

# Subtitling Korean Cultural Expressions into English: An Analysis of Translation Strategies in *20th Century Girl* (2022)

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## ABSTRACT

The global popularity of Korean films and dramas has heightened the demand for high quality subtitle translations. Such translations must preserve both linguistic meaning and cultural authenticity for audiences unfamiliar with Korean culture. Therefore, this study is to examine how Korean culturally specific terms were translated into English subtitles in the film *20th Century Girl* (2022), focussing on the strategies used in negotiating meaning between authenticity and accessibility. A qualitative content analysis was conducted using Newmark's (1988) translation framework to analyse selected terms including idioms, traditional practices, food related terms, and colloquial expressions. The findings reveal eight strategies word-for-word, literal, faithful, semantic, adaptation, free, idiomatic, and communicative translation were employed to varying degrees. Literal and faithful translations to maintain accuracy, but sometimes produced awkward phrasing in English. By contrast, communicative and idiomatic strategies tended to capture tone and emotional nuance more effectively. In situations where no direct equivalent was available, adaptation and free translation were used to convey the intended meaning without losing clarity. These findings suggest that subtitling extends beyond a linguistic task to a cultural act requiring careful negotiation of meaning, tone, and context. By addressing the challenges of cross-cultural communication in subtitling, this study contributes to the growing scholarship on audio visual translation. It also highlights the value of culturally sensitive translation methods in helping global audiences appreciate Korean culture more deeply. Overall, the study offers insights into the challenges of subtitling and underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity for translators, scholars, and practitioners engaged in crosscultural media

**Keywords:** Audio visual, cultural terms, Korean-to-English translation, subtitling, translation strategies

## INTRODUCTION

While language may be used to overcome cultural gaps, it can also become a barrier when there are discrepancies in the context. This is when the translation turns into the key for guaranteeing comprehension across it. The process of translation is complicated and includes more than just translating words between languages. It also includes identifying cultural differences and expressions that are present in the original text. When working with culturally specific phrases or concepts that might not have exact translations in the target language, the translator's job becomes even more important. One of the most popular translation techniques used in movie contexts is subtitling, where linguistic precision and cultural awareness must be balanced to guarantee that the audience understands the intended meaning.

Translation is very important for helping people from different cultures understand each other and breaking language barriers. It is more than just changing words from one language to another but it also involves adapting

cultural and contextual meanings to keep the original message clear (Ismail et. al, 2021). It is very necessary to use strategies that consider both language and culture to translate well (Katan & Taibi, 2021). Ways like direct, adaptation, and dynamic translation help to connect the original and translated text. Nida and Taber (1969) assert that a good translation should make the target audience feel the same way as the original audience. Baker (2011) highlights the importance of context and accuracy in translation. With movies like *Parasite* (2019), as well as well-known Korean dramas and films available on worldwide streaming services especially *Netflix* and Korean cinema has attracted a lot of attention from around the world in recent years (Worthy et. al, 2020). Understanding how culturally distinct terms and references are translated into English is becoming more and more important as audiences around the world always interact with Korean media. Non-Korean viewers might not immediately recognize these terms, which could include traditional Korean cuisine, practices, social norms, or even specific language slang.

In this study, the context that is examined is from a South Korean coming-of-age romance movie *20th Century Girl* (2022) which focuses on the English subtitles of the film. This movie is written and directed by Bang Woo-ri, starring Kim Yoo Jung, Byeon Woo Seok, Park Jung Woo and Roh Yoon Seo. In this movie, it contains a number of culturally specific elements, both linguistically and historically, that could make it difficult for subtitlers to maintain the intended meaning while keeping the clarity and comprehension for a worldwide audience. This movie provides a great case study to look at how translation strategies are used during the subtitling process to deal with phrases connected to Korean culture, including honorifics, traditional holidays, or well-known references to culture from that time period.

## Problem Statement

Language in our daily lives emphasizes the crucial role of translation in facilitating communication and fostering cultural understanding. Translation serves as a bridge that connects different linguistic communities, allowing individuals to engage with diverse cultures, media, and perspectives. However, translating between culturally distinct languages presents several challenges, particularly in subtitling, which serves as an essential link between languages and cultures. Subtitling is not merely about converting words from one language to another; it involves preserving grammatical accuracy while retaining emotional depth, cultural significance, and contextual nuance. This complexity is evident in audio visual translation, where linguistic and cultural elements must be adapted without compromising authenticity.

A compelling example of this challenge is the 2022 South Korean film *20th Century Girl*, which incorporates numerous references to Korean culture, many of which do not have direct English equivalents. The film showcases aspects of late 1990s Korean youth culture, traditional customs, and colloquial expressions that may be unfamiliar to global audiences. One of the major difficulties in subtitling such a film lies in adapting culturally specific phrases, idioms, and expressions while maintaining their original intent and emotional weight. Translators must strike a delicate balance between preserving authenticity and ensuring comprehensibility for international viewers. Recent studies on audio visual translation highlight the importance of cultural adaptation in subtitling, emphasizing that a literal translation often fails to convey the intended meaning effectively (Farhad, 2024).

This underscores the necessity of creative translation strategies to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, ensuring that audiences worldwide can engage with the film without losing its essence. Thus, this study explores the translation techniques used in the English subtitles of the film while examining how these strategies manage cultural references while preserving the film's emotional depth and cultural integrity. It investigates the challenges translators encounter when balancing linguistic accuracy with the need for cultural adaptation, ensuring that the content is accessible and relatable to a global audience. By focusing on how cultural nuances are handled, this study highlights the complexities of subtitling in films rich with local references and idioms. The study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of subtitling practices, emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity in audio visual translation. It also examines how translation choices impact audience comprehension, engagement, and the overall viewer experience, offering insights into how global audiences can better connect with foreign films while maintaining their cultural authenticity.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

Famous translation studies expert Peter Newmark made significant contributions to this field with his views on text classification and translation methods. His method of translating stands out in particular for its pragmatic approach, which highlights the connection between a text's purpose and the best translation technique (Newmark, 1988). Newmark divided writings into three primary categories: vocative, informational, and expressive. Literature, poetry, and autobiographies are examples of expressive texts that emphasize the author's ideas, feelings, and creative style. Therefore, they need translations that stay true to the original characteristics and language. Scientific reports, news sections, and scholarly papers are examples of informative texts that emphasize factual material and necessitate precise and clear translation in order to successfully communicate the information (Newmark, 1991). Advertisements, political speeches, and educational materials are examples of vocative texts. Since they are meant to inform or affect the reader, they require a translation strategy that puts effect and reader reaction ahead of exact faithfulness to the original language (Munday, 2016).

Newmark's division between communicative and semantic translation is a fundamental component of his framework. The goal of semantic translation is to accurately express the original text's meaning while preserving as much of its original structure and details as possible (Newmark, 1981). This method is frequently used for expressive texts where it is crucial to stay true to the author's intention. On the other hand, communicative translation aims to convey the message in a style that is understandable and natural to the intended audience which frequently requires modifications for contextual relevance, idiomatic expressions, and cultural differences (Newmark, 1991). This approach works especially well for vocative texts, when the reader's reaction is more crucial than strictly adhering to the original phrase. In order to produce a fair and useful translation, Newmark admitted that translators frequently combine the two methods in practice (Munday, 2016).

Since Newmark's theories offer clear and useful guidelines for choosing translation strategies, they have had a long-lasting influence on translation studies, especially in the training of translators. His 1988 book *A Textbook of Translation*, which provides in-depth analyses of numerous translation methods and their uses, is still regarded as an essential source in the subject. Newmark's impact and theoretical contributions are also further explored by academic assessments of his work, such as the study by Munday (2016). This offers more in-depth understanding of how Newmark's theory still influences contemporary translation strategies, especially when it comes to matching translation strategies with text functions to guarantee precision, readability, and efficacy in various communicative situations. Based on the theory presented by Newmark (1988), there are several translation strategies that were suggested to translate at the word level, which are:

Translation Strategies	Description
Word-for-Word Translation	Direct, literal translation of words in their exact order for advance understanding.
Literal Translation	Converts grammatical structures to target language rules while keeping the exact meaning.
Faithful Translation	Preserves the exact meaning and intention of the source text, even at the expense of naturalness.
Semantic Translation	Allows for slight change for readability, nuance, and aesthetics.
Adaptation	Modifying the source text to suit the cultural context of the target language.
Free Translation	Paraphrases or re-expresses the original in a more natural, fluent, and culturally appropriate way in the target language.

## Past Studies

Translation strategies are used widely and globally in the subtitling industries to help overcome the cultural barriers between one and another culture. It can help the audiences to access the audio visual material easily without any hustle. When subtitling, the language accuracy and cultural relevance should be taken seriously as it might create confusion to some parties.

Recent research on Korean subtitle translation techniques closely resembles Newmark's semantic and communicative translation methodology, which places a priority on finding a balance between preserving the original meaning and adapting it for cultural relevance. Ansas's (2022) study on the translation of swear words in *Extreme Job* movie subtitles (2022) suggests that communicative translation approach is used, in which swear words are modified or eliminated in order to adapt to the target culture while maintaining humor, tone, and cultural appropriateness. Oh (2010) also demonstrates a communicative translation technique, where wordplay translation requires creative adaptation to engage the intended target group. On the other hand, Cho (n.d) aims to translate culturally specific elements (culturemes) in Korean films in a way that maintains their vital importance while also being understandable to audiences worldwide. In order to preserve Korean references and ensure their global comprehension, Andrianaki and Lee's (2021) analysis of the translation of culture-specific concepts in the subtitles of 'Parasite' and 'Squid Game'" looks deeper into this subject.

Through a communicative translation method, Jing and Xiaozhen (2020) show how translators change linguistic and cultural elements to fit the context of the target language. A combination of semantic and communicative strategies were highlighted by Damayanti and Hartono (2021) in their study investigating strategies and creativity used by Fansubbers in subtitling 'Hot and Young Seoul Trip X NCT Life' to overcome language barriers. As fans use creativity to make sure informal, dynamic language maintains meaning while following to the target language's cultural expectations. Corresponding to this, Evan and Choi (2023) discuss on communicative translation and how Korean media changes for audiences who understand English in order to optimize cultural reception. Other than that, Pak (2023) takes a pragmatic approach to translation, analyzing both communicative and semantic translation, and studying how phrases and politeness are expressed while maintaining meaning. In order to preserve references' cultural relevance and intended meaning, the study of verbal allusion translation in film subtitle based on relevance theory, Liu and Jia (2014) examine the translation process from both perspectives. Last but not least, a study on subtitle translation of the Battle at Lake Changjin under Catford's Translation Shifts Theory by Li (2024) shows how translation shifts are used to change syntactical and grammatical structures while maintaining the accuracy of the message to the original. When taken as a whole, these cases demonstrate how Newmark's framework helps translators manage the challenging task of striking a balance between precision and cultural adaptation in translation.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach, which focuses on understanding complex phenomena in their natural contexts rather than predicting outcomes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Such an approach is appropriate for exploring translation processes and their social implications, as it allows diverse perspectives to be captured with rigor and relevance (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Hall & Liebenberg, 2024). Within this framework, content analysis is used as the main method to systematically examine written or visual material, identify patterns, and interpret meaning within context (Krippendorff, 2004). Specifically, the analysis is applied to the English subtitles of *20th Century Girl* (2022), focusing on how translation strategies align with established theories and how effectively they convey meaning and cultural references. This process highlights the linguistic and cultural adjustments made during subtitling and offers insights into how these decisions influence audience reception.

## Research Sample

This research focuses on the translation strategies used in the English subtitles of *20th Century Girl* (2022), directed by Bang Woori. The film provides rich material for examining how subtitling preserves cultural

meaning, particularly through its character interactions and emotional storyline. The plot follows Bo-ra, who, in 2019, learns from Joseph, Woon-ho's younger brother, that her first love, Woon-ho, died in an accident 17 years earlier. This revelation forces her to confront unspoken feelings and lost opportunities, culminating in a poignant video tribute of their memories together. The film was selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability technique that identifies cases with specific characteristics aligned to the study's aims (Campbell et al., 2020). In this case, *20th Century Girl* was intentionally chosen for its potential to reveal how translation strategies convey cultural differences in a multilingual context, thereby strengthening the study's focus and validity.

## Data Collection Procedures

The study adopted a systematic approach to data collection. The film was viewed on Netflix, and culturally specific Korean terms were extracted and categorized into groups such as honorifics, food, cultural practices, social concepts, and expressions. Each term was then analyzed to identify the translation strategy used, including literal translation, cultural substitution, omission, and explanatory translation. Simple quantitative analysis examined the frequency and contextual patterns of these strategies, while qualitative analysis assessed their effectiveness in conveying meaning and helping viewers understand Korean culture. Feedback from viewers was also considered. Finally, the study evaluated the overall effectiveness of the strategies, highlighted challenges in translating culture-specific terms, and offered recommendations for improving subtitle translation.

## Data Analysis

This study analyzed the English subtitles of *20th Century Girl* (2022) to identify and assess translation methods such as literal translation, paraphrase, and cultural adaptation, guided by Newmark's framework. Content analysis was chosen for its ability to systematically examine textual material and reveal patterns in translation strategies. Subtitles were reviewed line by line, with examples recorded to illustrate how strategies handled food names, idiomatic expressions, historical references, and culturally embedded phrases. The findings highlight how these methods preserved cultural meaning while making the text accessible to international audiences, underscoring the challenges of cross-cultural translation and the importance of selecting appropriate strategies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study conducted to explore Korean culturally related terms and the translation strategies applied in the English subtitles of the Korean film *20th Century Girl* (2022). The analysis is guided by two primary research questions:

1. What are the Korean culturally related terms used in the movie *20th Century Girl* (2022)?
2. What are the translation strategies used to translate Korean culturally related terms into English subtitles in the movie *20th Century Girl* (2022)?

### Finding 1: Korean Culturally Related Terms In The Film

The terms used in the film *20th Century Girl* (2022) that are relevant to Korean culture are identified and explained. These terms include expressions related to regional dialects, traditional foods and medicines, family connections, and school life. In the late 1990s, when the film is set, Korean society's everyday culture, values, and social standards are reflected in these terms. They provide the spectator a more realistic understanding of the characters' motivations, actions, and feelings. Understanding these culturally specific phrases is crucial since they frequently have connotations that go beyond simple words and can be challenging to translate directly into English.

## Samohada

The verb "사모하다 (samohada)" which means to love or admire someone deeply, respectfully, and longingly, is used in this phrase. It has historically been employed in situations involving idealized or remote affection, such as those involving teachers, elders, or even famous people. This term is spoken by Baek Hyun Jin in a playful, teasing tone during a conversation with Bo-ra assuming she is the one who contacted and confessed to him before without knowing that Yeon-du is the one who confessed her love towards Baek Hyun Jin. Teen dramas in Korea frequently use this type of dramatic exaggeration to portray teenage emotions as powerful and all-consuming.

## Musimcheon Beotkkot Jukjae

A local event that takes place in Cheongju along the Musimcheon stream is the “무심천 벚꽃 축제 (Musimcheon Beotkkot Jukjae)” which is Musimcheon Cherry Blossom Festival. In Korea, these festivals are widely observed and seen as representations of the changing of the seasons, fresh starts, and the beauty of youth and romance. It sets the background for an upcoming outing or romantic walk that could potentially take place at the cherry blossom festival. This term is mentioned by Bora as the broadcasting club member who needs to give school

announcements over the intercom. She mentions that the festival is about to start soon and means that the school trip is coming soon as well. The expression captures Korea's strong cultural ties to the natural cycles, particularly the cherry blossoms symbolic meaning of fleeting beauty and sentimentality. For Korean viewers, the inclusion of this particular setting anchors the movie in a familiar emotional and regional landscape. *Maeum yakhan saram*

Despite the literal meaning of the phrase "마음 약한 사람 (maeum yakhan saram)" is "a weak heart person," it is more appropriately understood to mean that one is emotionally brittle or easily anxious. This is consistent with the stereotype of Korean parents as a kind, perceptive, and intensely nurturing person, which is based on emotional accountability and family hierarchy. This line is said by Bo-ra's father in a moment of concern when Bo-ra stays out late at night without informing her parents where she is and receives a call from Bo-ra that she's injured. She fights with some other school teenagers who try to disturb Baek Hyunjin and Poong Woon Ho. It is delivered with gentle admonition and worry of her safety outside as a girl without anyone accompanying her. The culturally rooted idea of parental piety in which children are supposed to care for and protect their parents, especially those who are emotionally vulnerable.

## Michyeonya

One of the most frequently used terms in casual Korean speech is this one. “미쳤느냐 (micheonya)” literally translates to "Are you insane?" and can express a variety of feelings, including disapproval, playful teasing, and sincere worry. The tone can either soften or sharpen the perceived meaning, and it is frequently used in a light hearted manner among close friends. In this movie, Bo-ra uses this expression to her friend, Yeon-du when she still has not finished packing her stuff yet to go to New York for her heart surgery and so suddenly all Yeon-du talks about is falling in love at first sight at her crush and making a dramatic gesture. Yeon-do's statement makes Bo-ra feel upset because she wants her to quickly go through the surgery. This illustrates how informal Korean is dynamic and expressive, with direct emotional expression common, particularly among young people.

## Haega seojjoggeseo tteugessne

The Korean expression "했가 서쪽에서 뜨겠네 (haega seojjoggeseo tteugessne)" means "The sun must be rising in the west." It conveys astonishment, shock, or even sarcasm through the use of natural imagery. This

idiomatic structure is indicative of the Korean culture's tendency to convey social or emotional meaning through poetic and metaphorical language drawn from nature. This expression is used when Bo-ra's mother is surprised at her behaviour because she wakes up earlier than usual to go to school as she always wakes up late than she should and responds with this sarcastic remark since she never acted like that before. When someone acts totally out of character, this expression is usually used. Through culturally rich metaphors, its use in the movie demonstrates how Korean language is used to express emotion and interpersonal examination in addition to information.

### Butgessda

The verb "붙다 (buttda)" which literally translates to "to stick," is used in this sentence. It is used in Korean slang, particularly among students, to refer to passing an exam, getting accepted somewhere, or passing an audition. The expression is deeply ingrained in Korea's demanding academic culture, where students compete fiercely and the outcomes of public exams carry great weight. In the movie, the line is used when a student comments during Bo-ra's audition for the broadcasting club because impressed by her performance. In addition to expressing admiration, saying someone will "붙겠다 (butgessda)" which mean "she will get in", also makes a social statement, pointing out how certain people are expected to thrive in a system that prioritizes presentation and performance.

### Odisyeon

Although "오디션 (odisyeon)" is an English loanword from the word audition, it has completely adopted into Korean, particularly in relation to school clubs, entertainment, and idol culture. Furthermore, it makes reference to the idol industry, where auditions are regularly held, and the influence of celebrity culture. In the movie, Bora is shocked to hear that joining the school broadcasting club requires auditions. She discovers this while trying to join the same club as her friend Yeon-du in an effort to help her get closer to her crush. The fact that students must try out for a school club shows how seriously Korean educational institutions take these kinds of activities since it requires an audition just to join the club.

### Indieon Bab

“인디언 밥 (Indieon Bab)” is the name of a Korean children's game in which one child bends over while others slap their back in rhythm, chanting the phrase like a back smash. “Indieon Bab” or “Indian Bob” typically refers to Bob Johnson, a professional baseball player nicknamed “Indian Bob” who played in Major League Baseball and well known because of his powerful hits. It has no direct connection to Native American culture but reflects Korean playground culture, where such games are common. In this movie, during a late-night school trip dorm scene, a group of girls shout this phrase while engaging in playful back-hitting. For Korean audiences, it evokes strong nostalgia for schoolyard games, roughhousing, and group bonding through physical play. Finding 2: Translation Strategies Used To Translate The Korean Culturally Terms Into English

The process of translating culturally rooted terms from Korean into English requires thoughtful decision-making guided by translation theory. According to Peter Newmark (1988), a translator must select from a variety of approaches based on the term's meaning, the dialogue's purpose, and the cultural familiarity of the target audience. A variety of translation strategies, from literal to free, and even adapted expressions, were used to translate the many Korean cultural references in the movie “20th Century Girl” into English.

## Word-For-Word

Excerpt 1 (Timestamp : 00:37:20 - 00:37:25 )

Korean Language	English Subtitle
<p>“네가 나 열렬히 사모한다며.”  <i>“Naega na yeollyeoathi samohada-myo.”</i></p>	<p>“You said you <b>love me passionately</b>.”</p>

In the case of the term “*사모하다* (*samohada*)”, the translator applied a word-for-word translation strategy. The Korean expression is directly rendered into English as “You said you love me passionately,” with each lexical component mirrored as closely as possible. The key cultural term “*사모하다*”, a poetic and formal verb for deep admiration or romantic longing which is translated literally as “love passionately.” This preserves the solemnity and emotional intensity of the original Korean, but at the same time introduces an overly dramatic or unnatural tone in English, especially for a teenage character. This is a typical limitation of word-for-word translation which while it prioritizes lexical fidelity and syntactic parallelism, it often sacrifices idiomatic fluidity.

## Literal Translation

Excerpt 2 (Timestamp : 00:20:40 - 00:20:45)

Korean Language	English Subtitle
<p>“오늘부터 무심천 벚꽃 축제가 시작된다고 하네요.” “Oneulbuto  <i>Musimcheon Beotkkut Jukjaeka sijakduindago haneyo.”</i></p>	<p>“The <b>Musimcheon Cherry Blossom Festival</b>          is said to start today.”</p>

In this excerpt, a literal translation was employed. The translator retained the original structure and directly translated the proper nouns and event name which is “*Musimcheon Beotkkut Jukjae*” into “The *Musimcheon Cherry Blossom Festival*.” The original sentence structure and wording are preserved, including proper nouns like “*Musimcheon*.” The translation provides direct cultural access while remaining grammatically accurate in English. This strategy assumes a certain level of cultural openness from the audience and makes minimal interpretive changes. It is suitable for terms like proper nouns or event names, which do not require localization but should remain tied to their Korean setting for authenticity.

## Faithful Translation

Excerpt 3 (Timestamp : 00:26:40 - 00:26:44)

Korean Language	English Subtitle
<p>“너희 엄마 걱정하. 가뜩이나 마음 약한 사람인디.”  <i>“Neohui eomma geogjeonghya. gatteug-ini maeum yakhan saram-indi.”</i></p>	<p>“Your mom will worry. You know she <b>gets scared easily</b>.”</p>

In translating this excerpt, the translator utilized a faithful translation strategy. The original meaning, tone, and character emotion were preserved in “Your mom will worry. You know she gets scared easily”. “*Maeum yakhan saram*” means someone who has a weak heart, however the meaning of it is someone who is easily scared and worried about things. While the regional dialect was neutralized, the core idea that the mother is emotionally sensitive remains. Faithful translation often preserves the cultural essence and emotional reality of the original text without making it awkward for target readers, achieving a balance between fidelity and readability.

### Semantic Translation

Excerpt 4 (Timestamp : 00:02:50 - 00:02:55)

Korean Language	English Subtitle
“야, 너 미쳤나?”	“Hey, Yeon-do, are you insane?”
“Ya, neo micheonya?”	

The phrase “야, 너 미쳤나? (*Ya, neo micheonya?*)” was translated using a semantic strategy, which focuses on conveying the sense and emotional weight of the original expression rather than the exact words because in this scene Bo-ra is mad with Yeon-do who still is not prepared for her flight to New York. The English equivalent, “Are you insane?” captures the urgency and informality of the Korean exclamation. While a literal translation such as “Are you crazy?” would be accurate, the semantic choice of “insane” adds a slightly exaggerated tone that mirrors the character's strong reaction which is more suitable rendering within the norms of colloquial English.

### Communicative Translation

Korean Language	English Subtitle
“웬일이 래? 해가 서쪽에서 뜨겠네.” “Wen-il-irae? Haega seojjoggeseo tteugessne.”	“Wow, really? Maybe pigs will start flying soon.”

Excerpt 5 (Timestamp : 00:06:30 - 00:06:33)

The expression “해가 서쪽에서 뜨겠네 (*haega seojjoggeseo tteugessne*)” posed a cultural translation challenge due to its idiomatic structure. The translator chose a communicative strategy, replacing it with the English idiom “Maybe pigs will start flying soon.” Bora's mother is just trying to be sarcastic since Bo-ra always wakes up late to school but not on that day. This approach ensures that the function of the phrase expressing astonishment or sarcasm is retained. Communicative translation focuses on delivering the same message and emotional effect to the target audience, even if it departs significantly from the literal meaning to ensure that target language audiences can grasp the intended surprise and humour.

## Idiomatic Translation

Excerpt 6 (Timestamp : 00:12:22 - 00:12:24)

Korean Language	English Subtitle
“붙겠다, 붙겠어.” “Butgessda, butgesseo.”	“I think she'll get in.”

For “붙겠다, 붙겠어 (butgessda, butgesseo)” phrase, the translator adopted an idiomatic translation strategy, rendering the Korean slang as “I think she'll get in.” This translation captures the implied context of auditions and success without retaining the metaphor of “sticking” from the original. There is a verb called “붙다 (buttda)” means to stick. It exemplifies the need to replace local idioms with functional equivalents in the target language, especially when the literal version would confuse or mislead the reader what it means by to stick.

## Free Translation

Excerpt 7 (Timestamp : 00:11:25 - 00:11:27)

Korean Language	English Subtitles
“야, 오디션도 있어.” “Ya, odisyeondo isseo.”	“Hey, they even have auditions.”

The line “야, 오디션도 있어 (ya, odisyeondo isseo)” was translated using a free translation strategy. “Hey, they even have auditions.” rephrases the Korean sentence to sound more natural and flowing in English, while still maintaining the original meaning since “오디션 (odisyeon)” is a loanword from English which is audition . Free translation is particularly useful for casual, idiomatic, or exclamatory speech where a rigid structure would sound forced or unnatural in the target language since Poong Woon Ho speaking casually with Baek Hyunjin about the broadcasting audition. This strategy helps maintain the conversational rhythm and youthful tone of the scene.

## Adaptation

Excerpt 8 (Timestamp : 00:38:57 - 00:38:59)

Korean Language	English Subtitle
“인디언 밥!” “Indieon Bab!”	“Back smash!”

Finally, the culturally term “인디언 밥! (Indieon Bab!)” was handled through adaptation, a strategy that allows for creative substitution when no equivalent exists in the target culture. The phrase was translated as “Back smash,” a coined term that attempts to capture the physical nature of the children’s game while avoiding cultural appropriation or confusion. Adaptation is often necessary when the original reference is unfamiliar, controversial,

or tied to local customs that do not translate well across cultures. Since the game does not exist in English-speaking cultures, an invented equivalent is used to convey the idea of a playful, physical children's game.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined how culturally specific Korean terms in *20th Century Girl* (2022) were translated into English subtitles using Newmark's framework. The analysis showed that strategies such as word-for-word, literal, faithful, semantic, communicative, idiomatic, free translation, and adaptation were applied depending on context. While some methods preserved cultural authenticity, others required modification to ensure clarity and accessibility for international audiences. The findings highlight that translation is not only a linguistic task but also a cultural one, where choices directly affect audience understanding and engagement.

Based on the results, it is recommended that translators adopt flexible strategies, selecting approaches that best match the dialogue's tone and purpose. Literal or word-for-word translations may be effective for proper nouns or direct references, but semantic, communicative, or idiomatic methods are better for emotional or informal dialogue. Adaptation and free translation should be used when cultural concepts have no direct English equivalent, ensuring that meaning and impact are preserved. Collaboration between translators, filmmakers, and cultural consultants is also encouraged to capture both linguistic accuracy and cultural nuance. Finally, streaming platforms and production houses should establish clearer subtitling guidelines that emphasize cultural sensitivity, fluency, and creativity.

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