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# Translation strategies for culture-specific elements in the Japanese subtitles of recent German movies

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## 近年のドイツ映画の日本語字幕における異文化要素の翻訳方略

本研究は、近年のドイツ映画の日本語字幕における異文化要素の翻訳方略を検討し、ドイツの文化がどのように日本語に変換されるのかを明らかにする。翻訳者は訳出プロセスにおいて様々な問題に直面する。起点テキストに含まれる起点文化固有の要素（異文化要素）をどう訳すかという問題もそのひとつである。字幕翻訳には、文字数や時間制約のため、他のテキストで使用される方法が適用できない。したがって、字幕における異文化要素の訳出プロセスは他のテキストに比べてより難しいと考えられ、より適当な方略が求められる。利用された方略を分析することで、異文化コミュニケーションにおいて翻訳が果たす役割を検討できる。本研究では、調査対象の映画の字幕における異文化要素の翻訳方略を字幕研究者ペダーセンの分類（起点志向・目標志向）に基づき調査を行う。

### 1 Introduction

This paper examines Japanese subtitles of German movies, focusing on strategies for translating culture-specific elements, to identify how the culture of one country, as shown in movies, is transferred and represented in the language of the other country. This study answers the following question: Are Japanese subtitles of German movies translated with source-oriented or target-oriented strategies? In other words, are specific elements of the German culture transferred in a faithful manner or are they simplified in the Japanese subtitles?

With the spread of the DVD since the late 1990s and the more recent spread of internet-based distribution of movies and other audiovisual material, opportunities to access foreign movies in their original language have greatly increased. Sometimes, watching a movie in its original language is the only way to be able to see this film at all, which is often the case with German movies in Japan. For most viewers, this experience is only possible through a translation in the form of subtitles because they do not understand the original language of the film. However, the translation of cultural products such as movies is not just a simple substitution of words of one language with the words of another language, it is a part of intercultural communication. Therefore, the translator plays an essential role as ‘intercultural mediator’ (Nornes 2007) who makes the culture of one country understandable for the audience from another culture. In this mediation process, the translator often faces several crisis points: difficult to translate passages such as puns and other witticisms or rapid dialogue. But the most critical and common of these crisis points are culture-specific elements (CSE), such as references

to names of people, places, institutions, customs, food etc., that belong to the source culture and may not be known to the viewers even if they can understand the source language (Pedersen 2016).

CSE have been studied across various fields and are not exclusive to subtitling. For example, there are studies in literature (Davies 2003), tourism (Ajtony 2016) or film dubbing (Ranzato 2013) and they all highlight the obstacles posed by CSE in translation. However, in most of these fields there is enough space to render these elements into the target language without losing information, even adding information is possible through notes or explanations. In subtitling, this option is often not available due to the constraints of the medium. Subtitles can only contain a limited number of characters and appear on the screen only for a limited amount of time. Therefore, the translation process for culture-specific elements in subtitles poses more problems compared to other types of text and requires strategies that are suitable for this type of translation.

There are no extensive studies on the topic of culture-specific elements in subtitling, or in other fields, in the language pair German and Japanese (DE-JP). So, there appears to be a significant research gap which should be further investigated because the cultural differences between Germany and Japan pose a lot of problems for translators during the transfer of culture-specific elements. Furthermore, movies can be a relatively easy way for many people to experience another culture and an improved translation process should be beneficial for the understanding of this culture.

The theoretical framework used in this study is a model by Swedish scholar and translator Jan Pedersen (2011). His model is based on Toury's (1995) 'coupled pairs' approach which analyzes a source text (the original text) and its target text (the translation) to identify relationships between corresponding segments in the two texts. Pedersen has used Toury's translation analysis model together with previous research on subtitling (e.g. Nedergaard-Larsen 1993; Karamitroglou 1998; Gottlieb 2001a; Leppihalme 2001) to develop a classification of translation strategies for CSE which shows how CSE are translated in subtitling and why they are rendered that way. Furthermore, these translation strategies are categorized into source-oriented (foreignizing) and target-oriented (domesticating) strategies, meaning that a certain tendency can be assumed for the whole movie.

Since this model incorporates most of the previous research on this topic and Pedersen (2016) claims that it can be re-used for the analysis of similar data and that 'it could be seen as a tool kit for solving culture-based translation problems' it is considered to be the most appropriate theory for this study. However, this paper will also critically assess to what extent Pedersen's model can be applied to subtitles in the language pair DE-JP and if it has any limitations since it is based on the language pairs English-Swedish/Danish.

In the analysis, eight German movies and two television series were examined according to Pedersen's model to identify the CSE in the movies' and series' dialogues and if source-oriented or target-oriented translation strategies for these CSE were used. The works were selected according to the following criteria. First, the movies have been officially released in Japan to ensure that they were translated by a professional translator and according to national norms. However, due to reasons of accessibility only DVD releases and releases on streaming services (e.g. Amazon Prime) were used

for the analysis but not releases in cinemas or on television. Second, the movies cover a wide range of genres and topics to obtain subtitle samples with many different CSEs and translation strategies. And third, the subtitle translator of each work should be known to ensure that the movies were translated by different persons, so that the translation strategies are not too strongly influenced by personal preferences, and to make sure that the translation was created from the German source text and not from an intermediary English translation.<sup>1</sup>

## **2 Audiovisual translation in Japan**

### **2.1 Audiovisual translation**

Audiovisual translation is the translation of audiovisual media such as movies, television programs, video, and video games and mainly comprises the three categories subtitling, dubbing, and voiceover. Subtitling and dubbing are the most common forms. Voiceover is mostly used in documentaries or interviews when the original voice of a speaker is kept and the translation is spoken over this original text. Besides that, voiceover is often used in Eastern European countries for movies and television series because it is cheaper than dubbing but does not require reading by the audience as in the case of subtitling. By dubbing a movie the original voices of the original actors are replaced by voice actors who record the dialogue in the local language. This process requires not only a translation of the original dialogue but also the employment of trained voice actors which makes the whole process more expensive than the other forms of AVT.

Subtitling can be divided into the categories intralingual subtitles and interlingual subtitles. Intralingual subtitles are for example subtitles for the hearing impaired on television or DVD which are in the same language as the spoken words. However, in Japanese television programs for example it is very common to show subtitles on screen for emphasizing parts of the spoken dialogue and subtitles for the hearing impaired can be activated in addition to that.

The subtitles analyzed in this study belong to the category interlingual subtitles which are subtitles that are in a different language than the original language of the subtitled movie or television program. Specifically, this study is concerned with subtitles in Japanese that have been used for the release of German movies for a Japanese audience.

### **2.2 Audiovisual translation in Japan**

In 2017, almost 600 foreign movies, about the same amount as Japanese movies, were released in Japanese cinemas (Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan 2017). A look into the programs of cinemas across Japan reveals that most of them are shown with subtitles and only a small number is available in a dubbed version. According to Shinohara (2014: 98), in 2011 the number of released foreign movies in Japan was 384 and 346 of them were subtitled, 8 of them dubbed, and 30 were available in both a subtitled and a dubbed version. Shinohara (2012: 212) has also conducted interviews which show that subtitles are preferred by most Japanese viewers because they provide ‘the possibility to hear the actor’s voice’, ‘a better sensation of the atmosphere’, or the chance for ‘language

study’.

Japan has been mainly using subtitles for the translation of foreign movies since the 1930s. There was a move to either dubbing or subbing of foreign movies across the globe during the 1930s when the era of silent movies came to an end and movies with sound, so called ‘talkies’, became the common mode of film making. According to Takeda (2013: 82), the preference for subtitling in Japan can be traced back to a lack of personnel for producing dubs at the time and the generally higher costs of dubbing which requires not only the translation of a text but also voice actors, a director, and a recording studio.

Technical norms for modern Japanese subtitles are often cited by professional subtitlers to be 4 characters per second with up to 13 characters per line with a maximum of two lines. They usually do not contain punctuation marks except for exclamation marks and question marks, and they keep a balance between kana and kanji characters (Takeda 2013: 83). In the past, subtitles were written vertically at the left or the right side of the frame depending on which side of the screen the actual speaker was positioned and only contained ten to eleven characters. Today, Japanese subtitles for the spoken dialogue are usually written from left to right at the bottom of the screen. With horizontal writing, one line can contain as many as thirteen to fourteen letters. When the film is transferred to DVD, smaller letters can be used, which allows up to sixteen letters per line (Morizumi 2013: 208). However, vertical subtitles are still used for captions that appear on screen (Fig. 1) or for other texts that are used inside the movie (Fig. 2).

Another feature that is unique to the Japanese script and Japanese subtitles is the use of ruby annotations above a word or expression. They help explain the meaning of unfamiliar, foreign, or slang words and phrases. They can also convey the pronunciation for rare kanji characters or give an alternate reading of a word. In subtitles, ruby annotations play a very important role because they can be employed to add additional information without using more space. Moreover, the streaming provider Netflix regards them as important for subtitles because ‘they can help provide cultural context to a translation which allows the viewer to enjoy the content with a deeper understanding’ (Netflix Tech Blog 2017). This can be seen in Figure 3, where the name of a specific hotel chain in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) is visible in the movie *Barbara*. The Japanese subtitle renders the name of the hotel in katakana script to make it accessible to the target audience and places it as ruby annotation above the actual subtitle which is used to explain that it is a hotel for persons from other countries.

Takeda (2013: 83) notes that it is one characteristic of Japanese subtitles to often eliminate or rephrase discriminatory words and expressions that might discomfort the audience to make the movie more suitable for a wider audience. This happens either through self-censorship by the translator or by demand of the distributor. And distributors seem to have great influence on the translation process. According to Kamiya (2004), most movies in Japan are translated by a select group of popular subtitlers at the request of local distributors. This practice was heavily criticized as ‘corrupt’ by Nornes (2017: 3), being a result of the capitalist system of film studios and distributors where

profit seems to be more important than the artistic integrity of the actual work. Striking examples for this practice are two translations by Natsuko Toda, the most prominent subtitle translator of English-language movies for the last four decades. In *The Thin Red Line* (Nornes 2017: 7) and *Full Metal Jacket* (Kamiya 2004), the toning down or complete omission of discriminatory expressions and vulgarities stands out in Toda's Japanese subtitles, although these are important factors for the authenticity of both movies' settings.

Regarding German movies in Japan, it must be noted that they are released in cinema with Japanese subtitles only. On DVD, some movies are released with a Japanese dubbing and subtitles, and some DVDs contain a subtitled version only. Very popular movies are always released in a dubbed and subtitled version (e.g. *Good Bye Lenin!*, *Das Leben der Anderen*, *Er ist wieder da*). In general, the number of German movies that are released in Japan is very small. According to the annual list of foreign movie releases published by the Foreign Film Importers-Distributors Association of Japan (2018), in 2017 a total of 582 foreign movies were shown in Japanese cinemas of which 8 came from Germany (co-productions with other countries not included). The number has been relatively constant over the last years with 8 films in 2016, 10 in 2015, 7 in 2014, 9 in 2013, 5 in 2012, and 8 in 2011 (Foreign Film Importers-Distributors Association of Japan 2005-2018).

According to Wutz (2008: 256), the market for German movies in Japan is relatively small because they are regarded as arthouse productions which seem to be not very popular with Japanese moviegoers at present. Arthouse movies are called *tankankei* in Japanese because they are only screened in a single cinema (*tankan*) at first in Tōkyō and then shown in other major cities depending on their success. It could be argued that the audience of these movies differs from the audience that frequents the cinemas in shopping malls where blockbusters and mainly movies from Hollywood or Japan are shown. Therefore, the classification as arthouse productions could have a significant influence on how these movies are translated since the audience is probably more interested or has more knowledge about the films' culture than the usual cinema audience. However, there are no studies in this field, but this is one of the most important aspects for the translator: Who is the target audience of the text?

German movies were rather unsuccessful internationally during the 1980s and 1990s but have become more popular worldwide with the success of the 1998 movie *Lola rennt* and even more so with movies such as *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003) and *Der Untergang* (2004) (Beier 2008). According to a report about German films in foreign markets, *Good Bye Lenin!* and *Der Untergang* had 170,000 and 280,000 viewers in Japan (Wutz 2008: 257). Since that time, more and more German films have been translated directly from German by Minako Yoshikawa. Today, she translates almost all newly released German movies.<sup>2</sup> This development could suggest that because of the growing international interest in German movies more care is now taken regarding the translation process. From an interview with Yoshikawa it could be assumed that the translations have increased in quality since they are now done by someone with knowledge of the language and the culture (Fellow Academy: 2015).

### 3 Culture-specific elements and their translation strategies

#### 3.1 Culture-specific elements in translation studies

Almost each study uses a different term to refer to cultural references (culture-bound items, cultural terms, culture-specific elements, culture markers, extralinguistic cultural references, etc). Apart from these terms, they are often referred to as *realia*, the Latin word for ‘real things’, because of their referential link with reality. According to Leppihalme (2011: 126), the ‘references to realia may include not only references to material items [...] but also culture-bound notions and phenomena, such as religious or educational concepts, taboos, values, institutions, etc.’

Furthermore, the term *realia* is used in translation studies to refer to concepts that can be found in a given source culture but not in a given target culture. However, these foreign concepts may be introduced for example as loanwords, such as the Japanese word *tsunami*, into other cultures via news or other ways, making them no longer unfamiliar in the target culture (Leppihalme 2011: 126). In most cases, references to *realia* are nouns or noun phrases that have no exact equivalent in the target-language. According to Nedergaard-Larsen (1993: 210), intralinguistic elements like certain grammatical categories, vocative forms, metaphors, idioms and dialectal or sociolectal speech are not regarded as types of *realia*, even if they are culturally determined.

Classifications of *realia* differ with each study and always reflect the type of textual material examined. Therefore, Leppihalme (2011: 126) notes that ‘*realia* in a contemporary institutional text will differ from those in an 18th century comedy or a television soap opera.’ Nedergaard-Larsen (1993: 211) divides *realia* into four main categories of extralinguistic culture-bound problems, namely (1) geography, (2) history, (3) society, (4) culture, which are all further subdivided.

For the translation of these culture-specific elements, translators have developed a range of strategies which are not only determined by the type of text and the overall function of the translation but also by commercial and sociocultural considerations (Leppihalme 2011: 128). Some translators may reduce or delete culturally and historically elements found in the source texts while others may try to mediate them to target readers (Kujamäki 1998: 276). Cuéllar Lázaro (2013: 136) argues that one reason for the different ways of rendering culture-specific elements is connected to the different language pairs analyzed in these studies since they have a varying degree of complexity.

Scholars who have proposed categorizations of translation strategies for *realia* are for example Nedergaard-Larsen (1993), Kujamäki (1998), Leppihalme (2001) and Pedersen (2011). Leppihalme (2011: 128) notes that all these categorizations describe roughly the same strategies. The categorization for this study is taken from the research of Pedersen (2011). His model is based on the analysis of 14 previous classifications of translation strategies, but with a focus on taxonomies for the translation of subtitles, especially the ones by Nedergaard-Larsen (1993), Karamitroglou (1998) and Gottlieb (2009). Therefore, his model is seen as be the most appropriate for this study and will be examined in more detail in the following section.

Another important point for this study in regard to translation strategies is that they can be further categorized into foreignizing, or source-oriented, strategies and domesticating, or target-oriented,

strategies. According to Leppihalme (2011: 129), directing the focus on the domesticating global aspects of the translation of realia, ‘future research could contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of translation in intercultural communication’.

### 3.2 Pedersen’s model

The base for Pedersen’s model is the Scandinavian Subtitling project in which 100 anglophone films and TV programs and their Swedish, Danish, and some Norwegian subtitles were analyzed. The movies and TV shows are from many different genres and include fiction as well as non-fiction and have been broadcasted on private and public stations. The model consists of a definition and delimitation of culture-specific elements (called ‘extra-lingual cultural references’ in his model), a set of parameters that influence how these elements are rendered in the subtitles, and a classification of strategies for rendering them (Pedersen 2016). According to Pedersen, his model does not only describe how subtitles are translated in Scandinavia and why they are translated this way, but he sees it as ‘a tool kit for solving culture-based translation problems’ which could be used for other language combinations and for the instruction of translators (Pedersen 2011, 2016).

#### 3.2.1 Definition and scope of culture-specific elements

Pedersen (2011:43) calls culture-specific elements in his study ‘Extralinguistic Cultural Reference’ (ECR) which basically ‘are references to places, people, institutions, customs, food etc.’ that the audience may not know even if they know the language of the source text (Pedersen 2011: 44). Pedersen has developed his own definition of culture-specific elements to make it easier to sample out the coupled pairs (which include CSEs) that are necessary for this kind of analysis (Pedersen 2011: 45). His model defines what is within language and what is not, what is cultural and what is not, and it also includes the knowledge of the audience as a factor to identify what should be regarded as a CSE and what not.

In Pedersen’s model, 12 domains are used to categorize the culture-specific elements that were found in the Scandinavian Subtitle Corpus (Pedersen 2011: 59-60): weights and measures; proper names; professional titles; food and beverages; literature; government; entertainment; education; sports; currency; technical material; and other. These domains are not exclusive and culture-specific elements can belong to more than one domain. Furthermore, there is one domain labeled ‘Other’ for CSE that do not fit into any of the other categories. Pedersen (2011: 48) notes that names of people, places and institutions make up the majority of CSE and these are easily identified as CSE. However, he also points out that there exist titles and terms for sports, food and customs which could be said to be intralinguistic, but which are strongly connected to the extralinguistic culture. To determine which term or expression a CSE is and which not he suggests the following question for the sampling process: ‘Is the linguistic expression in itself transparent enough to enable someone to access its referent without cultural knowledge?’ (Ibid.). In other words, if the audience needs to have some cultural knowledge to understand a specific term of the source text and culture then it can be



classified as CSE.

As mentioned before, classifications of realia reflect the analyzed material, i.e. the source culture. For example, CSE from the category weights and measures may be more prevalent in the Scandinavian Subtitle Corpus which contains many American movies and TV series in which other systems of weights and measures are used. However, weights and measures present no problem in the language pair DE-JP in modern texts, since both countries use the metric system. Differences could arise when the story is set in a historical context when other units for weights and measures were in use. Furthermore, the German movies that are released in Japan often deal with history, especially with events during the Second World War or in East Germany. Therefore, the culture-specific elements found in these movies often belong to the domains personal and institutional names, professional titles (e.g. army ranks), and government.

### 3.2.2 Translation strategies for CSE

For this model, Pedersen has examined 14 different previous taxonomies of translation strategies for CSE, including very general ones as well as more specific ones regarding subtitling. His research indicates that these taxonomies have differing degrees of complexity, but in order to be useful as a model for translators a baseline of categories is necessary (Pedersen 2011: 73). Therefore, his model consists of six baseline categories called Retention, Specification, Direct Translation, Generalization, Substitution, and Omission most of which have subcategories (Fig. 4). The baseline strategies can be found in all previous taxonomies, so they can be regarded as the most common translation strategies for CSE.

Pedersen (2011: 74) sees the strength of his model in the fact that it is the result of an empirical process. The model is based on existing subtitles that have been produced for movies and television series that were broadcasted on Scandinavian television. Therefore, the “model matches the world, rather than trying to make the world fit the model”, hence, it has been changed whenever new findings made it necessary to do so (Ibid.).

In the following part, each strategy will be explained in more detail to give an understanding of how these strategies are used in the actual translation process.

#### *Retention*

This strategy is the most source-oriented way of transferring a CSE from the source text into the target text. It allows an element from the source culture to enter the subtitle unchanged. Pedersen has identified this strategy as the one that is most often used by translators to render CSEs. However, since a word or phrase from the source cultural is used without change in the target text, it offers no guidance to the viewer. Therefore, it may not always be the best translation strategy (Pedersen 2011: 79). On the other hand, Schröpf (2009: 159) notes that retained culture-specific elements can allow the target text to maintain a certain ‘flavor’ or authenticity of the source culture.

Retention is uncomplicated when translating between languages that both use the Latin alphabet,

which is the case in Pedersen's research where movies and television series from anglophone countries were translated into Swedish or Danish. When translating between German and Japanese, two languages that use different writing systems, retaining a word unchanged would obviously pose problems to the audience.

For the transcription of foreign-language words, the Japanese language has the katakana syllabary. However, since Japanese uses syllables, or morae, foreign words can only be approximated with this system. For example, the German word 'Arbeit' (work or job) has been introduced into Japanese as *arubaito* (アルバイト), composed of the five katakana characters a-ru-ba-i-to. So, using a word that is not already part of the lexicalized language (found in dictionaries) as loanword can be compared to what Pedersen calls 'target language adjusted retention'. The foreign word is introduced as is with a slight adjustment to adhere to the conventions of the target language.

### *Specification*

Pedersen (2011: 79) defines specification as strategy that keeps the CSE in its untranslated form in the target text and adds information to it that is not present in the source text. In this way, the CSE is explained in the subtitle and becomes more specific than it was in the original text. This strategy can be used in two different ways, either as addition or as completion, and is often employed in Japanese subtitles in a rather unique way which will be discussed in greater detail below.

### *Direct translation*

Pedersen (2011: 83) notes that this strategy could hardly be applied to most proper names (which would be rendered via retention), but it is used for names that are constructed of common nouns, for example names of companies, official institutions, etc. By using this strategy no information is added, nor subtracted. There is also made no effort to guide the audience of the target text or to transfer connotations of the source text.

### *Generalization*

This strategy involves replacing a CSE that is referring to something specific by something more general (Pedersen 2011: 85). It can either be done by replacing the CSE from the source text with a superordinate term or by using a paraphrase where the CSE from the source text is replaced by a more general phrase. Generalization is mainly used for two reasons. On the one hand, it is used to guide the viewers with a more common and therefore easier to understand term. On the other hand, it can be used to transform long phrases into shorter expressions to save subtitling space (Pedersen 2016). However, there are cases where superordinate terms or paraphrases may be longer than the original CSE (Pedersen 2011: 89).

### *Substitution*

Substitution means to remove the CSE of the source text and replacing it either with a different CSE

from the source culture or the target culture (cultural substitution), or with something completely different depending on the specific situation (situational substitution).

### *Omission*

Toury (1995: 82) has pointed out that omission is a valid translation strategy, although it means to delete the culture-specific element in the target text. It can be used responsibly, when there is no other viable option, but it could also be used out of laziness, when it is too much trouble for the translator to look up a term that is difficult to translate (Pedersen 2011: 96). Omission is seen as the most target-oriented translation strategy because it stops a CSE from entering the target text completely.

### *Official equivalent*

Using an official equivalent as translation strategy can also be called a 'ready-made solution' (Pedersen 2011: 97). This strategy does not involve a linguistic process for the translator. An official equivalent can come into existence through an administrative decision or by way of entrenchment. One example for the first would be the rendering of measures of length, for example feet is transferred to meters in most European countries since they have adopted the metric system.

### **3.2.3** Influencing parameters in the translation process

The strategies above have explained how culture-specific elements can be rendered in a target text. The influencing parameters explain why they are rendered in certain ways. According to Pedersen (2016), knowing these parameters will help the subtitler to make an informed decision when a CSE needs to be translated in a certain way.

### *Transculturality*

This parameter indicates how known a CSE is to the audiences of the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). For practical reasons, Pedersen (2016) divides CSE into the three categories transcultural, monocultural, and infracultural. Transcultural CSE are known by most people in the source culture (SC) and the target culture (TC) and infracultural CSE are generally known by neither of the two audiences. Therefore, transcultural and infracultural CSEs do not cause translation problems, as they would be either accessible through the encyclopedic knowledge of the audience or they would have to be made accessible in the co-text since it is even unknown to the audience of the source text. For example, a Japanese transcultural CSE would be *sushi*, a food that most people in Germany know and which nowadays can even be bought in German supermarkets. Another transcultural CSE that most people know about in Japan or Germany, and in many other countries as well, would be *Christmas*.

An example for infracultural CSEs would be the varieties of coffee beans that the protagonist in the movie *Oh Boy* is confronted with in a café. These names would only be known to people with a certain interest in this topic regardless if they are from the source culture (Germany) or the target culture (Japan). This is also used for humorous effect in the movie where the protagonist is

overwhelmed by this information although he just wanted to buy a ‘normal’ coffee. As a result, these infracultural CSE often stay untranslated and are rendered in the subtitles with the strategy retention.

That transculturality depends on the involved cultures also shows the following example. In the analysis of Pedersen (2011: 107), the convenience store 7-Eleven is a transcultural element because it is known to the source text audience in the United States and to the target culture audience in Sweden since this store chain exists in both countries. It would also be a transcultural element in an American-Japanese context since 7-Eleven is also present in Japan. However, in a Japanese-German context 7-Eleven and convenience stores in general must be regarded as monocultural since they do not exist in Germany and would only be known to small parts of the target audience. Regarding this, Pedersen (Ibid.) notes that with greater cultural distance between the source culture and the target culture more monocultural CSE would be found in a text.

So, monocultural CSE cause translation problems because they are only known to the audience of the source culture but not to the target audience and should be made accessible through the translation process (Pedersen 2016). This process can often be difficult because the translator must decide how much explanation of the CSE is necessary. For this, the translator has to judge how much the audience of the target text knows about the source culture in general and the particular CSE. It also depends on other influencing factors such as the co-text and polysemiotics which will be explained below.

Therefore, as Morizumi (2013: 210) puts it, ‘the translator works assuming a shared, common knowledge of the world and common sense’. However, she also points out that this knowledge may not be so common at all and that it may vary across time and space (Ibid.). This is probably even more true for countries that are as far apart geographically and culturally as Japan and Germany. The knowledge of many Japanese viewers about Germany today may be limited to popular topics such as soccer or automobiles.

On the other hand, the target audience may be especially knowledgeable because the source text appeals to a certain group of audience which takes a special interest in the topic of the source text. For example, the Japanese subtitles of the fantasy movie *Lord of the Rings* were translated by Natsuko Toda and heavily criticized by fans because they differed from the translation of the book. Therefore, transculturality may not only depend on how much of the source culture is known in the target country in general but may also depend on the possible existence of a special audience which has to be considered in the translation process.

### *Extratextuality*

CSEs of a text can exist outside of it in the real world (e.g. a real place name like ‘Schweinfurt’ in *Die Wolke*) or they can be text internal and do only exist in the movie or TV series (e.g. the made-up place name ‘Markt Ebersberg’ in *Die Wolke*). According to Pedersen (2016), the importance of this distinction lies in the fact that text internal CSEs do not cause translation problems because they have no connection to reality and could be translated by using any of the available translation strategies.

On the other hand, text external CSEs really exist in the source culture, so the ways in which they can be translated are limited.

### *Centrality*

This parameter is one of the most important influencing parameters and indicates how important a culture-specific element is to the text and can work both on the micro level and the macro level (Pedersen 2011: 111). This means, the subtitler has to determine for each CSE how important it is for the scene in which it appears and how important it is for the whole movie and then render it appropriately in the target text.

### *Polysemiotics*

In comparison to other forms of translations, the classical concept of text has to be widened for audiovisual translation since films are polysemiotic texts where a subtitler has more to translate than only the dialogue. Polysemiotic texts have four semiotic channels: the non-verbal visual channel (the picture), the non-verbal audio channels (music and sound effects), the verbal audio channel (the dialogue) and the verbal visual channels (displays and captions). All these elements in a movie create an intersemiotic redundancy which allow the translator to shorten the text without loss of information because this information is present in another semiotic mode or ‘channel’ (audio, visual, gesture etc.) (Gottlieb 2001b: 15). Pedersen (2011: 113) regards polysemiotics as an important element for the guidance of the TT audience. For example, if a CSE is shown in the picture that is at the same time mentioned in the dialogue the subtitle could be translated with generalization or even omitting the CSE because the picture already contains sufficient information to understand the meaning of text.

### *Co-text*

Although the co-text is a part of the polysemiotics (the dialogue), Pedersen (2016) regards this parameter as extra important because it has to be coherent and can be useful in making an CSE accessible. When a CSE is explained at some point in the text, the subtitler does not have to explain it again. This is also true for the translation of other texts but ‘subtitlers may be more eager to take advantage of co-textual redundancy than are other translators, because of the media-specific constraints’ (Pedersen 2011: 114).

### *Media-specific constraints*

There are two kinds of constraints in subtitling. The first is the semiotic switch from the spoken to the written word in which the text gets somewhat formalized. Second, there are the time and space constraints that were outlined above for subtitles in Japan and in Germany. These constraints make condensation necessary, especially when there is a lot of dialogue in a short time. This means that sometimes the only viable strategy in subtitling a rapid dialogue is to omit parts of it. Since subtitlers constantly must be aware of the media-specific constraints, this parameter may be the one that has

the greatest influence on the subtitling process in general.

### *Subtitling situation*

This parameter is centered on the translation situation and contains various aspects that are not in the text, but about the text (Pedersen 2011: 115). These aspects are the translation norms (national and local), broadcasting (prime time TV, DVD), audience of the target text (age group, level of education, expert or general), the source text (genre, style) and pragmatic aspects (deadlines, salary).

As shown above, German movies in Japan have only a small market, so they can be assumed to have a special-interest audience. There may be exceptions when one of these movies becomes very popular and is screened to a wider audience, but for most of these movies the number of viewers is rather low. Therefore, it could be assumed that the audiences in both countries have more background knowledge about the source culture of the movies. Such background knowledge would make the use of the translation strategy retention a viable option. Furthermore, depending on the age of the target audience, culture-specific elements can be transcultural or unknown. An older audience is probably not so knowledgeable about modern technology, whereas a younger audience may have problems to understand some historical events.

Regarding pragmatic aspects, Pedersen (2011: 118) notes that the whole AVT sector is troubled by rising translation volumes, shortened deadlines and falling prices. This has, without question, great influence on the quality of the translations. Broadcasting may play some role as well in this study as there could be a difference between the subtitles of DVDs and streaming providers. However, more samples would be required to determine a difference between these two types of media.

## **4 Translation strategies in the selected German movies and TV series**

For the following analysis, the dialogue of the German source text that contained culture-specific elements was collected together with its corresponding Japanese subtitles in a data sheet and was then classified according to the translation strategies outlined before.

For the quantitative analysis the employed transfer strategies were counted according to Pedersen's method by type (Pedersen 2011: 151-159). This means that if the same cultural reference is translated in the same way in the examined target text (subtitles) then it is only counted once. Furthermore, only monocultural elements were extracted for the investigation because only these cause translation problems. However, the distinction between monocultural and transcultural elements was not always obvious and required some additional investigation.

For the qualitative analysis several representative examples were selected for which possible influencing parameters are explained in this chapter to demonstrate why this specific strategy was used in each case. In combination, these two ways of analyzing the data show if there is a tendency towards using source-oriented or target-oriented translations strategies and they explain why there is a specific tendency or no tendency.

The number of examined German movies is eight and the number of television series is two. They encompass mainly the genres drama and comedy and were produced between 1998 and 2017. Almost half of the works have historical themes and play during the Second World War (*Der Untergang*, *Mein bester Feind*, *Die Fälscher*) or in the former GDR (*Barbara*, *Deutschland 83*).

The Japanese subtitles of the analyzed German movies show no general tendency in regard to the employed translation strategies. For some of them, rather source-oriented strategies were used and for some rather target-oriented strategies. In around a third of them, source-oriented and target-oriented strategies were employed to about the same degree. One striking example for the extensive use of target-oriented strategies, especially omission, is the movie *Die Wolke*, in which a high number of geographical names appear. Rather source-oriented subtitles can be found in the movie *Er ist wieder da*, which contains many culture-specific elements referring to historical and political figures and events.

### Retention

Among the source-oriented strategies, this one was used the most in the Japanese subtitles of German movies. In Japanese subtitles, retention is often used by rendering personal names or place names in the Japanese katakana script. The other form of retention is to keep the characters of the German script. In the analyzed movies, this second kind of retention was only used for abbreviations or acronyms, as in the following example.

#### 4.1 *Die Wolke*, 22:02

Original German text	Japanese subtitle
Das ist ein ABC-Alarm.	ABC 警報だ
(This is an ABC alarm.)	(It is an ABC alarm.)

This example is a combination of retention of the abbreviation ‘ABC’ and the translation of the word ‘Alarm’. Although the Japanese term *ABC keihō* (ABC 警報) is not found in a dictionary, it was used to render the German term ‘ABC-Alarm’ which is an alarm that sounds when there is a threat by an atomic, biological or chemical weapon. However, since the word *ABC heiki* (ABC 兵器) is used in Japanese, the translator may have assumed that the meaning of ‘ABC’ would be clear to the viewer and therefore has retained it untranslated. Furthermore, if its meaning is not clear to the audience at this point then it should become understandable through the depiction of the unfolding events following the nuclear accident. So, this strategy requires some participation by the audience to infer the meaning of the culture-specific element via the co-text or the polysemiotics.

### Specification

Specification is a less used strategy in the Japanese subtitles of the analyzed German movies and the subcategory completion is more often used than addition.

4.2 *Er ist wieder da*, 4:43

Original German text	Japanese subtitle
Liegt denn der <b>Dönitz</b> auch irgendwo hier rum?	デーニッツ元帥 どこに？
(Is Dönitz also lying around here somewhere?)	(Where is Grand Admiral Dönitz?)

In this scene, Hitler just woke up in present-day Berlin with no clue where he is. The first person he is looking for is Dönitz who was Grand Admiral of the naval forces and became the head of state after Hitler's death. The movie's co-text or the polysemiotics contain no information about who this person was, and even a German viewer would not necessarily know who Dönitz was. Therefore, the Japanese subtitler has decided to aid the target audience by adding the word *gensui* (元帥) to the name, clarifying that this person was an officer (or admiral in this case) of the highest rank.

This strategy was utilized in other cases as well. In *Deutschland 83* (episode 1, 17:15) for example, 'Erich Honecker' was rendered in the Japanese subtitles as *hōnekkā shokichō* (ホーネッカー一書記長), meaning General Secretary Honecker. Obviously, the first name Erich was omitted, probably to save space, as it was supposedly more important for the subtitler to help the viewer understand the importance of this person by adding his occupational title.

As Pedersen (2011: 80) has noted, this strategy emphasizes a certain aspect of the translated CSE, in this case the occupation of the person, to make the target text more specific than the source text. The translators could have used other characteristics of these persons to provide the audience with more information. In any case, these examples show that the added information in the Japanese subtitle takes only very little space of the available characters and could therefore be regarded as a very felicitous way to guide the target audience. However, in other languages this strategy may require more space and Pedersen (2011: 80) notes as one of its drawbacks its verbosity. Another drawback is that this strategy could be regarded as patronizing because it tells the audience what it should know to understand the text.

The next example shows the usage of the subcategory completion. Pedersen (2011: 79) notes that this strategy is often combined with other strategies.

4.3 *Deutschland 83*, 12:51

Original German text	Japanese subtitle
Die HVA ist Elite. Es geht um einen wichtigeren Posten...im Westen.	偵察総局はエリート部署よ 西へ行くの
(The HVA is elite. It is about a more important position... in the west.)	(The General Office for Reconnaissance is an elite department. (You) will go to the west.)

In the German source text appears the abbreviation HVA which is not further explained in the dialogue and which was the name of the foreign intelligence service of the GDR, called 'Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung' in German. It can be translated into English as 'Main Directorate for Reconnaissance' (BStU: n.d., para. 5). In the Japanese subtitle, it is not retained as HVA, but its



meaning is directly translated as *teisatsu sōkyoku* (偵察総局), meaning reconnaissance general office. So, first the strategy specification (completion) is used, which spells out the abbreviation HVA, followed by a direct translation of it.

Figure 3 has shown that the Japanese script can also display smaller characters, called ruby, above words which is usually used to indicate the reading of the characters below. This is often employed in situations such as the one shown in example 4.3 (HVA). However, for some reason this strategy was not used in *Deutschland 83*. The following example shows how the culture-specific element HVA in example 4.3 could have been rendered differently.

In Figure 5, the abbreviation SPD is written above the Japanese word *shamintō* (社民党) which is itself an abbreviation of *shakaiminshutō* (社会民主党), meaning Social Democratic Party. The German dialogue mentions ‘SPD’ (German Social Democratic Party) without further explanation, so the translator has decided to explain it in the subtitle by specification (completion). At the same time, ‘SPD’ is retained above the Japanese word for Social Democratic Party. One minor flaw here is that the Japanese term is used for the Social Democratic Party of Japan, but the context should make clear to the viewer that the Social Democratic Party of Germany is meant in this case.

As can be seen in Figure 5, ‘SPD’ and ‘社民党’ occupy both the same space of three characters in the subtitle. Therefore, this strategy was not used to save space and the subtitle would have been understandable if ‘SPD’ was completely omitted. But most likely the word ‘SPD’ was introduced to the viewer because it is shown in a picture that follows this scene and is also used in subsequent subtitles. This introduction of the source word makes it possible to omit it in the subtitles for the picture because in this scene the subtitle space is already completely occupied by the caption ‘Rede gegen das Ermächtigungsgesetz’ and its translation and by the translated words of the speech that can be heard in this scene (Fig. 6).

However, the above strategy is utilized in other instances to save space in the subtitle. Ōta (2016: 192) notes that by introducing the abbreviation of an official name by writing it as ruby above the word (or at the side in the case of vertical subtitles) this abbreviation can be used on its own in the following subtitles, thereby saving space. She explains this with the example of the National Security Agency (NSA) of the United States which she renders in the Japanese subtitles as *kokka anzen hoshō kyoku* (国家安全保障局) with ‘NSA’ written above this term. By using the abbreviation NSA instead of its Japanese translation in the subsequent subtitles, the space of four characters is made available for the rest of the dialogue whenever the word NSA is mentioned. This strategy was also used in the movie *Der Untergang*, which was translated by Ōta (from English) (Fig. 7). Compared to the example NSA and its translation, the abbreviation ‘SS’ that is used for the Japanese term saves only the space of one character. However, for longer terms this can be a very useful strategy which is not available for German subtitles.

Ōta (Ibid.) regards ruby as a very useful tool for the Japanese subtitler, but she also notes that it can be overused, for example for Japanese word plays. However, the following example shows how ruby can be felicitously employed to transfer humor by adding information to the subtitle that is

necessary to understand the implied meaning of the source text.

#### 4.4 *Er ist wieder da*, 17:13

Original German text	Japanese subtitle
Diese Matrone hatte sich mit den <b>bayerischen Gemütstrinkern</b> zusammengetan.	この中年女は 南の酒浸り政党(CSU)と つるんでいる
(This matron had joined forces with the Bavarian boozers.)	(This middle-aged woman went together with the drunkard party (CSU) from the south.)

In this example, the source text only mentions ‘bayerische Gemütstrinker’ which is rendered as *minami no sakebitari seitō* (CSU) (南の酒浸り政党 (CSU)) with the letters CSU written as ruby above the phrase. However, the pictures that accompany this narration show events of the Bavarian political party CSU and their leader, making it obvious for a German viewer who is meant by the term ‘bayerische Gemütstrinker’ (Fig. 8). The narration and the pictures are very satirical as they show the party mainly involved in drinking alcohol, for example at the Oktoberfest in Munich. The Japanese translator has decided to keep this association as drunkards in the subtitles since this is the important part of this humoristic scene. However, to make it better understandable for the Japanese audience the information that the Bavarian boozers implies a political party, and more specific the CSU, is added. However, this is not a specification in the sense of completion, but obviously an addition. And besides aiding the viewer in understanding the humor of the scene the name of the party is also used in later scenes, either as logo written in the background or in speech.

#### Direct translation

Direct translation is a less used source-oriented strategy in German movies and it is often used for official names that have no Japanese equivalent. One example for this is the word ‘Bundesstraße’ which has the meaning of a national road and which was rendered in *Die Wolke* (44:08) directly translated as *renpō dōro* (連邦道路). It also would have been possible to use the translation *kokudō* (国道) which has the same meaning of a national road and is used as official name for this type of road in Japan. In this case, the direct translation was probably preferred by the translator to mark it as something different compared to the Japanese *kokudō*.

The following example shows how different translation strategies, with focus on direct translation, are used in a single subtitle. In this scene, the author of a stage play asks one of the guests from the audience, who is an actor himself, where he is playing. Since he is not answering, the director lists some names of theaters. At first, he mentions the ‘Staatstheater’ (State Theater) which was directly translated as *kokuritsu gekijō* (国立劇場). Next is the ‘DT’, the ‘Deutsches Theater’ (German Theater), which was translated via specification (completion) by spelling out the abbreviation and translating it directly as *doitsu gekijō* (ドイツ劇場). This is followed by ‘BE’, an abbreviation for the ‘Berliner Ensemble’,

which was omitted in the subtitle. And finally ‘Burg’, which is also translated via specification (completion) by adding the Japanese word for theater, resulting in *buruku gekijō* (ブルク劇場). In this example applies what Pedersen (2011: 83) has meant by using direct translation for names that are constructed of common nouns.

#### 4.5 *Oh Boy*, 57:16

Original German text	Japanese subtitle
Lass mich raten. <b>Staatstheater? DT? BE? Burg?</b> Irgendeine andere staatlich subventionierte Irrenanstalt? Was machst du dann? Film? <b>Berliner Sonderschule?</b> Lass es mich wissen.	所属は国立劇場? ドイツ劇場? ブルク劇場? 国立の精神病院? ならどこだ? 特殊学校か?
(Let me guess. State Theater? German Theater? Berliner Ensemble? Burg? Any other nuthouse subsidized by the state? What are you doing then? Film? Berlin Special School? Let me know.)	(You belong to the State Theater? German Theater? Burg Theater? A national mental hospital? Then where? A special school?)

The direct translation of ‘Berliner Sonderschule’ shows that this source-oriented strategy provides no guidance for the audience. The translation may use the same expression; however, its connotations are probably completely lost to the Japanese viewer. Blankenship and Twark (2017) have written a whole paper about the term ‘Berliner Sonderschule’ and its meaning where they suggest that the film’s director is setting himself apart from a number of German films from the 1990s and 2000s that have been subsumed under the term ‘Berliner Schule’. The director also uses it ironically to categorize his own film.

Of course, to explain the meaning of this term in the restricted space and time of a subtitle is an impossible task, so it is left to the viewers to figure it out on their own. In the end, the direct translation can be regarded as an appropriate representation of the source text since there is no explanation in it as well and the audience can only infer its meaning from the context and through some knowledge they may have about German films of the recent past. In addition, rendering it with retention would make not much sense since it is not an official name and it would make the subtitle too long. Other strategies, such as generalization, would also lead to a subtitle that is too long for this scene that contains a lot of dialogue.

## Generalization

### 4.6 *Er ist wieder da*, 15:23

Original German text	Japanese subtitle
Zeitungskrämer, haben Sie einen <b>Völkischen Beobachter</b> oder einen <b>Stürmer</b> ? Ne, schon länger nicht mehr. Dann wäre ich aufs Erste auch mit einem <b>Panzerbären</b> zufrieden.	党機関紙は ないのか?  もうないよ ”パンツァーベア紙” も読みたい
(Newspaper vendor, do you have a ‘Völkischer Beobachter’ or a ‘Stürmer’? No, not for quite some time now. Then a ‘Panzerbär’ would do for now.)	(Don’t you have a party organ?  Not anymore. I also want to read the Panzerbär paper.)

Generalization is, together with omission, the most often used target-oriented strategy in Japanese subtitles of the analyzed movies. Example 4.6 makes clear that generalization by using a superordinate term is often employed when there is not enough space and/or time to render the culture-specific element with retention and omission is not a viable strategy. And in this case, a direct translation would have no meaning for the target audience, making the subtitles hardly understandable. Therefore, the names of the Nazi party’s newspaper ‘Völkischer Beobachter’ and the antisemitic weekly newspaper ‘Der Stürmer’ were summarized under the superordinate term *toukikanshi* (党機関紙), meaning party organ or party newspaper, since there would not be enough space for these names in the Japanese subtitle.

However, the subtitle after the next makes clear that the preferred way of rendering such culture-specific items seems to be retention or specification for this movie’s subtitler. In the dialogue, the newspaper ‘Panzerbär’ is mentioned which was only published in the very last days of the Second World War in Berlin and is probably unknown to both the source and the target audiences (a difficult case of monocultural or infracultural CSE). Nevertheless, the subtitler has decided to keep the name as *pantsābea-shi* (パンツァーベア紙), meaning ‘Panzerbär paper’.

### 4.7 *Die Wolke*, 8:26

Original German text	Japanese subtitle
Was dachte der sich eigentlich, wo er ist? Bei “ <b>Wer wird Millionär</b> ”?	あの人 何様のつもり? クイズ番組の回答者?
(What did he think where he was? At ‘Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?’)	(Who does he think he is? Contestant in a quiz show?)

Here, the popular quiz show ‘Wer wird Millionär’ is mentioned, the German version of the British show ‘Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?’ which was broadcasted for the first time in the United Kingdom in 1998 and then exported to Germany in 1999. It also came to Japan in the year 2000 under the name *Kuizu \$ Mirionea* (クイズ \$ ミリオネア *Quiz \$ Millionaire*). In the Japanese subtitle, it is generalized with the superordinate term *kuizu bangumi* (クイズ番組), meaning quiz show. So, why was it not translated using its official equivalent? One explanation could be that the translator

preferred the general term because it is shorter. The official name would have made the subtitle longer and with it the time it needs to stay on screen, therefore causing problems with the next subtitle. Another explanation would be that the Japanese version of the show was not well known. Schaefer (2000) notes that this quiz show had not many viewers in Japan in its first year, probably as a result of cultural differences. However, the show ran regularly every week until 2007 when it was changed to a special program with an irregular and less frequent schedule. Therefore, the program should have been known to some extent to the Japanese audience at the time of release of *Die Wolke* in Japan in 2006.

### Substitution

4.8 *Er ist wieder da*, 5:48

Original German text	Japanese subtitle
<b>Hitlerjunge</b> Ronaldo, wo geht es zur Straße?	ヒトラーユーゲントのロナルド 道はどこだ？
(‘Hitlerjunge’ Ronaldo, where is the street?)	(Ronaldo of the Hitler Youth, where is the street?)

In example 4.8, the German word ‘Hitlerjunge’, the common term for a boy who was member of the Hitler Youth, was substituted with the expression *hitorāyūgento*, meaning Hitler Youth. In Japanese (and in English as well), no equivalent term for the word ‘Hitlerjunge’ seems to exist so it is substituted with the term for the organization of which a ‘Hitlerjunge’ was a member of, namely the *hitorāyūgento*, which is a retention of the German ‘Hitlerjugend’. This strategy allows to retain some of the cultural identity of the source text because another culture-specific element from the source culture with a similar meaning was used. And it makes the subtitles easier to follow for the target audience because this Japanese word is usually used as translation for the German word making it an official equivalent.

### Omission

4.9 *Deutschland 83*, episode 2, 15:14

Original German text	Japanese subtitle
Das war heute so eine Hitze in meinem Klassenzimmer. Hiervon habe ich den ganzen Tag geträumt.	教室が暑くて 湖が楽しみだったわ
Die Hälfte deiner Schüler sicher auch.	生徒も同じさ
Haha, meine <b>Jungpioniere</b> denken nur an ihre Hausaufgaben.	どうかしら？ 宿題で頭が痛いはずよ
(It was so hot in my classroom today. I’ve been dreaming about this all day. I bet half of your pupils were too. Haha, my Young Pioneers think only of their homework.)	(The classroom was hot, so, I was looking forward to the lake. The pupils as well. I wonder. Their heads should be aching from homework.)

In this example, the CSE ‘Jungpioniere’ (young pioneers), a term exclusively used for elementary school children who were members of the so-called pioneer organization in the German Democratic Republic, is mentioned in the German dialogue. In the corresponding Japanese subtitle, the translation of this word has been omitted. However, in the subtitle before the general term for pupil (*seito* 生徒) was used to mark the topic of the conversation, therefore leading to the conclusion that in the whole sequence the term ‘Jungpioniere’ was subsumed under the term pupil, allowing for the CSE to be omitted without losing too much information.

This example shows that, although the method for the analysis is based on Toury’s coupled-pairs approach, the co-text (e.g. the subtitles before and after, or the images) cannot be ignored since no sentence in a text exists in isolation. However, both strategies in this example, omission and generalization, are target-oriented, so in the end it would make only a slight difference. But this example also makes clear that for the sake of short and easy to understand subtitles the cultural authenticity of the source text can get lost in translation.

However, a faithful rendering of the term ‘Jungpioniere’ would probably be a rather long word written in katakana script. For this reason, terms that would be rendered in katakana, such as foreign place names and personal names, will often be omitted in the Japanese subtitles due to their length if they are not central to the text. This can be seen in the movie *Die Wolke*, a film about a fictional nuclear incident in Germany, where many geographical names appear, often smaller cities which a foreign viewer probably does not know. As a result, these place names are often omitted when they are not central to the dialogue at hand or when it is clear from the co-text what place is meant. An example from the movie is the city name Schweinfurt. In the subtitles it appears either by using the source-oriented strategy retention to render it as *shuvainfuruto* (シュヴァインフルト), or it is not appearing at all (target-oriented strategy omission). The word written in katakana takes up the space of 9 characters which is a lot considering that one line of a Japanese subtitle only consists of 13 to 16 characters in total.

### Official Equivalent

German geographical names can be said to have official equivalents in Japanese because they are written on maps, so their Japanese spelling was determined by some authority. Therefore, many of them cannot be strictly regarded as monocultural. However, in each case the translator has to judge how well known a geographical name is to the target audience and use an appropriate translation strategy. Large cities such as Berlin or popular tourist spots such as Neuschwanstein are probably known by many Japanese, but a city such as Schweinfurt may not be known at all. Other examples are personal names. Hitler is rendered in Japanese as *hitorā* (ヒトラー) and his common used title ‘Führer’ is always rendered as *sōtō* (総統) which can mean president as well but in the German context it is exclusively used as translation for ‘Führer’.

For the analysis, there must be drawn a line as well, so if a name or a place is very likely to be unknown by the target audience then it is not treated as official equivalent if it was retained in the

subtitles. Furthermore, in movies with historical topics there must be paid close attention to the difference between text internal and text external names. For example, in *Der Untergang* personal names such as 'Fegelein' or 'Rommel' are all text internal because these historical persons appear in the movie. Therefore, they are rendered by retention. On the other hand, in *Er ist wieder da* the names of Nazi personalities are text external references and therefore translated for example with specification (example 4.2).

## 5 Conclusion

Although Pedersen's model was successfully applied in a Japanese-German context in this paper, some difficulties were encountered in the process. The most problematic point was the delineation of which CSE has to be included in the analysis. First, it is necessary to decide if a certain word or phrase is a CSE. Second, it must be considered if it is text internal or text external. Only text external elements are included in the analysis. Finally, it must be decided if the CSE is monocultural, transcultural or infracultural which requires either sufficient knowledge of both cultures that are involved or an additional investigation to find out how known the CSE in question is. This whole process is time consuming and there are cases when a CSE cannot be conclusively categorized.

The quantitative analysis of translation strategies showed that in the Japanese subtitles of the analyzed German movies there was no general tendency towards a more frequent use of source-oriented or target-oriented translation strategies. However, because of the relatively low number of analyzed movies, this result is not universal in regard to the translation of German movies. Among all the six baseline translation strategies, most often used were retention, generalization, and omission. The examples for each translation strategy have explained how the translation process of CSE between Japanese and German is carried out in practice and for what reason certain strategies are employed.

The use of the source-oriented strategies retention, direct translation or specification in the Japanese subtitles of German movies suggest that the translator regards the audience of these movies as knowledgeable enough to know these terms or to be able to figure them out on their own. In many of these cases, there is not enough information contained in the polysemiotics that would give additional information. This can make the movie harder to understand and some points are certainly lost to the audience when they do not understand the original language (e.g. example 4.5 'Berliner Sonderschule'). It could be said that the analyzed Japanese subtitles appear to emulate what would be unknown to the audience of the source text as well, keeping culture-specific elements that could be regarded as infracultural either via retention (e.g. 'Panzerbär') or direct translation (e.g. 'Berliner Sonderschule').

The following reasons can be thought of as why omission is an often-used strategy for the rendering of German dialogue into Japanese subtitles. The use of retention would mean to write the source word in katakana script which would be very space consuming. To express something

similar with available kanji could therefore be thought to be a more felicitous way. However, for proper names or place names this strategy cannot be applied. For example, to render the German city Schweinfurt in Japanese there are two strategies. One is to use retention and transfer the word into katakana script (シュヴァインフルト). In a rapid dialogue, such a word would probably be simply too space consuming. Therefore, the only other viable strategy would be omission in the end, increasing the amount of employed target-oriented strategies. However, omission did not always lead to a loss of information but often had the aim to keep the subtitles short.

Regarding the above conclusions, certain aspects that have an influence on the translation process in Japan were outlined in part 2. These aspects are the preferred method of audiovisual translation, namely subtitling; the prevalent translation philosophies; and the audience of German movies in Japan. It became clear that in recent years German movies in Japan are mainly translated by one person, which influences the translation process without doubt very strongly through this person's own translation philosophy. Furthermore, the audience of German movies in Japan could be regarded as a special-interest audience (except for very popular movies) which has a presumably deeper knowledge of the source culture than a general cinema audience may have, allowing a more foreignizing approach to the translation. In addition, there are characteristics due to the different writing systems that are only found in Japanese subtitles, but not in subtitles of western languages, such as ruby annotations and vertical writing. These characteristics allow the employment of the translation strategy specification in a unique way in Japanese subtitles.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For example, the very popular German movies *Good Bye Lenin!* and *Das Leben der Anderen* were first translated into English and then from English into Japanese.

<sup>2</sup> This information is relatively easy to retrieve since in Japan the names of subtitle translators are in most cases written on the back of the DVD cover or are credited at the end of the movie.

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## Filmography

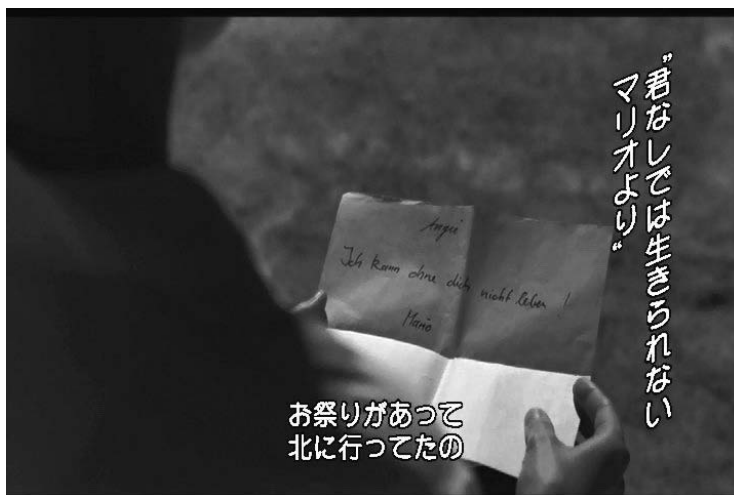
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## Figures



**Figure 1.** Vertical Japanese subtitle in *Mein bester Feind*. The source text written on screen ('Wien 1938') is displayed with vertical Japanese subtitles on the left side and the sign of the shop ('Jakob Kaufmann & Sohn Kunsthandel') is rendered as horizontal subtitle at the bottom. Another unique feature of Japanese subtitles is that the direction of slanted text (italics) is different for horizontal and vertical text.

(Source: *Mein bester Feind*, 5:21)



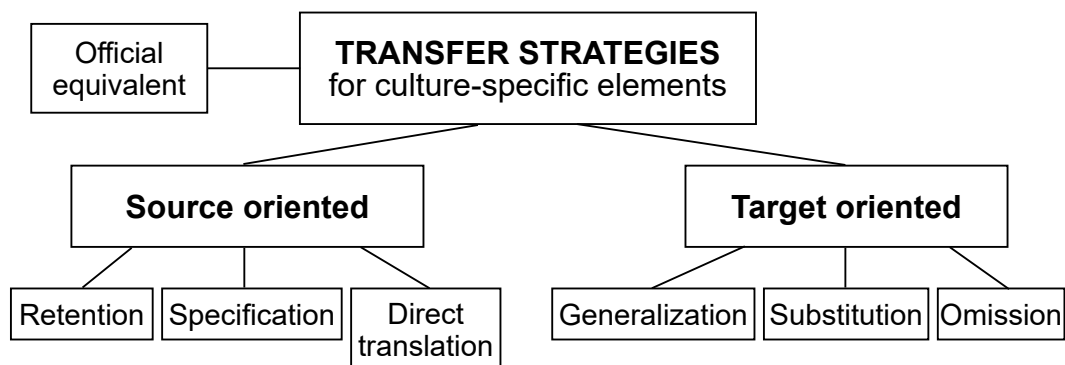
**Figure 2.** Vertical Japanese subtitle in *Barbara*. In this example, a vertically written subtitle is used to show the contents of the letter seen in the picture while the normal subtitles at the bottom render the spoken dialogue.

(Source: *Barbara*, 1:17:07)



**Figure 3.** Ruby annotation in a Japanese subtitle in *Barbara*. The word ‘Interhotel’ is retained as *intāhoteru* (インターホテル) in the Japanese subtitle as ruby above the actual subtitle which reads ‘Hotel for foreigners’.

(Source: *Barbara*, 57:56)



**Figure 4.** Simplified taxonomy of transfer strategies for culture-specific elements (Pedersen 2011: 75).



**Figure 5.** Use of ruby annotation in *Er ist wieder da*. The abbreviation for the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) is retained as ruby above the Japanese translation of the word.

(Source: *Er ist wieder da*, 17:19)



**Figure 6.** Various semiotic channels transmit information at the same time in *Er ist wieder da*. The banner of the SPD can be seen at the top of the picture in the middle. Its caption is not rendered in the subtitles, probably because there is not enough space to display all of the information contained in this scene (audio from the dialogue, visual information from the picture, visual information from the on-screen text). To aid the viewer, the term SPD was introduced in a subtitle just before this picture appeared on screen (Fig. 5).

(Source: *Er ist wieder da*, 17:33)



**Figure 7.** Use of ruby annotation in *Der Untergang*. The abbreviation for ‘Schutzstaffel’ (SS), the paramilitary security organization of the Nazi Party, is written as ruby above its Japanese translation *shin'eitai* (親衛隊).

(Source: *Der Untergang*, 11:27)



**Figure 8.** Use of ruby to transfer humor in *Er ist wieder da*. The leader of the Bavarian political party CSU is shown at the Oktoberfest drinking beer. In the movie, this is used to portray the party as a drinker party. The name CSU is not mentioned in the German source text but is added as ruby above the Japanese translation.

(Source: *Er ist wieder da*, 17:13)