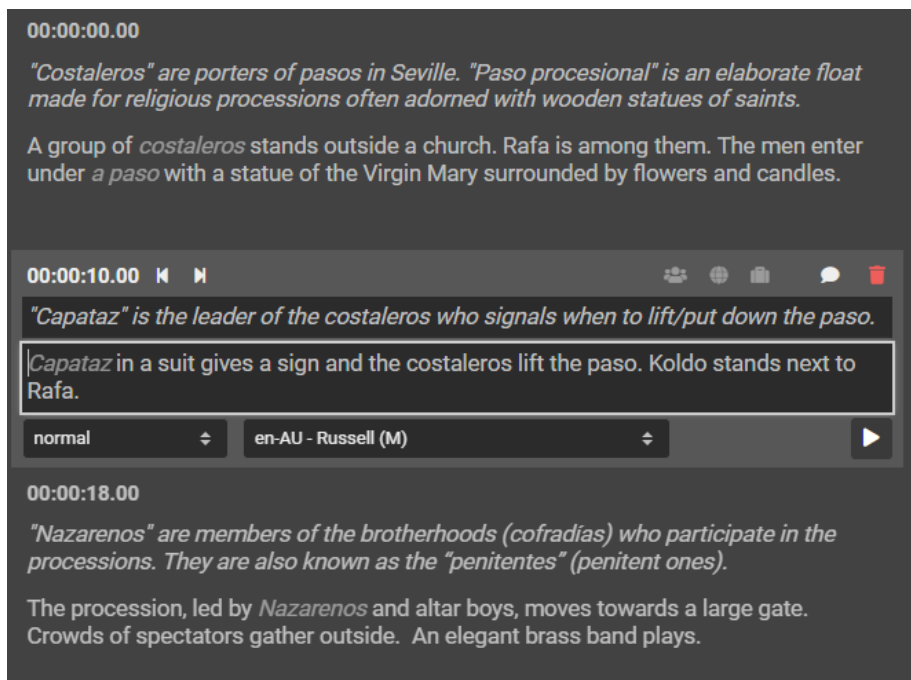
The templates included two types of culture specific references, which following Newmark (1988, p. 112), could be roughly classified as either *foreign cultural words* (FCW), which are easily detected since “they are associated with a particular language and cannot be literally translated” (p. 112) or *culture-free generic terms* (CFG) which “describe a particular culture and bring meaning, expressiveness or local color (or a combination of all of them)” (Mangiron, 2006, p. 63) (see Table 3 for examples).

Table 3. Examples of foreign cultural words (FCW) and culture-free generic terms (CFG) in AD templates.

Culture specific reference	CSR type	Context
An evening in a bustling restaurant. Guests share <u>pulpo a la gallega</u> , potatoes, and grilled beef.	FCW	Clip 5 is a series of shots showing places characteristic of Santiago de Compostela, its inhabitants and tourists, and food. Santiago de Compostela is the capital of Galicia – a region and autonomous community of northwestern Spain, and pulpo a la gallega (Galician octopus) is its signature dish.
Later, on the Rambla, Vicky talks on the phone beside <u>a bird stand</u> .	CFGT	Clip 2 is a series of scenes showing Vicky and Cristina who explore Barcelona, visiting its landmarks. In one of the scenes, Vicky talks on the phone while standing by a bird stand. While as such, a bird stand is neutral it is one of the characteristics sights of the famous La Rambla boulevard.

As is common in subtitling, the AD templates were presented to the participants cued and with annotations providing information regarding culture specific references (Georgakopoulou, 2019). Following Netflix guidelines for dealing with cultural references in subtitle templates (2021b), culture specific references consisting of foreign cultural words were not localized but kept as in the source audio description. Annotations were added to the comment box above AD events (see Figure 1). Culture-free generic terms were neither marked nor explained in the template. This was done to see if non-identification and non-explanation of less visibly foreign elements can influence their rendition in translation, assuming that they will be more likely to be omitted if not indicated.

Figure 1. Annotations of culture specific references in Frazier



2.4. Procedure

The participants were tested individually in July and August 2022. They worked remotely, using their personal computers. While working, their screen and sound from the computer were remotely recorded through MS Teams. Before the session, each participant received an information sheet about the study and signed an informed consent form. The participants were also asked to read the Netflix Audio Description Style Guide (2021a) and watch two videos on audio describing culture specific references created within the ADLAB PRO Project (ADLAB PRO, 2019; 2019).

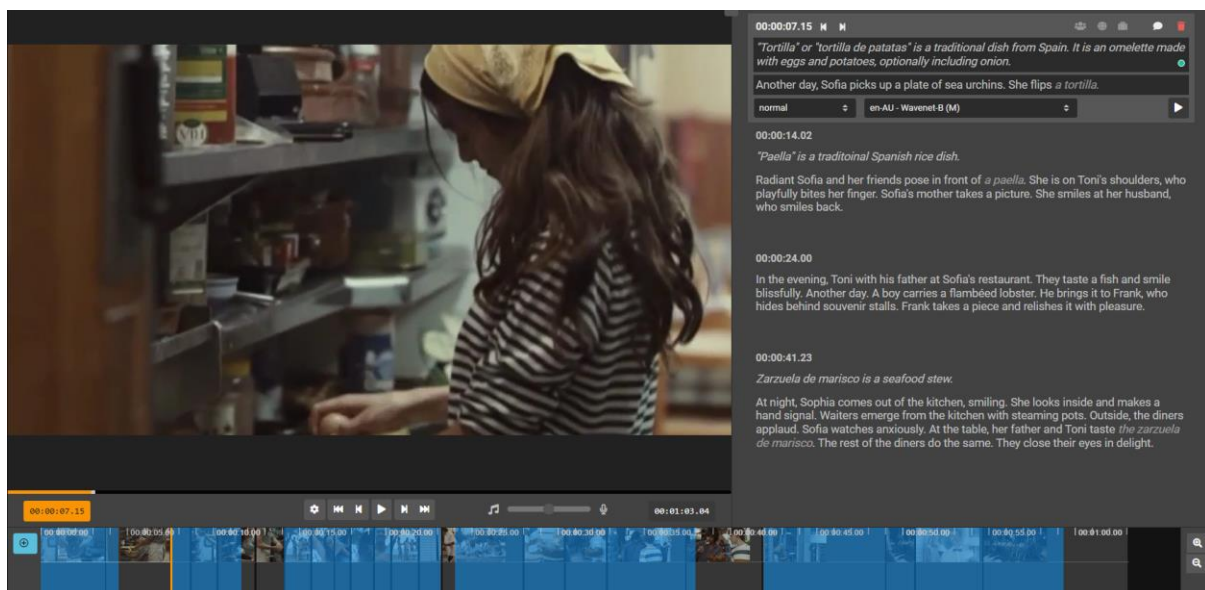
No time limit was set; on average, the sessions lasted approximately four hours. Each session was divided into three stages – all stages were completed in one sitting. First, participants filled out an online questionnaire regarding their professional experience. Then, they finished the script translation task (ca. 3 hours). Finally, they had an interview (ca 30-45 minutes) with the researcher, which used the translations they produced as prompts for discussion about their translation choices. The interview was recorded in MS Teams.

For the script translation task, clips were assigned to the participants in random order. The participants worked in Frazier⁴ – a cloud-based AD authoring software that enables describers

⁴ <https://www.videotovoice.com/>

to write and cue AD script and preview it against the original video with text-to-speech (See Figure 2). As one of the features, Frazier integrates AI-based machine translation, which the translators were free to use. They were also allowed to use the Internet and modify the template script to the desired fit, including adding or omitting information and modifying spotting. They were also allowed to adjust the reading speed but were instructed to use only three of the five available settings: normal, fast, and faster.

Figure 2 English AD template opened in Frazier



3. Results

The results presented below are based on a quantitative analysis of the translated scripts and a thematic analysis of the post-task interviews, which revealed that participants found culture specific references to be the most challenging part of the task. They argued that, on the one hand, it was because they had little or no knowledge about the source culture of the film and, on the other, because of the density of the culture specific references in the text.

3.1. *Transfer of culture specific references*

The scripts produced by the participants were analyzed to see whether they included the culture specific references from the template. All elements included in the translated scripts were accounted for, regardless of the tactic used by the translators. For example, both translations presented in Table 4 were classified as containing a culture specific reference.

Table 4. Examples of AD translations

Clip 5 Reference 15	PL01 Clip 5 Reference 15	PL02 Clip 5 Reference 15
At the door of another bar, a waitress offers pieces of <u>tarta de Santiago</u> to passersby.	Kelnerka częstuje przechodniów <u>ciastem</u> .	Przy drzwiach innego baru kelnerka częstuje przechodniów <u>migdałową tartą de Santiago</u> .
	English back translation: A waitress serves <u>cake</u> to passersby.	English back translation: At the door of another bar, a waitress serves <u>almond tart de Santiago</u> to passersby.

The analysis showed that the translated scripts retained most of the culture specific references included in the templates (see Table 5), maintaining an average of 95% of all culture specific references from the template file.

Table 5. Culture specific references in the original and translated AD scripts.

	References in template	PL0 1	PL0 2	PL0 3	PL0 4	PL0 5	PL0 6	Average of maintained CSRs
Clip 1	6	6	5	6	6	6	5	94%
Clip 2	18	17	16	16	16	15	16	94%
Clip 3	14	14	13	14	13	14	11	94%
Clip 4	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	97%
Clip 5	19	18	18	18	19	16	18	94%
Average	12.6	12	11.6	12	12	11.4	11.2	94.60%

If we look at the references by type, 93% of the foreign cultural words and 94% of the culture-free generic terms were maintained (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6. FCW references in the AD template and translated AD scripts.

	References in template	PL0 1	PL0 2	PL0 3	PL0 4	PL0 5	PL0 6	Average of maintained FCW
Clip 1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	100%
Clip 2	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	100%
Clip 3	14	11	11	11	10	11	9	75%
Clip 4	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	94%
Clip 5	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	97%
Average	7.2	6.4	6.6	6.4	6.4	6.6	6.2	93.20%

Table 7. CFGT references in the AD template and translated AD scripts.

	References in template	PL0 1	PL0 2	L03	PL0 4	PL0 5	PL0 6	Average of maintained CFGT
Clip 1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	100%
Clip 2	7	7	6	6	7	6	6	90%
Clip 3	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	89%
Clip 4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	100%
Clip 5	13	12	12	13	13	11	12	92%
Average	5.8	5.6	5.2	5.6	5.8	5.2	5.2	94%

We also observed that some participants added culture specific references not present in the template. However, those were isolated cases and borderline with explaining those culture specific references inserted in the template as proper names.

Table 8. Culture specific references added to the translated scripts

Clip	PL01	PL03	PL05	PL06
Clip 2		2	1	
Clip 3	1			1

In the post-task interview⁵, the participants who added culture specific references argued that they did so to give the audience more context and “local color”:

PL01: Park Guell well... It’s famous, it’s a famous park, right? But not everyone may know exactly what it is famous for. Some people know that it is, well, some kind of a famous park in Barcelona. They don’t quite know why it’s famous and what’s there. That’s why here I was very happy that there is some space to add something.

PL03: There was still quite a bit of space left, so I could add that there was a Gaudi building in the background, a building in his style. I don’t know which building it is exactly, so I couldn’t name it, but I described it as having soaring towers. I also added that the girl was climbing some stairs. There was enough space to add this, so that’s my addition, just to describe what you can see there. Because Park Guell itself, I don’t know if... if the name doesn’t tell me anything... What is this park? I also think that it is easier for the viewer to imagine...

PL05: I tried to convey the atmosphere of the park, because the name of the park itself... Well, it didn’t tell the viewer much, well, a park like any other park.

⁵ The interviews were conducted in Polish.

3.1.1. Strategy and tactics

When asked about their general approach to transferring the culture specific references, all participants noted that they tried to find a balance between domesticating and foreignizing so that the target audience could experience the foreignness of “watching something Spanish” (PL05) while being able to smoothly follow the plot without encountering too many “mental stumbling blocks” (PL01). Most participants noticed that rather than adopting a general strategy, they decided on the tactics on a case-by-case basis. However, one participant (PL06) stressed that they would prefer to go back to the films and adopt a general strategy, which would unify their tactics throughout the film.

The translations produced by the participants were analyzed using Pedersen’s (2011) taxonomy for rendering culture specific references in subtitling. Product-oriented analysis revealed that the participants used all of Pedersen’s source- and target-oriented tactics, i.e., retention, specification, direct translation, generalization, substitution, official equivalent, and omission (see Table 9 for examples).

Table 9. Examples of solutions and tactics used to render culture specific references in AD translation

AD Template	AD Translation	Tactic
Radiant Sofia and her friends pose in front of <u>a paella</u> .	Radosna Sofia z przyjaciółmi pozują z <u>paella</u> . English back translation: Joyful Sofia and her friends pose with a paella.	Retention
A group of <u>costaleros</u> stands outside a church.	Przed kościołem stoi grupa uczestników procesji, <u>costaleros</u> . English back translation: In front of the church stands <u>a group of procession participants, costaleros</u> .	Specification
Cristina, camera in hand, walks down a narrow street in the <u>Barrio Gótico</u> .	Cristina z aparatem w <u>dzielnicy gotyckiej</u> . English back translation: Cristina with her camera in the <u>Gothic Quarter</u> .	Direct translation
<u>Capataz</u> in a suit gives a sign and the costaleros lift the paso	Na sygnał <u>lidera uroczystości</u> costaleros unoszą podest. English back translation: At the signal of <u>the leader of the ceremony</u> , the costaleros raise the platform.	Generalization

A busy bar. A waiter serves a <u>pincho</u> of boquerones.	W barze kelner podaje <u>tapas</u> z sardeli. English back translation: At the bar, a waiter serves anchovy <u>tapas</u> .	Substitution
Vicky and Judy walk down the stairs of the MNAC and stop at a terrace overlooking the <u>Plaza de Espanya</u> .	Narodowe Muzeum Sztuki Katalonii. Vicky i Judy schodzą w kierunku tarasu z widokiem na <u>Plac Hiszpański</u> . English back translation: National Art Museum of Catalonia. Vicky and Judy walk down towards the terrace overlooking <u>Spanish Square</u> .	Official equivalent
[...] people dip them in romesco sauce and eat them. They drink wine from a porrón.	Goście maczają cebule w sosie romesco, jedzą ze smakiem i popijają winem. English back translation: Guests dip onions in romesco sauce, eat with relish and sip wine.	Omission

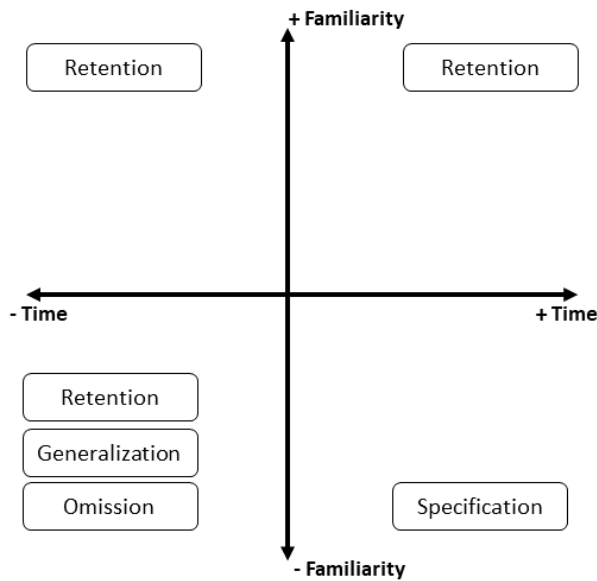
In the post-task interviews, the participants elaborated on the motivation behind their choices of tactics to transfer the culture specific references. Thematic analysis revealed that participants' decision-making was primarily guided by the time constraints and evaluation of their own and the audience's frame of reference (see Figure 3). As the participants argued:

PL01: I tried to run it through my filter, that is, to consider how representative my filter is.

PL02: I was guided by some sense of what might be familiar to the viewer. I have a teenage child [...], and this teenage girl is often in my mind such a, let's say, average viewer, unfamiliar with the subject. So, I imagine what she may or may not know. Well, that's more or less the criterion I adopted as to what I can include and not explain at all. I often use this in translations directed to a general audience that I imagine her and her friends. This is, for me, some kind of a mental representation of an average viewer, an ordinary person who is interested perhaps in the world in general but who does not have a deep knowledge of various subjects.

PL04: The way I approached it was that where I thought something needed to be added, I added, I described. Where something was some recognizable cultural object, I didn't add anything.

Figure 3. Strategies used by translators



When a culture specific reference was assessed as familiar, most participants would favor retaining the foreign name without any further explanations, both when the time was abundant and scarce. As explained in their comments:

PL01: I have always tried to add more information. I didn't want to leave things vague except for such obvious things as Catalonia or tortilla. That, in my opinion, doesn't need any additional explanation. When a person hears the words, he will immediately have the right image.

PL03: I was wondering which elements, for example, are clear. For example, paella is something that doesn't need to be explained, right? The same with the tortilla because it's pretty evident in our language.

Interestingly, some participants sometimes opted for retention when the reference was unfamiliar and time-restricted. In this scenario, they saw retention as giving a possibility to look the reference up later and to learn more about it:

PL03: I simply don't know this sculpture. And I suspected that most people who are not somehow super-read in arts are unfamiliar with this sculpture. This is why I really wanted to describe this sculpture, but there was no space. But since I gave the name, someone interested can search for themselves and find a description.

One participant seemed more skeptical about such an approach because, as they explained, leaving unknown foreign terms without any explanation would "hinder the reception" and "force the audience with visual impairment to constantly pause and search" (PL06).

When a reference was less familiar, but the available time was sufficient, all participants would opt for specification which they felt allowed them to maintain the foreignness and explain the reference, giving the participants an opportunity to both understand and visualize the reference. Two participants saw specification as a pragmatic and space-saving strategy since once a foreign term was introduced and explained, they could use the term in Spanish or Polish:

PL02: Regarding some of the culture specific references, I explained them. I left the original name at least in the first, but mainly in the first occurrence. I don't remember the names of those participants in the human towers anymore... But I named them once in Catalan, and I gave an explanation of who they were. When they appeared, later on, I used the Polish term.

PL05: I wrote, "They enter under a *paso*, a kind of litter." If it wouldn't fit, I would leave the word *paso* out. But since there was space and there was an opportunity to explain to the viewer what this *paso* was... Well, that's cool because we enriched the description. And later in the film, I could use the word *paso* because I had already introduced it.

Overall, participants felt that retention and specification allowed them to maintain "local color" and provided a "fuller", "more authentic", or even "educational" experience for the viewers.

PL01: I tried to retain the names so that they would stay in mind. Because I like to learn about things, so I also like to learn about other cultures, and this [tactic] I feel can help to learn about the culture.

PL05: Of course, it can be done... we can throw out virtually everything that sounds Spanish. So that *paella* becomes a rice dish, *costaleros* become porters and so on. But it's those Spanish interjections that give that flavor that the viewer is watching something Spanish, taking place in Spain. And leaving those Spanish-language interjections, which in addition can be explained to the viewer. Well, I thought it gave it more local color and atmosphere.

Regarding the less familiar references combined with time limitations, all participants eagerly resorted to generalization apart from retention. One participant compared it with "handing on a silver platter" (PL03), which, in the opinion of another participant, helps the audience to get a better idea of "what is happening on the screen" (PL01) and assures a "smooth experience" and does not "take them out of rhythm" (PL01). Interestingly, while participants were quite

firmly convinced about the advantages of generalization, most were also aware that it makes the description “shallower” and more “diluted” (PL04).

Finally, when asked why some of the culture specific references were left out, the participants mainly mentioned time constraints and the need to prioritize other information. Comments included:

PL01: Yes, I tried to get the paella in because that giant paella was in front of them... But no, it was overlapping with the next AD event. I really tried... but I wasn't able to get it in... I worked on it for quite a while, but I didn't... but it didn't work out because I decided that other information was more important.

PL02: For example, in that first clip, where the Catalan flag is repeated repeatedly. Well, for example, there were two types of Catalan flags there... I found it impossible to fit it into the audio description.

PL06: It seems to me that there wasn't much of a chance to describe what they drink wine from, to make it... I mean, there was no chance to elaborate on it somehow, so I gave up on it altogether because, well, it was such an unusual vessel, such a jug. So I thought if I start describing it in Polish... Well, it would be too many words. On the other hand, if I leave the proper name, no one will understand what they are drinking from.

However, some participants also noticed that they would omit those elements that they could not see in the clips or that they thought were not relevant to the plot:

PL02: I left out St. James Shell⁶ not because I thought it was unimportant but because I watched this clip three times looking for these shells and didn't see them there. Maybe they were visible for a split second... I didn't consider them an invalid reference. Still, if I don't see something in the video, well... then I am not describing it for the audience.

⁶ The clip the participant refers to is the opening sequence of the movie *18 Comidas*. In constantly intertwining shots, it shows restaurants, bars and cafe terraces in the old town of Santiago de Compostela. One of the characteristic sights of Santiago de Compostela are restaurant windows laden with food. There are six shots of such sites in the clip. Five follow one another (from 00:14 to 00:21), and the sixth, depicting the shells of Saint James, appears later (00:48-00:50). In the template, to maintain the continuity of the narrative, all these shots are described together. The shells of Saint James are included in this description as they are the symbol of Saint James and Santiago de Compostela. The shells are clearly visible in the foreground, in close-up and for a relatively long time. While the participant may not have seen them, exactly in the place where they were described, it is not true that the shells of St. James were not visible in the clip.

PL03: It was the traditional glass jug, wasn't it?⁷ Well, I didn't even see it in these shots, so I figured it was enough to say that they were drinking wine.

PL04: [...] Sometimes, I omitted elements when I thought it was somehow not important to the plot and could only introduce unnecessary confusion.

Overall, the participants found the task of rendering culture specific references difficult but feasible, mainly if, as discussed below, annotations were provided. While the participants noticed that, in the best-case scenario, AD should be created from scratch / translated from a pivot template by a professional familiar with the source culture, they also felt that as translators, they were competent enough to provide suitable solutions since “[...] This is precisely why we are professionals. We can assess what will be understood, what needs to be added and explained, and what, even if explained, will be incomprehensible and one would have to elaborate to convey it at all, so it would be better to limit oneself to giving a substitute” (PL01).

3.2. *The usefulness of the pivot template for transferring culture specific references*

All participants noted that the significant advantage of pivot templates was that they identified and explained culture specific references. They were very aware that due to their unfamiliarity with the clips' source culture, it would be difficult for them not only to identify culture specific references but sometimes even to notice them:

PL01: For example, one thing that caught my eye was in that first file. People were eating these onions⁸; I wouldn't have guessed they were onions because they looked peculiar. I probably would have said if it wasn't in the template, I would have written that it was some kind of a plant because I wouldn't even know what to look for. I wouldn't have known what to look for, so I wouldn't have made the association.

PL05: If it was not mentioned in the text at all, for example, that this is a *tarta de Santiago* and if I was writing this AD from scratch, I would have written that the waitress was

⁷ The participant talks about a clip from the movie *Ocho apellidos catalanes*, in which a series of shots show traditional Catalan festivities. The shot of one of the men drinking wine from a traditional porrón jug is indeed short, and the jug is barely visible. It was included in the template as it appeared in one of the audio description scripts by Spanish describers.

⁸ The participant is referring to *calçots* - type of spring onions eaten typically in Catalonia, Spain.

serving samples on the street. Only by getting this information from the template that she is serving *tarta de Santiago* we mention it at all.

Participants appreciated that foreign cultural words were not localized but kept as in the source audio description (e.g., *tarta de Santiago*, *calçots* etc.). All participants found this feature very helpful as it allowed them to enrich the text with local “color” and “flavors” so that the viewers could know and feel that “they are watching something Spanish” (PL05).

The participants also noticed that having the original foreign terms made searching for additional information about the references easier and significantly reduced the time spent searching for information needed to understand and render culture specific references:

PL04: I think they were very helpful because this task would have taken me twice as long if not for them. Well, because I could, of course, see what was happening on the screen. It’s just that I also sometimes wasn’t sure what precisely the name given in the template referred to. Well, I could guess it, but I would still have to check it further, and here I already had it all really explained in the annotations.

Moreover, some participants noted that the context provided in the annotations was sufficient to understand the culture specific references, so they could limit their search to checking for language equivalents.

PL02: The annotations were very useful. In most cases, they gave me enough context to understand what was happening. So, I could immediately concentrate on thinking about how to phrase it. In some cases, I searched further. But to tell you the truth, I searched more to find if and how something works in Polish than to dig deeper and understand.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that one of the participants raised concerns regarding the potential risks associated with the introduction of pivot templates, mainly when relying on individuals who lack familiarity with the language and culture of the source text, which in this case is the image:

PL05: The specifics of this transfer - that someone writes AD in Spanish, then someone translates it into English - is that it creates two platforms for errors. A Spanish-speaking describer may have omitted something obvious⁹. The English-language translator may

⁹ The participant was referring to prior discussion about the fact that when describing a film from their own culture describers may not include elements that are obvious for that culture but not for others. For example, in the previous experiment, while describing Spanish clips, Polish describers more often than Spanish describers referred to sunny weather.

not have fixed this in their translation, so it would be missing in the template. Well, then it's back to translating into the target language. Either that target describer will see it, has knowledge of the culture, and can sort of recover it from the original, from the image. Or they won't do that and will follow the template. Well, it's a bit like playing Chinese whispers.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of the scripts reveals that the audio descriptions created via a pivot template retained a substantial number of culture specific references. This might indicate that annotated (pivot)templates might be beneficial to avoid cultural loss, especially since preliminary results show the retention rate is higher when compared to scripts written from scratch by Polish audio describers (Jankowska, 2022a, 2022b). An important aspect to consider considering these findings is whether it is necessary or desirable to include such a high number of culture specific references in audio description scripts. This concern arises from the possibility that an excessive focus on culture specific references may come at the expense of omitting other vital elements from the AD. It is plausible that the lack of experience with audio description among the translators may have influenced their decision-making process. Unfamiliarity with what is crucial to include in AD might have led to an overemphasis on culture specific references. Further research is warranted to delve into this matter through reception studies and by comparing the content of translated audio descriptions with those created from scratch, which is the next phase of this ongoing project (Halwa, Zajdel, Jankowska, forthcoming).

The analysis also showed that translators employed strategies and tactics commonly used in subtitling to address these references. This confirms the suggestions made by Remael and Vercauteren (2010), who notice that culture specific references can be transferred in the translated AD using tactics known from general translation.

Remael and Vercauteren (2010) also underline that AD-translation requires intercultural competence and a careful judgement of the target audience. The findings from the post-task interviews indicate that participants were acutely aware of the significance of culture-specific references and the audience's need to comprehend them while enjoying a smooth viewing experience. They also recognized the importance of preserving the foreignness of the content. Notably, translators demonstrated prudence by acknowledging their limitations regarding the source culture of the clips. This prudence reinforces the study's underlying assumption and the

ADT workflow stressed in previous research (Jankowska et al., 2017; López Vera, 2006), suggesting that translators possess the intercultural competence necessary to handle culture-specific references in audio description.

Furthermore, the participants showed a strong level of enthusiasm regarding the assistance provided by annotated pivot templates in addressing culture specific references, specifically in terms of their identification and comprehension. Remarkably, all participants agreed that integrating practices for identifying and explaining culture specific references should be established as a standard practice within the AD script production workflow, irrespective of whether it entails translating existing AD or creating AD from scratch.

Currently, AD translation and AD (pivot)templates are not standard practices in the industry. However, the market landscape may undergo significant changes in the future. While AD production is decentralized, with localized markets handling the script production process, international industry leaders are beginning to include AD in multiple languages. The efficient and parallel creation of multilingual translations was the driving force behind the implementation of templates in subtitling. Therefore, expecting AD to follow in these established footsteps is logical. To ensure both quantity and quality, exploring ways to incorporate audio description translation into modern workflows, including (pivot)templates, becomes crucial.

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