

Lexical Non–Equivalence and Translation Strategies in Subtitles of “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies”*

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were: 1) To investigate the types of lexical non–equivalent problems found in the English subtitles of the Thai movie “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies”. 2) To examine translation strategies employed in English subtitles of the Thai movie “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies”. 3) To explain the possible reasons for the use of translation strategies in English subtitles of the Thai movie “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies”. This study adopted a mixed–methods approach. A total of 262 Thai–English subtitle pairs containing lexical non–equivalence were selected from 1,403 subtitle lines in the film “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies” (Netflix). Baker’s (2018) conceptual categories of lexical non–equivalents were used to analyze the non–equivalents. The translation strategy taxonomy proposed by Baker (2018), Newmark (1988), and Larson (1998) was applied to explain translation strategies used in subtitle translation. The content analysis was employed to explore the reasons for the use of translation strategies. The findings of this study were: 1) The top three lexical non–equivalence were the source language lacks of details with 44 times, (16.79%), followed by the context of source language is understandable with 35 times (13.35%), and differences in physical or interpersonal perspective with 34 times (13%), respectively. 2) Translation by omission (52 times, 19.85%) was the most commonly used translation strategy, followed by translation by

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paraphrase using an unrelated word (47 times, 17.94%), and translation by addition (42 times, 16.03%), respectively. 3) Four reasons for translation strategy use to cope with translation problems at the word level were semantic problems, lexical problems, cultural problems, and form-related problems. The results of this study could be a guideline for translators to employ practical strategies in movie subtitle translation. Pedagogical implications are also discussed to shed light on the teaching and learning of translation.

Keywords: lexical non-equivalence; subtitle translation; Thai-English translation; translation strategies

Introduction

Translation is a vital tool for conveying meanings from one language to another and facilitating cross-cultural communication (Kapur, 2014). According to Nida and Taber (1982), it is to reproduce the natural equivalent of the source language (SL) in terms of meaning and style. According to Larson (1998), translation aims to convey equivalence from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). With the widespread film-making business, Thai filmmakers produce Thai movies to cater to international audiences (Laongpol, 2020). Therefore, subtitle translation in English plays a crucial role in ensuring that international audiences understand the entire movie.

For subtitle translation, non-equivalence at the word level is a significant problem encountered by translators. If non-equivalence is poorly handled, translation breakdowns might occur. For example, when the Thai word “เจ๋ง”, which is used to describe someone or something awesome or great, is translated in English as “cool” instead of “smart”, “excellent”, “outstanding”, or “exceptional” by overlooking its surrounding contexts may result in cultural misunderstanding, loss of humor and emotional tone. Therefore, translation strategies employed by professional translators are recommended to address translation problems (Baker, 2018). Many studies have revealed that specific translation strategies are mainly used to address non-equivalence in English-to-Thai translation subtitles. For example, Pengpanich and Whisenand (2020) found that paraphrasing by using related words was very common in translation subtitles of the movie “The Proposal”. Settanyakan and Wongwattana (2022) analyzed strategies for translating movie subtitles of the top 100 films ranked by the Thai Box Office in 2017 and reported that deletion was applied at the highest level. Based on the research by Sontisawang et al. (2020), cultural substitution was generally employed in subtitles of the movie “Deadpool”.

Similarly, cultural substation was also primarily used in the study of Taowan (2021), who investigated translation strategies of taboo words in “Big Mouth”.

However, few studies have explored the translation difficulties and translation strategies in Thai-to-English subtitles. Ngampradit and Boonmoh (2012) examined types of non-equivalence at the word level and translation strategies found in English subtitles of the movie “Hello Stranger”. Somsin (2024) analyzed the techniques and methods used in translating Thai cultural terms in the English subtitles of the movie “Love Destiny 2”. Moreover, no empirical studies have been found to discuss the rationale for using translation strategies in movie subtitles. Identifying the reasons behind strategy use will provide an in-depth understanding of translators’ perspectives and how translators decide to choose a strategy for solving problems in subtitle translation.

In light of the aforementioned research gaps, this study aims to investigate the types of lexical non-equivalence and the translation strategies employed in the English subtitles of the Thai film “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies” (Lahn Ma). This film was selected due to its broad international reach and significant cultural impact. It grossed an estimated \$73.8 million worldwide. It was selected as Thailand's entry for Best International Feature Film at the 97th Academy Awards, and became the first Thai submission to reach the 15-film shortlist. The film deals with Thai-Chinese family values, emotions, and cultural norms, which are deeply rooted in the source language and difficult to translate literally. These aspects make its subtitle translation particularly challenging and relevant for study. Investigating its subtitles provides valuable insight into how Thai cultural and emotional nuances are conveyed to global audiences through English, especially when literal translation fails to deliver the intended meaning. This article proceeds with a literature review, outlines the research methodology, presents the findings, and concludes with theoretical and pedagogical implications.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the types of lexical non-equivalent problems found in the English subtitles of the Thai movie “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies”.
2. To examine translation strategies employed in English subtitles of the Thai movie “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies”.
3. To explain the possible reasons for the use of translation strategies in English subtitles of the Thai movie “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies”.

Literature Review

Lexical Non-Equivalent Problems in Translation

Equivalence is central to translation (Somsin, 2024). Translators begin by decoding words, the most minor units of meaning, and must maintain lexical equivalence to avoid losing information when moving from the SL to the TL. Problems arise when the TL lacks direct lexical equivalents. Based on Baker (2018), there are eleven types of lexical non-equivalence. 1) Culture-specific concepts: The SL words reflect cultural ideas unfamiliar to the TL. 2) The source-language concept is not lexicalized in the target language: The idea exists, but there is no direct word in the target language. 3) The source-language word is semantically complex: The SL words carry complex meanings needing phrases in the TL. 4) The source and target languages make different distinctions in meaning: The SL and TL define meanings differently. 5) The target language lacks a superordinate: The target language (TL) has specific terms but lacks a general category that encompasses them. 6) The target language lacks a specific term (hyponym): The target language (TL) has no specific term for the source language (SL) concept due to environmental differences. 7) Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective: Physical or social relationships vary based on formality, register, and viewpoint. 8) Differences in expressive meaning: Words match in meaning but differ in emotional tone; modifiers may be needed. 9) Differences in form: The TL lacks equivalents for particular SL forms. 10) Differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms: The SL and TL differ in grammatical structure and usage. 11) The use of loan words in the source text: The SL uses borrowed terms when no TL equivalent exists, and accurate matches may be hard to find.

Translation Strategies in Subtitling

Baker (2018) described translation strategy as the approach used by professional translators to handle problems. Similarly, Matkivska (2014) defines it as a set of rules guiding translators to achieve their goal effectively. As-Safi (2011) notes that effective strategies help resolve translation issues, while In-Lom (2021) emphasizes that appropriate strategies should preserve the original meaning, sense, style, and culture. Baker (2018) proposed eight strategies commonly used by professional translators. 1) Translation by a more general word (superordinate): Using a superordinate to handle non-equivalence. 2) Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word: The translator chooses a less emotional word when expressive meanings differ. 3) Translation by cultural substitution: Replacing a culture-specific word with a familiar one in the TL

for naturalness. 4) Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation: Using a loanword, often with the first explanation for clarity. 5) Translation by paraphrase using a related word: Substituting with a related TL word when forms differ. 6) Translation by paraphrase using an unrelated word: Using an unrelated word when no TL equivalent exists. 7) Translation by omission: Omitting non-essential words to keep the translation concise. 8) Translation by illustration: Using visuals when physical entities lack TL equivalents.

Additionally, the study applied strategies from Newmark (1988) and Larson (1998) as follows. 1) Translation by using a more intensive expressive meaning: Emphasizing ideas for better audience connection. 2) Translation by using idiom: Replacing a phrase with a TL idiom for naturalness and cultural relevance. 3) Translation by addition: Adding words, explanations, or context to clarify meaning. 4) Translation by using more specific words: Replacing general terms with more precise ones to improve clarity and accuracy.

Empirical Studies

Several studies have investigated translation strategies used in film subtitles. Pengpanich and Whisenand (2020) identified translation strategies in “The Proposal” by using the frameworks of Baker, Vinay and Darbelnet, and Nida. The top three of strategies used included translation by using loan words (e.g. “office” – “ออฟฟิศ”), translation by paraphrase using unrelated words (e.g. “You poisonous bitch.” – “ยายแก่บ้าพลังเฮ้ย”) and translation by paraphrase using related words (e.g. “My mother made this dress by hand.” – “แม่ฉันตัดเสื้อนี้ด้วยตัวเอง”).

Sontisawang, et al. (2020) investigated translation strategies employed in “Deadpool” based on the taxonomies of Baker, Newmark, and Ngampradit and Boonmoh. The three most frequently used strategies were translation using cultural substitution (e.g., “fair” – “งานวัด”), using a more intensely expressive word (e.g., “tight” – “รัดตัว”), and using a more neutral / less expressive word (e.g., “love” – “ชอบ”). Translation using illustration was not found in this study.

Settanyakan and Wongwattana (2022) examined translation strategies in movie subtitles from the top 100 films ranked by the Thailand Box Office in 2017, using the frameworks of Newmark and Gottlieb. The common strategies were communicative translation strategy (e.g. “Oh, that is hilarious. You should be on TV.” – “มุกเหี้ยแต่ฮา น่าไปเป็นดาวตลก”), semantic translation strategy (e.g. “Where did you get an idea like that?” – “เอาความคิดนั้นมาจากไหน”), and faithful translation strategy (e.g. “It means you love me” – “มันหมายความว่าฉันรักฉัน”), deletion (e.g. “This is a small village, you know.” – “เมืองนี้เป็นเมืองเล็ก”), expansion (e.g. “Ladies first.” – “เชิญ

คุณผู้หญิงก่อน”), and paraphrase (e.g. “There is no way that someone like you could ever understand what we have.” – “คนอย่างคุณไม่มีทางเข้าใจสิ่งที่เรามีให้กันหรอก”).

Taowan (2021) examined the translation strategies of taboo words using Baker’s framework in the adult animated series “Big Mouth” seasons 1, 2, and 3, which represented taboos. The top three translation strategies were cultural substitution (e.g. “What the fuck are you talking about?” – “พูดเรื่องบ้าบออะไรของแก”), using a more neutral / less expressive word (e.g. “Rage! Rage! Fucking rang! Climb into the stands and beat his ass.” – “โกรธ! โกรธมากมาก! ปีนที่นั่งคนดูขึ้นไปเตะกันเขาเลย”). Nevertheless, no translation by illustration was discovered in the movie subtitles.

Ngampradit and Boonmoh (2012) analyzed the types of non-equivalence, translation strategies, and the reasons for translation strategy use in “Hello Stranger”. The framework of Baker was employed to analyze the movie scripts. The top three types of non-equivalents were differences in expressive meaning (e.g. “เตี้ย” – “dwarf”), followed by concept in the SL is not simply lexicalized in the TL (e.g. “แสด” – “act slutty”), and differences in physical or interpersonal perspective (e.g. “แตก” – “eat”). For translation strategies, translation by a more neutral word / less expressive word (e.g., “ถีบ” – “kick”) was mainly used because the translator selected the nearest equivalent word, which has a less expressive meaning. Second was translation by cultural substitution (e.g. “เป็นหมีกแดงหรือไง” – “Are you Martha Stewart or something?”) because the translator intended to build understanding bridges for the semantic gaps from the source text to the target text. Third was translation using a loan word or a loan word plus explanation (e.g. “ครีปผมชื่อต่าง” – “Darng, it means puppy”) because the translator intended to clarify the meaning of the Thai name to the audience. However, translation by illustration was not found in the subtitles. Somsin (2024) examined the lexical non-equivalence of cultural terms in “Love Destiny 2” by using Baker’s framework. The top three used translation strategies included translation by paraphrasing using related words (e.g., “ไม่ชอบมาพากล” – “suspicious”), followed by translation by paraphrasing using unrelated words (e.g., “ขุนช้างขุนแผนเล่า” – “Is he Mis-Chief or Hanker-Chief?”). Moreover, translation by using more neutral / less expressive words (e.g., “ออกเรือน” – “marry”). Similar to the study conducted by Ngampradit and Boonmoh (2012) and Taowan (2021), translation by illustration was not employed in this research.

Based on previous research on translation strategies in movie subtitles, most studies have explored international movie subtitles translated into Thai, such as “The Proposal”, “Deadpool”, and “Big Mouth”. However, few studies (“Hello Stranger” and “Love Destiny 2”) investigated

non-equivalent problems and translation strategies in Thai-to-English subtitles. To this end, the present study aims to bridge this research gap by examining the lexical problems that arose in the translation and the translation strategies used in “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies” (Lahn Mah). Furthermore, the study aims to explain the reasons behind the use of translation strategies in movie subtitles.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is constructed based on a literature review of Thai-to-English subtitle translation into lexical non-equivalent problems, translation strategies, and reasons for translation strategy use as shown in Figure 1. It outlines the connections of variables in the study.

Movie Subtitle Translation

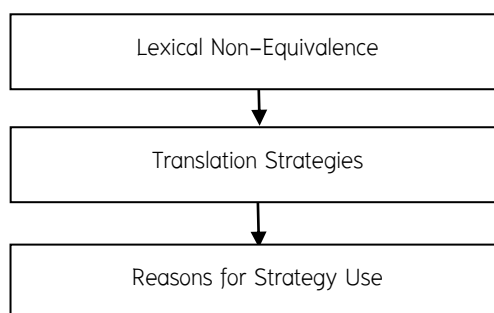


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Movie Subtitle Translation

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to analyze data. A quantitative method was employed to analyze the types of non-equivalent problems at the word level and the translation strategies employed in the English subtitles of “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies”. A qualitative approach was employed to explore the possible reasons behind the translation strategies used to address lexical non-equivalent translation problems in the English subtitles of the movie.

Data Collection

In this study, quantitative data were collected from Thai-to-English subtitles appearing throughout the movie “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies,” which is available on Netflix.

The movie lasts 2 hours and 5 minutes. The researchers thoroughly watched the movie to gain a comprehensive understanding of its content. To ensure the alignment between the Thai dialogues and English subtitles, the data was typed in a tabular format, one column for the Thai original text and one for the English translation. There was a total of 1,403 pairs of Thai dialogues and English subtitles. The data was compared sentence by sentence to analyze it. However, only 262 pairs of them, consisting of lexical non-equivalent problems and translation strategies, were drawn for data analysis. Qualitative data were derived from the content analysis, which revealed patterns of reasons for using translation strategies.

Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, eleven types of lexical non-equivalence based on Baker (2018) were employed to analyze the data. Then, the non-equivalent items were identified to determine the use of translation strategies, according to the framework proposed by Baker (2018), Newmark (1988), and Larson (1998). Quantitative data, including frequencies of each lexical non-equivalence type and translation strategy use, were calculated as a percentage to determine the most commonly found translation problem and the most frequently used translation strategy. Qualitative data elicited from the content analysis were used to explain the reasons for using the translation strategy. To enhance reliability, three independent raters were invited to verify the findings. These Thai university lecturers possess strong backgrounds in English education and translation, each holding at least a master's degree in English and over ten years of experience teaching at the tertiary level. Their combined expertise lends credibility and accuracy to the data analysis. The inter-rater reliability showed a high value of Kappa ($K = 0.92$, $p < .05$), which demonstrated almost perfect agreement between raters' judgments on the reasons the researchers provided for translation strategy use in this study.

Research Results

The results of the study are presented in three aspects: lexical non-equivalent problems, translation strategies, and the reasons for using these strategies. To be more convenient in reporting the findings, the letter "A" followed by the number (A1–A14) refers to each type of lexical non-equivalence, and "B" followed by the number stands for each translation strategy (B1–B12).

1. Lexical non-equivalent problems: Out of 262 pairs of Thai dialogues and English subtitles, 169 items were found as non-equivalents based on Baker (2018)'s framework, namely A1–A11. Furthermore, the researchers found that 93 items of non-equivalence did not align with the framework proposed by Baker (2018). Therefore, the researchers classified them into three additional types of lexical non-equivalence, i.e., A12, A13, and A14. The first lexical non-equivalent that emerged during the data analysis was A12, which provided understandable contexts in the source language. It arises when a concept is easily understood in the source language due to cultural or contextual familiarity but may be ambiguous in the target language. Differences in cultural background and shared knowledge can lead to difficulties in conveying the intended meaning. For example, “แกก็ใช้บัตรเสริมแกลิ” was translated into “Why don’t you use your card?” The word “เสริม” literally means “supplementary.” However, the translator chose to omit it because it might sound overly formal in casual conversation. If the context already makes it clear which card is being referred to, mentioning “supplementary” is unnecessary.

The second was A13. The source language lacks details. It occurs when the source language (SL) uses a vague term, making it challenging to convey an accurate meaning in the target language (TL). Explanatory details ensure clarity and accuracy. For instance, “โหม่มาบอกคนดูแลต้องได้ใจ” was rendered as “I thought you said the caregiver would be rewarded.” Because the SL lacked specific detail, the translator adds “reward” in the TL, providing necessary context that is not explicit in the SL.

The third was A14. Words in the source language have no significant meaning in the target language. This occurs when words in the source language (SL) have no cultural or linguistic relevance in the target language (TL). In such a case, an equivalent expression conveys the intended meaning. For example, “ขอให้ได้ทรัพย์ตามปรารถนา” was translated as “May I gain wealth as I wish.” The word “ตามปรารถนา” literally means “as wish,” which carries a deeper Thai cultural and emotional tone because the translator kept the literal meaning to preserve the intent.

According to Table 1, the top three lexical non-equivalents were A13, A12, and A7, respectively. A13 The source language lacks details, which was found most often, with 44 instances, accounting for 16.79%. (e.g. “ยังไม่ถึงเวลาฤ” – “It is not time for my meal yet.”). Second was A12 The context of source language is understandable with 35 times, counted as 13. 35% (e.g. “เขาปล่อยตัวมึงกลับบ้านแล้วหรือ” – “Did they let you come back already?”) Third

was A7 Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective with 34 times, counted as 13% (e.g. “ปากเหม็นบุหรี่” – “Your breath smells like cigarettes.”)

It was also revealed that the bottom three lexical non-equivalence included A2 The source-language concept is not lexically in the target language with 3 times, counted as 1.14% (e.g. “ทะลึ่ง” – “How dare you! ”), followed by A9 Differences in form (e.g. “ตมเปื่อย ๆ เลย” – “It is very tender.”) with 2 times, counted as 1.14%, and A5 The target language lacks a superordinate (e.g. “เสียว่าวันไหนมาปรับทีวีให้อากงหน่อยสิ” – “When you have time, can you come take a look for Grandpa?”) and A10 Differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms (e.g. “แล้วข้าวของอะไรเยอะแยะ” – “What is with all the stuff?”) occurred equally for 1 time (0.38%), respectively.

Table 1 Frequency of Non-Equivalence Type in the English Subtitles of the Movie “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies”

Rank	Non-Equivalence Type	Freq.	%
*1	A13 The source language lacks details	44	16.79
*2	A12 The context of the source language is understandable	35	13.35
3	A7 Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective	34	13.00
4	A1 Culture-specific concepts	33	12.60
5	A4 The source and target languages make different distinctions in meaning	29	11.06
6	A8 Differences in expressive meaning	28	10.68
7	A3 The source-language word is semantically complex	20	7.63
*8	A14 Words in the source language do not have significant meaning in the target language	14	5.37
9	A6 The target language lacks a specific term (hyponym)	9	3.43
	A11 The use of loan words in the source text	9	3.43
10	A2 The source language concept is not lexically present in the target language	3	1.14
11	A9 Differences in form	2	0.76
12	A5 The target language lacks a superordinate	1	0.38
	A10 Differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms	1	0.38
Lexical non-equivalents based on Baker (2018)		169	64.50
Lexical non-equivalents based on the researchers		93	35.50
Total		262	100

* Remark: Lexical non-equivalents identified by the researchers during the data analysis

2. Translation strategies: After analyzing the types of non-equivalence, the translation strategies employed to address them in the movie were investigated. Table 2 illustrates the frequency of individual translation strategies for handling the non-equivalence at the word level. It is noticeable that 11 out of 12 translation strategies were manipulated following lexical non-equivalence. To clarify, B8 Translation by using illustration was not found in this study. The most frequently used translation strategy was B7 Translation by omission (52 times, 19.85 %). For example, “เดี่ยวเอ็มช่วยพาขึ้นเอง” was translated as “I will help bring you up.” Here, the word “พา” (meaning “bring”) was omitted, as its meaning is already implied in the context and does not need to be explicitly translated. The second was B6 Paraphrasing using an unrelated word, which was found 47 times (17.94%). For instance, “ทำไมมึงต้องพูดเหมือนมึงดูดีมากเลย” was translated as “Why are you making yourself look good?” In this case, the word “พูด” (which means “speak”) was rendered as “make.” The translator chose a broader or less directly related word to express the intended meaning more naturally in the target language. The third most frequently used strategy was B11 Translation by addition, which occurred 42 times (16.03 %). It involves adding words or brief explanations in the target language to clarify meaning, provide context, or bridge linguistic and cultural differences. For example, “นี่ไก่จากมณฑลเทียนเหลนนะคะม้า” was translated as “The chicken is from the famous Montien Hotel, Mother.” The word “hotel” was added to clarify that “Montien” refers to a hotel, ensuring that the target audience fully understands the reference.

Table 2 Frequency of Translation Strategies Used in the Movie “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies”

Rank	Translation Strategies	Freq.	%
1	B7 Translation by omission	52	19.85
2	B6 Translation by paraphrasing using an unrelated word	47	17.94
3	B11 Translation by addition	42	16.03
4	B1 Translation using a more general word	27	10.30
5	B5 Translation by paraphrasing using a related word	26	9.93
6	B2 Translation using a more neutral/less expressive word	17	6.49
7	B9 Translation by using a more intensive expressive meaning	16	6.10
8	B3 Translation using cultural substitution	15	5.73
9	B4 Translation using a loan word or a loan word plus explanation	9	3.44
10	B12 Generic to specific	8	3.05
11	B10 Idiom translation	3	1.14
12	B8 Translation by using an illustration	0	0
Total		262	100

3. Reasons for translation strategy use: Based on the content analysis, the results regarding the possible reasons the translator used to apply translation strategies for the movie subtitles of “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies” were classified into four categories: semantic, lexical, cultural, and form-related problems.

According to Table 3, the primary reason for employing translation strategies in the movie subtitles was semantic problems. That is, the translator frequently used B2 Translation by a more neutral/ less expressive word, B3 Translation by cultural substitution, B5 Translation by paraphrase using a related word, B6 Translation by paraphrase using an unrelated word, and B9 Translation using a more intensive expressive meaning because the translator encountered problems related to meanings of source language text, i.e. A3 The source-language word is semantically complex, A4 The source and target language make different distinctions in meaning, A8 Differences in expressive meaning, A13 The source language lacks of details, and A14 Words in the source language have no significant meaning in the target language.

Additionally, the reasons why the translator commonly applied B1 Translation by a more general word (superordinate), B2 Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word, and B5 Translation by paraphrase using a related word since he faced problems regarding vocabulary or lexis, namely A2 The source-language concept is not lexicalized in the target language, A5 The target language lacks a superordinate, A6 The target language lacks a specific term (hyponym), and A7 Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective.

Another reason for the translator to employ translation strategies is related to the cultural context of the source language (SL) and target language (TL) texts. The translator often used B7 Translation by omission to solve problems about an unfamiliar cultural concept, which included A1 Culture-specific concepts, A11 The use of loan words in the source text, and A12 The context of the source language is understandable.

Also, the translator generally employed B5 Translation by paraphrasing using a related word because the problems A9 Differences in form and A10 Differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms occurred while translating. It is observed that B5 Translation, which involves paraphrasing using a related word, was applied to solve translation problems in three categories: semantic, lexical, and form-related problems.

Table 3 Reasons for translation strategy use in the Movie “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies”

Reasons	Lexical Non-Equivalent Problems	Translation Strategies
Semantic problems	A3 The source–language word is semantically complex	B2 Translation by a more neutral / less expressive word
	A4 The source and target languages make different distinctions in meaning	B3 Translation by cultural substitution
	A8 Differences in expressive meaning	B5 Translation by paraphrasing using a related word
	A13 The source language lacks details.	B6 Translation by paraphrasing using an unrelated word
	A14 Words in the source language have no significant meaning in the target language	B9 Translation using a more intensive expressive meaning
Lexical problems	A2 The source–language concept is not lexicalized in the target language	B1 Translation by a more general word (superordinate)
	A5 The target language lacks a superordinate	B2 Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word
	A6 The target language lacks a specific term (hyponym)	B5 Translation by paraphrasing using a related word
	A7 Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective	
Cultural problems	A1 Culture–specific concepts	B7 Translation by omission
	A11 The use of loan words in the source text	
	A12 The context of the source language is understandable	
Form–related problems	A9 Differences in form	B5 Translation by paraphrasing using a related word
	A10 Differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms	

Discussions

The research finding revealed that the most common problem of lexical non-equivalence in the movie subtitle “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies” was A13, the source language lacks details (44 times, 16.79%). For example, “แล้วพอผมทักไปก็ไม่มีคนตอบเลยครับ” was translated as “When I texted him, no one replied.” and “ให้ข้อมูลคนไข้ก่อนนะครับ” was translated as “Please fill out the form.” This result is not in line with previous studies, as the researchers identified this type of translation problem. It occurred when the Thai subtitles of the movie lacked sufficient details to be translated into English, resulting in a lack of clarity for the audience. The possible reason is that the Thai language often relies on shared cultural context, implicit meaning, and conversational hints that are not directly expressed in words. As a result, important details

may be omitted in the Thai dialogue but are necessary for complete understanding in English, requiring translators to interpret and fill in the gaps. However, the problem related to A7, Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective, was ranked third in this study, with 34 mentions (13%). This finding is consistent with Ngampradit and Boonmoh (2012), who also reported this problem as the third most frequent issue. The reason might be that Thai and English differ significantly in how they express physical and interpersonal perspectives. Thai often encodes social hierarchy, emotional tone, and speaker relationships directly through word choices, such as the use of pronouns or verbs. At the same time, English tends to neutralize or generalize these expressions for clarity and fluency. Therefore, translators sometimes shift the perspective to soften the strong word (as in “พวกมึง” to “you all”) or use a more general term (as in “เส้นเลือดหัวใจตีบ” to “heart disease”), to preserve the overall meaning and tone in TL audiences.

Notably, two translation problems rarely occurred in this study: A9, Difference in form (2 times, 0.76%), and A5. The target language lacks a superordinate (1 time, 0.38%). This is similar to the research of Ngampradit and Boonmoh (2012), which found that neither translation problem was identified. In the case of A9, a difference in form, such as verbs in Thai becoming nouns or adjectives in English, can be handled smoothly by rephrasing the sentence to fit the English language. For A5, the target language lacks a superordinate; when a specific term in Thai has no direct superordinate in English, translators use more general terms that are easily understood by international audiences. These strategies help maintain fluency and clarity in subtitles, making these problems less frequent and less noticeable. In terms of translation strategy use, the result showed that B7 Translation by omission (52 times, 19.85%), B6 Translation by paraphrasing using unrelated words (47 times, 17.94%), and B11 Translation by addition (42 times, 16.03%) were frequently used in this study. This finding is consistent with the results reported in previous studies, including Pengpanich and Whisenand (2020), Settanyakan and Wongwattana (2022), and Somsin (2024). This might be because subtitles are subject to strict time and space limitations, requiring translators to convey meaning as clearly and concisely as possible. In many cases, specific strategies in the Thai source text, especially culturally specific or contextually implied details, may be omitted (B7) without significantly altering the intended meaning. This helps maintain fluency and comprehension in the English language. Similarly, when a direct translation lacks clarity, paraphrasing using unrelated words (B6) allows translators to reframe the message using natural expressions in English. This strategy ensures that the subtitles are easy to follow while preserving the character's intended meaning. Finally, addition (B11) is often used when the

SL lacks details that are culturally or contextually necessary for the target audience to understand the message. By inserting an explanation, the translator can make the dialogue more explicit, especially when important information is only implied in the original Thai text. Together, these strategies are frequently employed because they offer flexibility and help maintain the natural flow, cultural accessibility, and clarity required for effective subtitle translation.

It was also found that B8 Translation by illustration was not employed in this study. This finding aligns with past studies, including those by Ngampradit and Boonmoh (2012), Somsin (2024), Sontisawang et al. (2020), and Taowan (2021). A possible reason is that the visuals and dialogues are displayed simultaneously in the movie. The audience can completely understand the movie content without illustrations. Therefore, the illustration, along with the explanation for the context, is not necessary.

The study's results also revealed four groups of reasons for using translation strategies, namely, semantic, lexical, cultural, and form-related problems. A semantic problem was the main reason for selecting translation strategies, as lexical non-equivalence in subtitle translation is mainly relevant to the meanings of source language (SL) words in the movie content. These include the SL's lack of details, the SL and TL make different distinctions in meaning, differences in expressive meaning, the SL word is semantically complex, and words in the SL have no significant meaning in the TL, respectively. Therefore, the translator frequently chose strategies related to the semantic problem to deal with lexical non-equivalences in subtitle translation.

New Knowledge from Research

New knowledge from the research highlights four key areas. First, the study reveals lexical non-equivalence issues in translating Thai-specific items such as family terms, slang, and expressions of respect or gratitude, enhancing the understanding of culturally bound expressions in Thai-English subtitling. For cultural concept awareness, the study offers an understanding of how Thai culture affects the difficulty of achieving lexical equivalence in English, highlighting the need for cultural adaptation in subtitle translation. Second, for translation strategy, it proposes a refined model for strategy selection, focusing on cultural intent, emotional preservation, and audience understanding, which helps subtitlers make more thoughtful, culturally sensitive choices and guides decision-making in cross-cultural contexts. Third, regarding practical implications, the investigation of Thai-to-English subtitle translation is beneficial as an authentic source for enhancing subtitle translation training, teaching, and professional development. Ultimately, this

study can contribute to the professional development of those involved in movie subtitle translation. Subtitle translators should be aware of lexical non-equivalences and decide which strategy is suitable for solving the problems. Moreover, the limitations of subtitle translation should be acknowledged, such as the inability to convey facial expressions and body gestures of the characters. For teachers, the cultural differences between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) are significant in subtitle translation. Also, learners should modify the target expression to maintain the source meanings. Therefore, the target audiences can understand the original meanings in the subtitle. New knowledge gained from this study is depicted in Figure 2.

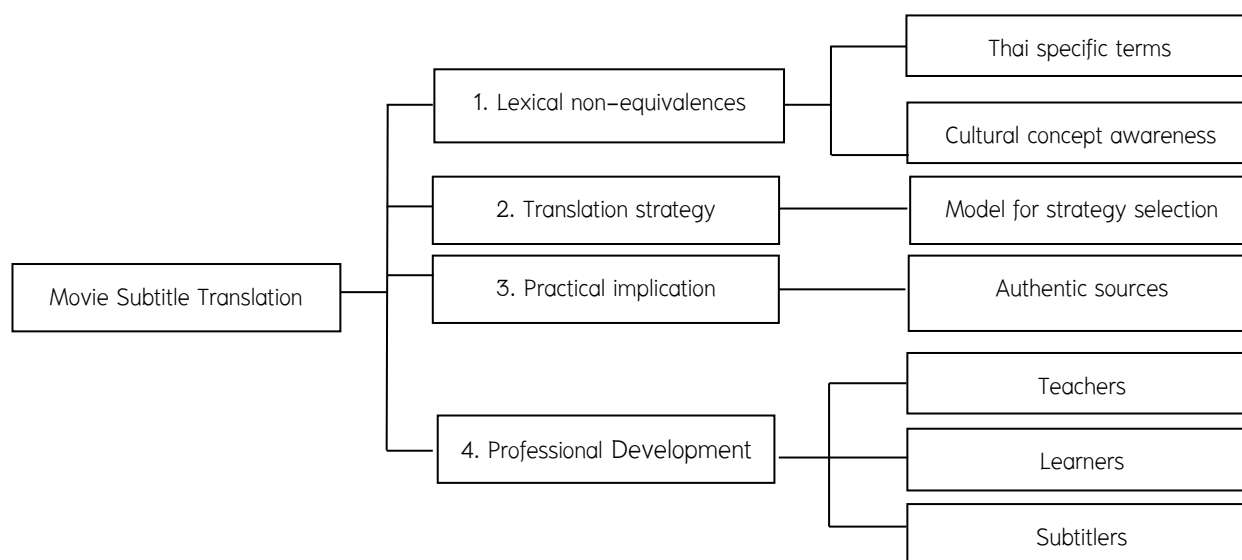


Figure 2 New Knowledge on Movie Subtitle Translation

Conclusion

This study examined lexical translation problems, translation strategies, and the reasons for employing these strategies in “How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies,” drawing on the frameworks of Baker (2018), Newmark (1988), and Larson (1998). Out of 1,403 Thai–English pairs, 262 pairs of lexical non-equivalence were identified for analysis. The most frequent type of lexical non-equivalence was A13, the source language lacks detail, with 44 times. The second was A12. The context of the source language is understandable 35 times. The third involved A7 Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective, found 34 times. Among the strategies identified, B7 Translation by omission was used most frequently (52 times), followed by B6 Translation by paraphrase using an unrelated word (47 times), and B13 Translation by addition (42 times). These strategies helped adapt culturally specific expressions, maintain fluency, and ensure clarity in the target language (TL). The reasons for using the translation strategies in this study

were relevant to semantic, lexical, cultural, and form-related problems. Moreover, subtitle translation plays a crucial role in translation studies, particularly in education and cross-cultural understanding (Neves, 2004). Gottlieb (1992) noted that subtitling differs from other types of translation because it must adhere to strict constraints, including reading speed, line length, and limited screen time. Therefore, subtitles need to be brief yet accurate and meaningful. Díaz and Remael (2007) suggested that engaging students in real-world subtitling activities allows them to apply language and translation skills in practical contexts. This experience trains them to handle cultural expressions, humor, and idioms, which are often challenging to translate. Perego et al. (2010) added that subtitling encourages learners to consider cultural differences and make appropriate choices for the target audience. In this way, subtitle translation supports both practical training and the development of cultural awareness in translation studies.

Suggestions

The study's findings can serve as a valuable guideline for those interested in subtitle translation, particularly in terms of lexical non-equivalence and translation strategies. For pedagogical purposes, teachers may use authentic subtitles in learning activities to enhance learners' in-depth understanding and develop their translation skills. Besides, teachers should encourage their learners to be aware of the cultural diversities of the source and target languages. For future research, various dimensions are recommended. First, it should examine sentential translation problems to get a broader analysis than the lexical level. Second, to enhance research validity, interviews with subtitlers and feedback from film viewers should be conducted. Third, the exact subtitle translations using different translation frameworks should be compared to identify which framework yields more reliable and culturally appropriate translations. Fourth, further study should investigate translation problems and strategies employed in subtitles of new Thai social media slang initiated by LGBTQ+ to ensure the target audiences have a distinctly broader insight into the original messages.

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