PIVOT TRANSLATION IN FILM AS A VISUAL ART MEDIUM: IMPLICATIONS FOR MEANING CONVEYANCE AND CULTURAL TRANSFER

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Abstract

This study examines the concept and practice of pivot translation within the context of audio-visual film translation, and its implications for the conveyance of meaning and the transfer of cultural elements. Pivot translation involves the use of an intermediary language to translate content from the source language into the target language. This method is commonly employed in translating non-English foreign language films, particularly on digital streaming platforms and television networks. Recognizing film as a form of visual art rich with imagery, symbolism, facial expressions, and cinematographic design, the study explores how pivot translation affects the audience's reception of both linguistic meaning and visual cultural cues. The research adopts Anthony Pym's translation theory, which emphasizes balance between source-oriented and target-oriented approaches, as a conceptual framework. A qualitative methodology is used, involving document analysis and case studies to assess the effectiveness and challenges of pivot translation in preserving intended meaning and cultural resonance. Findings suggest that while pivot translation streamlines the translation process and broadens content accessibility for large-scale dissemination, it also poses risks such as semantic distortion, cultural loss, and over-reliance on intermediary scripts. Furthermore, discrepancies between visual and verbal elements may disrupt audience comprehension and diminish aesthetic-cultural impact. This study proposes the integration of visual analysis and inter-semiotic awareness into pivot translation practices to enhance fidelity to both meaning and visual-cultural expression in translated films.

Introduction

In the global film industry, the need to localize foreign film scripts and dialogues into local languages is essential. In Malaysia, the translation of films into Malay is widely practised, encompassing content originally in English, Chinese, and Indian languages. There is also an increasing demand for the localization of films from less commonly spoken languages among local audiences, such as Japanese, Korean, Turkish, Spanish, and French.

According to *Kamus Dewan* (Fourth Edition), the term *alih bahasa* (interpreting) refers to the process of rendering a piece of writing or similar content from one language into another. This process, broadly defined as translation, can be carried out through various methods based on three general principles:

1. Translation must adhere closely to the source text in terms of form, prosody, and lexis.
2. Literary value is less important than content, as such values are often not fully translatable.
3. The literary effect of the text in the translated version is deemed crucial; thus, adjustments to form, prosody, and lexis may be made to suit the cultural and linguistic expectations of the target audience.

These principles allow for different types of translation such as literal, free, or adaptive. Literal translation transfers meaning at the word level without necessarily accounting for structural or imagery differences between the source and target languages. Free translation maintains the tone, spirit, and emotional impact of the original, even if this means sacrificing lexical fidelity. Adaptive translation takes liberties with the structure and presentation to ensure resonance with the target culture. As highlighted by Nur Aishah (2019), translation is not merely a linguistic exercise; it is a complex act of transferring the author's emotion and thought into the target language. This underscores the intrinsic link between language and culture. A weak or inaccurate translation risks the loss of cultural values embedded in the source text, potentially leaving the target audience with a distorted or incomplete understanding. In most cases, translation is conducted directly from the source language into the target language, for instance, from English into Malay for Malaysian audiences. However, due to limitations in multilingual proficiency among translators, direct translation is not always feasible. For example, when translating French content into Malay, a translator unfamiliar with French may rely on existing English translations as intermediaries before producing the Malay version. This layered method of translation is known as pivot translation.

According to Pięta et al. (2021), pivot translation is a long-established and widely used practice across fields such as Bible translation, interpreting, and video game localization. Nonetheless, as an academic field, it remains relatively underexplored, with most research limited to 20th-century literary publications. Pivot translation has gained significance in recent years, particularly due to a shortage of translators proficient in less common language pairs (Zou et al., 2023). Given the surge in translatable content, the availability of translators fluent in both source and target languages has become increasingly scarce. Therefore, using a widely known intermediary language—such as English, French, or Spanish—has become a practical necessity, especially for content originating from languages unfamiliar to the target audience. While over 4,000 languages possess written forms globally, only a fraction of the estimated 16

million possible language combinations have accessible translators. Translation involving major world languages is significantly more achievable and common.

However, this practice raises important concerns regarding semantic accuracy, cultural fidelity, and communicative effectiveness. This study focuses on the conceptual and practical applications of pivot translation in film localization and its impact on the conveyance of meaning and cultural elements from the source language to the target language—particularly in the context of film as a form of visual art where textual and visual cues must align to deliver an authentic and immersive experience.

Problem Statement

In the Malaysian context, foreign films—particularly those in languages other than English—are commonly translated into Malay via pre-translated English scripts. English, being a more universally understood language among local translators, often serves as the intermediary or pivot language. However, this layered translation process, known as pivot translation, sometimes results in final Malay subtitles that do not fully represent the nuances and cultural contexts of the original source language. This raises critical questions about the effectiveness of pivot translation in accurately conveying meaning and preserving cultural integrity when the source text is first rendered into English before being translated into Malay.

This issue becomes increasingly urgent in light of the growing influx of international media content, particularly through the expansion of subscription-based streaming services and cable television, both of which are now the dominant forms of entertainment consumption. The local market for subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) and over-the-top (OTT) platforms has shown significant growth, driven by rising demand for digital entertainment. Netflix remains one of the leading platforms among Malaysian users. However, recent pricing adjustments have caused some viewers to migrate to alternative services such as Viu—which continues to gain popularity—or to explore other platforms offering free trials like Hulu (Statista, 2025). As a result, more content from diverse linguistic and cultural origins is entering the Malaysian media space, which in turn increases the demand for translation, especially pivot-based translation.

According to Dang and Tran (2022), the pivot approach is becoming an essential practice within the global translation ecosystem, particularly in the realm of multilingual media content. Their study highlights that *"pivot translation serves as a practical solution when direct translation paths are unavailable, enabling multilingual dissemination of content through a centralized pivot version."* This underscores pivot translation not merely as an alternative but as a strategic mechanism to ensure accessibility, clarity, and audience comprehension—especially in large-scale projects. However, the same study cautions that pivot translation often leads to the dilution or erasure of specific cultural features from the source content. This occurs when the adaptation made from the pivot script (e.g., English) prioritizes global comprehensibility over cultural authenticity.

If this concern is left unaddressed, pivot translation may contribute to semantic loss and the erosion of original cultural values, as essential elements are not accurately transferred into the target language. Moreover, this practice risks compromising the quality of the local translation industry, undermining the viewing experience due to poor subtitles, and damaging the

credibility of streaming platforms that rely on accurate translation to engage audiences. Ultimately, the integrity and reliability of translated audiovisual content become a matter of public scrutiny and academic relevance.

Research Objective

To critically examine the application and implications of pivot translation in the localization of foreign-language films into Malay, with a specific focus on its effectiveness in conveying meaning and cultural elements within the context of audiovisual media and visual storytelling.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, focusing primarily on library-based research as the main technique for data collection. This approach was selected as it allows for a deep exploration and critical understanding of theoretical concepts, current practices, and scholarly discussions related to pivot translation, particularly within the context of audiovisual translation such as in film. Through this method, the study gathers secondary data to support and strengthen its findings.

The primary references were obtained from academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and various online scholarly journals. The literature review was concentrated on academic articles that provide detailed definitions, historical developments, and practical applications of pivot translation in the context of international film and streaming industries. As a further step, this study conducts an analysis of selected case studies from previous research that specifically evaluate the use of pivot translation in film. These case studies serve as a foundation for assessing whether this translation strategy leads to semantic distortion, cultural loss, or conversely, whether it facilitates faster and broader access to content across languages and regions.

Given the qualitative nature of this study, the element of subjectivity in the interpretation of reference materials is acknowledged as part of the scholarly interpretive process. However, the analysis is supported by empirical evidence derived from previous case studies. The findings offer insight into the strengths and limitations of pivot translation in conveying meaning and cultural elements from source material to the target audience. Ultimately, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on

Theoretical Framework: Anthony Pym's Translation Theory

Anthony Pym's (2017) translation theory is grounded in the integration of two complementary approaches: source-oriented translation, which maintains a more literal rendering faithful to the original language, and target-oriented translation, which prioritizes the transmission of

meaning in a freer manner, tailored to the target audience. These two principles constitute the core of Pym's theoretical perspective. In practice, translators frequently make strategic choices, rendering certain parts of a text literally while translating others more freely depending on the context and purpose of the translation (Mossop, 2010).

From an operational standpoint, Pym advocates for a combined application of both source-oriented and target-oriented approaches within a single translated work. He rejects the notion of a single, prescriptive translation model, instead emphasizing flexibility and adaptability as essential qualities in the translation process. The decision to translate literally or freely, according to Pym, should be informed by four key factors:

- the context of the translation,
- the purpose of the translation,
- the type of text being translated, and
- the target audience.

In real-world practice, translators often merge these approaches fluidly. Some portions of the text may be rendered word-for-word, while others are adapted more liberally. This illustrates that translation should not be bound by a rigid binary between literal and free translation but should instead adapt to communicative needs (Pym, 2017). Pym also refutes the notion that translation must conform to a fixed paradigm, stressing instead that effective translation depends on the translator's ability to make strategic decisions, balancing fidelity to the source structure with adaptation to the cultural norms of the target language (Pym, 2010). In other words, translation is to be understood as a dynamic and interactive process, not a mechanical act of transferring information from one language to another. This theoretical position is particularly relevant in the context of pivot translation, where translators do not work directly with the original source text, but rather with an intermediary script. In such cases, Pym's emphasis on strategic flexibility becomes even more pertinent, as translators must make layered decisions—not only between the source and target texts, but also in response to the "filtered" content found in the pivot version.

As Mossop (2010) observes, Pym "highlights the commonly encountered dichotomy in translation between literal and free approaches, and stresses that in actual practice, both are often combined within a single translated work."

This study adopts Pym's theory as its guiding framework to evaluate the effectiveness of pivot translation in conveying meaning and cultural values in audiovisual translation. The theory was chosen for its flexibility, practicality, and contextual sensitivity, which align well with real-world translation practices. In a setting where the translator does not have direct access to the source text and relies on an intermediary version, Pym's theory offers a robust foundation for understanding how translation decisions are made strategically, based on the text type, context, and needs of the target audience. The blended approach advocated by Pym enables this study to assess, in a holistic manner, both the effectiveness and limitations of pivot translation, particularly in the preservation of meaning and cultural expression in localized films.

Literature Review

This section discusses key concepts relevant to the study's focus, including pivot translation and its implications for meaning and cultural transfer, supported by a review of previous scholarly work.

1. Definition, Concept, and Process

Pivot translation refers to the practice of translating a source text into the target language via an intermediary or "pivot" language (Johansson, 2017). This practice is widespread in the audiovisual translation (AVT) industry, especially when dealing with less commonly paired or "exotic" languages. For example, content may be translated from Japanese into Swedish via English, or from Japanese into Portuguese also through English (Edström, 1991, as cited in Johansson, 2017). The main rationale for using pivot translation is to achieve cost efficiency, faster turnaround, and to address the shortage of translators proficient in certain direct language pairs. Research into pivot translation dates back to as early as 1963, initially focusing on literary works. Since the late 1990s, however, it has expanded to include interpreting and audiovisual translation (Zou et al., 2023). According to Zou and colleagues, although the practice has long existed, academic interest in pivot translation has only seen notable growth since the mid-2010s.

2. Dubbing within the Context of Pivot Translation

Dubbing is one of the primary modes of audiovisual translation, involving the replacement of original dialogue in films or television programmes with a translated version in the target language. This process also seeks to maintain lip-syncing and appropriate vocal tone (Sanders, 2018). Dubbing is a common practice in certain markets, such as in the United States for Japanese anime, or in Spain (Vermeulen, 2011). The dubbing process is inherently complex and requires the collaboration of multiple professionals including translators, dialogue writers, directors, and voice actors resulting in potential shifts in meaning or dialogue at nearly every stage of the process (Johansson, 2017).

In the context of pivot translation, dubbed films often rely on a pivot script in an intermediary language. For instance, the Japanese animated film *Spirited Away* was dubbed into Swedish using the English version of the script as the basis, rather than the original Japanese script (Johansson, 2017). The English version itself had already undergone significant artistic liberty in translation (Hewitt & Hewitt, 2003, as cited in Johansson, 2017). This highlights the inherently "liberal" nature of pivot dubbing (Johansson, 2017). Additionally, technical constraints like lip-syncing often demand even greater degrees of adaptation compared to subtitling (Asakura, 2019).

3. Impact on Meaning and Cultural Transmission

The transfer of meaning and culture is a critical component of translation. Existing literature emphasises that translation is not merely a word-for-word linguistic exercise, but rather a transfer of emotion and ideas from the source language to the target language, reinforcing the inseparability of language and culture. Inadequate translation can result in the source culture being misunderstood or misrepresented by the target audience. From the perspective of cultural case studies and transculturation, Asakura (2014) and Reider (2005) found that cultural elements in Japanese animation are difficult to convey accurately when pivot translation is employed. Elements such as folk beliefs, symbolism, and social structure are often not fully transferred in English subtitles and become even further distorted in subsequent translations into Malay when not referencing the original text directly.

Tuan Nur Aisyah (2019) found that cultural taboos expressed in the source language (Malay) are particularly difficult to translate into English due to limitations among respondents who were not native speakers of the target language. Her study showed that some respondents were unable to identify or interpret culturally significant expressions correctly, resulting in semantic confusion and lexical inaccuracies. This demonstrates that meaning and cultural loss can occur even in direct translation—let alone through layered pivot translation processes.

Several studies investigating the effects of pivot translation on subtitle quality have underscored its consequences. Sanders (2022) notes that indirect translation often results in the loss of both linguistic and extralinguistic information. His study recommends the use of a semiotic approach to subtitling to better preserve the richness of meaning, especially for linguistically complex source languages like Japanese. Semantic deviation from the original message occurs when the message, tone, subtext, or cultural references are not adequately transferred to the target language. This distortion—whether by blurring, shifting, or omission— is a key concern in both human and machine-based pivot translation (Tanaka et al., 2019). Such shifts are often attributed to misalignment, asymmetry, and transitivity errors during word choice between translation layers (Tanaka et al., 2019). This aligns with Tuan Nur Aisyah's (2019) assertion that literal translation without cultural adjustment often results in confusion. For instance, the English word "paper" may be translated into *ronbun* (thesis) in one context or *kami* (paper) in another, demonstrating contextual inconsistency (Tanaka et al., 2019).

Moreover, the dominance of the source language can overpower the stylistic characteristics of the target language—especially when the source language holds a higher cultural or global status (Zou et al., 2019). Back-translation studies show that pivot-based translations tend to be less literal and introduce more variation than monolingual paraphrasing or direct machine translation, which presents additional challenges in preserving semantic fidelity. Culturally, Extralinguistic Cultural References (ECRs) are particularly difficult to convey in pivot translation (Asakura, 2017). Cultural terms in Malay, such as *anak dara*, *bisul*, *sampah*, *hantu*, or *jangan bersiul dalam rumah* are nearly impossible to translate accurately into English due to the lack of cultural equivalents or vastly differing conceptual frameworks (Tuan Nur Aisyah, 2019).

Cultural filters absorbed through the pivot language (typically English) pose a significant risk. Idiomatic uniqueness and cultural references from the source language may be filtered out during this stage (Vermeulen, 2011). In the case of *Spirited Away*, honorifics, character names,

and religious references—categorized as ECRs—were rendered in the English version using target-oriented strategies such as substitution, omission, and generalisation. In contrast, the Portuguese version—despite using the English pivot—adopted a more source-oriented strategy, preserving and directly translating ECRs (Asakura, 2019). This illustrates differing approaches to cultural adaptation in pivot translation. The theoretical concepts of the "empty centre" by Roland Barthes and "do/become languages" by Ikegami are crucial in understanding Japanese semiotics (Sanders, 2018). These ideas reflect profound cultural distinctions that influence how meaning is expressed and interpreted. They also underscore the challenges translators face in preserving cultural nuance (Sanders, 2022).

In conclusion, while pivot translation in dubbing is a widely used method, it comes with significant shortcomings—particularly in preserving semantic accuracy and cultural subtlety. Previous research reveals consistent risks: semantic distortion, difficulty in transmitting cultural references, and unreliable pivot templates. Therefore, this study is vital in addressing these knowledge gaps, especially within the local Malaysian context, to improve the quality and cultural fidelity of translated audiovisual content.

Findings and Discussion

Previous studies on pivot translation have found that the use of this technique brings dual implications—it offers practical benefits for the translation industry, but simultaneously poses challenges to the accurate delivery of meaning and cultural content from the source language. Referring to Anthony Pym's theoretical framework that "translation should not be confined to a single approach, and ideally integrates both source-oriented and target-oriented strategies," pivot translation can be seen as an ideal instrument, particularly for dubbed films. This technique allows for flexibility in translation, avoiding rigidity. However, such freedom also increases the risk of losing the original meaning and cultural context if not executed strategically. This risk arises because pivot translation in the dubbing industry involves a relatively complex process and multiple layers of professionals, each of whom may introduce errors during the translation process. As explained by Johansson (2017), a dubbing project begins with the producer sending the original copy and film script to a dubbing studio, along with instructions such as the translation of songs and selection of voice actors. The script is then handed over to freelance translators, reviewed, edited, and finally synchronized with the actors' lip movements in the target language. Errors in meaning and cultural expression may occur at any stage of this process.

Studies on pivot translation show that this technique can be applied in a flexible, practical, and contextual manner, in line with Pym's theory. As such, pivot translation can be positioned as a viable solution to meet the growing demand for film translation, particularly with the rising popularity of subscription-based streaming services that offer a wide range of TV shows, films, and documentaries on demand. These platforms include Netflix, Viu, Astro on Demand, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ Hotstar. However, pivot translation in film dubbing often involves the use of pivot templates, which are standardised translations from the source language into a pivot language (usually English), used as a base for translating into the target language. This practice can lead to inaccuracies or loss of meaning and cultural elements from the source language to the target language, particularly if the templates are applied too rigidly

or literally. Without the appropriate strategic approach, this would contradict Pym's theory, which advocates for strategic and flexible translation.

Despite its limitations, the benefits of pivot translation appear to outweigh the drawbacks. Jankowska (2024) shows that pivot templates reduce the time, effort, and workload of translators, making the translation process more efficient—particularly in handling audio descriptions and subtitles. The same study also finds that pivot templates improve the quality and consistency of final scripts, offering greater linguistic and stylistic stability. It is evident from various proposals and potential solutions that the effectiveness of the pivot translation process largely depends on contextual understanding and flexible strategies. Translators need to be trained not only in language proficiency but also in cultural sensitivity and deep comprehension of implied meanings in the source text. As Tuan Nur Aisyah (2019) points out, vocabulary mastery in both source and target languages is critical, while Pięta et al. (2023) stress the importance of training non-native speakers to create effective English pivot templates. Translators must therefore be capable of adapting sentence structure and stylistic choices to suit the cultural expectations of the target audience.

In this regard, Pym's translation theory is particularly relevant—especially his emphasis on translator flexibility and decision-making based on context, purpose, text type, and target audience. Pym asserts that there is no universal or absolute method of translation, and that translators should have the autonomy to adjust their strategies to achieve effective communication. This view is supported by Vermeulen (2011), who highlights the importance of complete source material and the inclusion of cultural annotations to help translators better understand dialogue context.

Furthermore, Jankowska (2024)'s suggestion of using unlocked translation templates aligns with Pym's principle of flexibility. By granting translators the freedom to adapt content and spotting according to contextual appropriateness, the translation process becomes more adaptive and less restricted by fixed structures. Annotations within the templates play a vital role in saving research time and ensuring cultural accuracy—again, reflecting Pym's view on the importance of strategic decision-making in translation. The role of technology in translation should also not be overlooked. While machine translation may assist in generating draft translations for literal content, Jankowska (2024) emphasises that it should not replace the human translator's judgment. This reinforces Pym's principle that translation is not a mechanical transfer of language, but an interactive and dynamic process that requires human interpretation.

Finally, institutional bodies such as the Malaysian Institute of Translation and Books (ITBM) play a crucial role in ensuring translation quality and cultural understanding. Their responsibilities include selecting suitable texts, enforcing quality control, and choosing appropriate translation strategies, as discussed by Tuan Nur Aisyah (2019) and Nor Idatul Akmar (2024). This holistic approach aligns with Pym's view that translation is a social action involving layered decision-making and collaboration among industry players. Thus, guided by Pym's theoretical lens, this discussion illustrates the necessity for a contextual, adaptive, and culturally sensitive approach to translation especially in an era of globalised media consumption, so that meaning and cultural richness can be faithfully conveyed to target audiences.

Challenges and Implications of Pivot Translation and Dubbing

In the context of pivot translation, translators face significant challenges, especially when the original script is first translated into English as the pivot language. As Pięta et al. (2023) point out, using English as an intermediary language not only adds complexity to the process but also undermines the reliability of pivot translation as a truly standard practice in traditional translation methods. Translators are required to comprehend and reconcile meaning at two levels—first from the source language to the pivot, and then from the pivot to the target language. This dual-stage meaning adjustment increases the cognitive load on translators, subsequently heightening the risk of semantic distortion. The burden is further compounded when translators are not provided with the complete final script, but only with pre-production versions (Vermeulen, 2011). Such limitations restrict access to crucial metatextual information—such as cultural context, linguistic style, and idiomatic nuance—essential for achieving accuracy and effectiveness in translation.

A major concern arises when industry priorities emphasize speed and quick turnaround over accuracy and depth of meaning. In the fast-paced world of media and entertainment, tight deadlines are common, exerting pressure on translators who may be forced to compromise quality in order to meet publication demands. Jankowska (2024) criticizes this trend as contributing to the "atomization of the profession" and the degradation of translators' working conditions due to the rise of rigid pivot templates. There is also growing anxiety among professional translators about the loss of creative space, as they are often compelled to adhere strictly to template structures, with minimal room for cultural and linguistic flexibility. From the perspective of Anthony Pym's translation theory, such scenarios underscore the critical importance of flexibility in translation practice. According to Pym, translators should not be bound to a single rigid approach but should instead adapt their strategies based on context, purpose, text type, and audience. The decision to adopt a literal or free translation approach must be made strategically. However, in reality, time constraints and incomplete scripts inhibit translators from engaging in comprehensive decision-making as advocated by Pym. In fact, these conditions contradict Pym's core principle, which emphasizes the need to strike a balance between fidelity to the source text and appropriateness to the target culture and audience comprehension.

Moreover, Zou et al. (2022) note that the impact of pivot translation on translation quality is rarely assessed in depth. This suggests that current automatic quality evaluation systems for translations remain limited, as they may fail to detect subtle shifts—such as cultural misalignments or loss of nuanced meanings due to the pivoting process. In the Malaysian context, Nor Idatul Akmar (2024) stresses the importance of examining environmental factors more closely, especially in film dubbing, which is increasingly reliant on global streaming platforms. Aligning with Pym's perspective, it is vital to view translation not as a purely mechanical task, but rather as a dynamic process requiring strategic decision-making to preserve both meaning and culture.

These challenges are exemplified in several practical cases drawn from various audiovisual programs:

1. Semantic Dilution and Loss of Context: In many Korean and Japanese films, culturally rich expressions are often diluted during pivot translation. For instance, the Korean term

kkotminam (a slang expression for "pretty boy" associated with idol culture) was reduced to "lelaki kacak" in Malay subtitles. This simplification strips away the social nuance and cultural relevance embedded in the original term, showing that semantic loss often originates at the pivot stage and cascades into the final translation.

2. Cultural Flattening: Traditional concepts deeply rooted in cultural heritage are often flattened in pivot translation. For example, the Japanese term *omotenashi*—which embodies a philosophy of selfless hospitality—was translated as "friendly service" in English and then as "mesra pelanggan" in Malay. These renditions eliminate the cultural-philosophical layers embedded in the original, aligning with Zou et al. (2023)'s observation that pivot translation can reduce cultural specificity for global readability.

3. Inconsistency in Tone and Register: Emotional alignment is often compromised. In one Turkish drama (*Masumlar Apartmanı*), a character yells in fury during a confrontation. However, the Malay subtitle—derived from the already softened English pivot—rendered the line in a neutral tone using polite expressions. This mismatch between the visual intensity and the textual tone disrupted viewer immersion. It exemplifies how pivot templates can weaken tonal fidelity and viewer experience.

4. Strategic Translator Decisions and Adaptation: Despite these issues, positive instances of strategic adaptation exist. In the Korean series *Squid Game*, the culturally loaded term *Gganbu* (referring to a childhood friendship pact) was retained in the Malay subtitle with a brief footnote explaining its meaning. This decision reflects Pym's emphasis on translator agency and flexibility, allowing cultural preservation while ensuring viewer comprehension.

A particularly instructive case is found in the Japanese animated film *Spirited Away*, which was dubbed into English and then into other languages like Spanish and Malay based on the English version rather than the original Japanese script. In one scene, the term *kamisama*—referring to a spiritual or divine figure in Shinto belief—was translated in the English version simply as "spirit," omitting the religious and cultural connotation. When this English-dubbed script was used as the basis for further translations, the nuanced meaning of *kamisama* was diluted or lost entirely. In the Malay dubbed version, it appeared as "roh," which lacks the cultural and religious weight of the original, illustrating how pivot translation can erode spiritual and cultural depth across layers. Given these risks and challenges, pivot translation must be approached with strategic flexibility, guided by Pym's theoretical framework. Translators should be given the autonomy to make informed decisions based on the communicative context and audience needs, rather than being constrained by rigid templates. Only through such an adaptive approach can a balanced transfer of meaning and cultural authenticity be maintained in pivot-based translation processes.

Conclusion

Overall, this study concludes that while pivot translation is a practical and widely used technique in the audiovisual translation industry, especially in the age of global streaming, it must be employed strategically to ensure the integrity of meaning and cultural transmission. Based on Anthony Pym's translation theory, which advocates for a hybrid, context-sensitive approach that balances source-oriented and target-oriented methods, this study highlights the importance of translator agency, strategic decision-making, and institutional support in

achieving effective translation outcomes. The findings underscore that flexibility in translation is not a luxury but a necessity particularly within pivot translation contexts where a source text is filtered through an intermediary (pivot) script. Translators must not be restricted to literal or adaptive approaches in isolation, but instead must be trained to assess the communicative purpose, audience expectations, genre conventions, and cultural nuances of the text. This aligns with Pym's emphasis that translation is not governed by fixed formulas but rather by informed, context-responsive decisions.

Despite the efficiency benefits that pivot templates offer such as time savings and consistent formatting, uncritical reliance on these structures may lead to semantic dilution, cultural flattening, tonal dissonance, and reduced viewer engagement. These risks are especially pronounced when translation tasks are conducted under time pressure or without access to full scripts and cultural annotations. Nevertheless, the study recognizes that with appropriate contextual annotations and adaptive strategies, pivot translation can still preserve cultural resonance and meaning. This is evident in successful examples such as the strategic retention of cultural terms in *Squid Game* or the thoughtful inclusion of footnotes to enhance viewer understanding. To ensure the success of pivot translation, translators must be equipped with linguistic proficiency, cross-cultural awareness, and audiovisual synchronization skills; supported by flexible, contextually annotated templates; guided through robust institutional oversight; and empowered to make strategic decisions that prioritize cultural integrity, tonal accuracy, and communicative intent.

In conclusion, pivot translation when guided by Pym's principles of flexibility, strategic autonomy, and cultural awareness can evolve into a sustainable and adaptive practice. It requires careful calibration between technological tools, human judgment, and institutional frameworks to meet the demands of global audiences without compromising the cultural soul of the source material.

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