Qualitative Growth in the Japanese Subtitles for *Bridge of Spies*

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1. Introduction

Translators of audiovisual media agree that creating foreign language subtitles for a film lead to much of the original content being lost in translation. The need to concentrate spoken language from the source text (the original untranslated version) into short, readable snippets of subtitles reduces verbal content, while the frequent deployment of *explicitation* strategies deprives audiences of opportunities to draw their own inferences and make their own interpretations of the text.

Nevertheless, in "Making the Source Text Grow: A Plea Against the Idea of Loss in Translation," Christiane Nord argues that translation can actually enhance the source text. One way it enhances the source text is through what she refers to as the "qualitative growth" of the source text. Qualitative growth is when new receivers can "discover 'items of the information offer' which were not available to the source-culture audience" (Nord 2011: 25). In other words, translations can provide new ways for readers to interpret the source text. It is in this sense that the source text can "grow."

While Nord focuses her argument on literary translation, this idea applies to film subtitling as well. In a previous article, I have argued that Japanese subtitler Matsuura Mina creates subtitles for *There Will Be Blood* (2007) that produce Nord's qualitative growth. *There Will Be Blood* is a particularly suitable candidate to apply Nord's idea because it is fraught with ambiguous dialogue and rich in opportunities for interpretation. In her subtitles, Matsuura makes use of *semi-translation* and *ellipses* strategies and provides opportunities for the viewer of the target text (the translated version) to interpret the film in new ways. While it is true that semi-translation and

ellipses tend to reduce source texts, when skillfully employed, as in this case, they prompt target text viewers to use their knowledge of not only the source culture, but also the target culture to infer meaning from ambiguous dialogue. This is something viewers of the untranslated source text cannot do. There are no ellipses or semi-translations in the source text. Thus, watching the subtitled version of the film involves new ways of grasping the source text, which, in turn, makes the original grow in the Nordian sense (Kabara 2015).

This paper will expand on this idea to examine whether Matsuura uses comparable techniques in other films with similarly ambiguous dialogue. To this end, this paper will analyze Matsuura's Japanese subtitles for *Bridge of Spies* (2015). As with *There Will Be Blood*, the dialogue in this film is fraught with ambiguous and heavily coded language. This poses an interesting challenge for a subtitler as she must try to capture the sense of evasion prevalent in the language of the source text while giving enough clear information for the target text viewer to follow the story. Indeed, subtitling for this film is a negotiation between the viewer's need to pull together a coherent story in their minds and their need to exercise their powers of inference to interpret ambiguous meaning. Thus, this film can suitably test the idea that subtitles can make the source text grow.

Through analyzing key subtitles for *Bridge of Spies*, this paper will demonstrate that despite the reliance on explicitation, the Japanese subtitles do generate Nord's "qualitative growth." Through the strategic use of orthographic enhancements, the subtitles provide opportunities for interpretations that are not available in the source text.

2. Loss of Content in Interlingual Subtitling

Interlingual subtitling necessary entails loss of content due to the inherent constraints on the film translation. There is one simple reason for this: subtitles can only display a limited number of words or characters every second. Correspondingly, there are two reasons for this word/character limitation: 1. subtitles must be

synchronized with dialogue, and 2. audiences read subtitles slower than dialogue is spoken. These limitations on the number of characters per second (CPS) displayed are universal in the field of subtitling. In Europe and North America, the standard is approximately twelve CPS, while in Japan, where the language is written mostly in ideograms, the standard is four CPS. As a result of these CPS limitations, some content is necessarily lost. But this raises a question: precisely what content is lost in subtitling?

To start, subtitling entails basic quantitative loss. For example, in subtitling among European languages, word counts are reduced by 40 to 75 percent compared with the source text dialogue (Antonini 2005: 213). The dramatic drop in word count implies that either subtitles must condense the content of the original dialogue into fewer words or they must simply omit some content.

A brief example from the *Bridge of Spies* illustrates these two types of reduction. Early in the film, a Judge reprimands Soviet spy Rudolf Abel's court-appointed attorney James Donovan (Tom Hanks) for taking his duties of defending the alleged Russian spy too seriously. The judge tells him "This man has to have due process, but let's not kid each other." The Japanese subtitles read, 裁判は　あくまでも形式的なものだ (*Saibatsu wa akumade mo keishikitekina mono da*) or "The trial is just a formality" in English. The ST dialogue contains 13 words, while the Japanese subtitles contain 15 characters. Since one Japanese character is not equivalent to one English word, a rough but fair estimate is to equate two Japanese characters with one English word. With this estimate, it appears that the content has been reduced by approximately half. This is only one example, but it is typical of the subtitling apparatus and it illustrates the two aforementioned strategies at work in subtitling: *condensation* and *omission*. The colloquial expression "but let's not kid each other" is condensed to "just a formality," and "This man has to have due process" is omitted altogether.

The omission of the "due process" part illustrates a more literal sense of loss prevalent in subtitling. However, when we talk about something being "lost in translation," we usually mean something else. The expression "lost in translation"

refers to a loss of poeticness, or a loss of subtlety and nuance that allows "viewers to read beyond the surface, literal meaning of the text and integrate prior knowledge to make inferences about inexplicit meaning in the source text" (Kabara 2015: 166). Such is the case in the above example from *Bridge of Spies*. The circumlocutious phrasing the judge uses ("Let's not kid ourselves") clashes with the directness of the subtitles ("The trial is just a formality"). The former invites the viewer to infer the judge's attitude about the trial, while the latter states his view explicitly, thus stripping away an opportunity for the viewer to interpret meaning. In this case, the source text viewer can infer the meaning quickly and intuitively based on context, genre convention, and nonverbal cues, such as the actors delivery of the line. In more enigmatic dialogue, the viewer may need to work harder to infer meaning. Either way, what is "lost in translation" is the opportunity to make such inferences.

As the above example demonstrates, the main culprit here is the translator's strategy of *explicitation*, which refers to "the process of introducing information into the target language which is present only implicitly in source language, but which can be derived from the context or the situation" (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 8). This process is prevalent in all translation. In fact, Shoshana Blum-Kulka argues that "explicitation is a universal strategy inherent in the process of language mediation" (1986: 26). The strategy is certainly found in audiovisual translation. According to Jan Pedersen, subtitlers frequently use explicitation as a means of keeping the character counts down (2005: 116-117). In summary, explicitation is seen as a necessary evil in translations of cultural works, especially audiovisual translation.

The reason for the necessity of explicitation is the mismatch between source culture knowledge and target culture knowledge. Nord argues that in literary texts language relies on the *expressive function* of text (Nord 1997: 80). The expressive function is "the use of verbal or nonverbal communicative signs to manifest a person's feelings or attitude towards the objects of phenomena of the world" (Nord 1997: 138). She explains that the expressive function is sender-oriented and therefore affects translation.

> The sender's opinions or attitudes with regard to the referents are based on the value system assumed to be common to both sender and receiver. However, in the standard form of intercultural interaction the sender belongs to the source culture and the receiver belongs to the target culture. Since the value systems are conditioned by cultural norms and traditions, the value system of the source-text author may be different from that of the target-culture receivers. (Nord 1997: 42)

The same could be said for audiovisual translations, where translators must account for the target audiences' lack of source culture knowledge. To compensate for this issue, literary translators have a handful of options, including footnotes and weaving in explanations into the body of the text. However, subtitlers must work within the boundaries of CPS limits and, therefore, most often rely on explicitation as a solution.

Abé Mark Nornes argues that such simplifying solutions have a corrupting effect. He claims that subtitlers, especially Japanese subtitlers, are beholden to an underlying and pervasive ideology of simplifying source texts for target text audiences, and the only solution is a radicalization of subtitling practices (2004: 448).

But despite the frequent use of explicitation and its inherent limitations, loss and corruption are not inevitable even in conventional subtitling. A close analysis of the subtitles from *Bridge of Spies* illustrates how audiovisual translation, even with constraints as severe as subtitling, can make a source text grow.

3. Orthographic enhancements in the Subtitles for *Bridge of Spies*

Japanese subtitlers often utilize conventions of written Japanese to enhance their subtitles. With the unique characteristics of Japanese script, they can clarify the meaning of standard subtitles, but they can also recreate ambiguity found in the source text. This effect is based on what Akira Yanabu refers to as the *kasetto kōka* or "jewelry box effect." The jewelry box effect refers to a situation where a person encounters a neologism written in kanji where the meaning of a new word is unclear, but the reader nevertheless understands that it bears importance. It is similar to the way

a person might look at a jewelry box without opening it and predict its contents are something of value (1982: 38). Japanese subtitlers have made use of this effect not through coining new words, but through highlighting key words in their subtitles. The strategy involves adding orthographic signs to standard subtitles to communicate the presence of multi-layered meanings.

One technique Japanese subtitlers use to enrich the viewing experience is supplementing subtitles with *furigana*. In written texts, furigana is commonly used to indicate the pronunciation of rarely-used kanji, and it is usually used to the same effect in film subtitles despite the character-count limitations. But occasionally furigana is utilized in more productive ways.

An example can be found in the film *The Human Stain* (2003). In this film, the main character, Professor Coleman Silk (Anthony Hopkins) is accused of using politically incorrect speech in his class. After noticing that two of his students have been absent the entire semester Coleman, asks if they actually exist or if they are "spooks." The word "spook" usually refers to a ghost, but it can also be used as a derogatory term for an African-American. By coincidence, one of the students Coleman is referring to happens to be African-American. Although context makes Coleman's intentions clear, the ambiguity of the word becomes a major plot point, as Coleman's superiors accuse him of using it in the racially insensitive sense.

In order to capture this ambiguity, the Japanese subtitles exploit the furigana reading aid. The subtitle reads as follows.

スプーク
幽霊か？

Typically, the kanji compound 幽霊 is read as *yūrei*, meaning ghost. However, here the presence of furigana above the kanji indicates the characters should be read as "*supūku.*" Since the use of the word "spook" becomes a key point of contention later in the film, the Japanese rendition *supūku* also becomes key for the Japanese subtitles. It highlights the term, indicating a special thematic importance.

The effect of the combination of the standard subtitle with the furigana is contradictory. On the one hand, the standard subtitle is an explicitation. Since the kanji

compound 幽霊 means ghost, it erases the ambiguity found in the original, and, thus, eradicates the chance for the viewer to interpret the text on her own. Indeed, the subtitles do the interpreting for the viewer and make "ghost" the only meaning available. It clearly indicates Coleman is talking about ghosts, not African-Americans. On the other hand, the presence of furigana supplementing the standard subtitle thwarts this straightforward interpretation. It prompts the viewer to note the unusual reading and raises doubts about the intended meaning. In this sense, it recovers the ambiguity of the source text. The word *supūku* has no established meaning in Japanese. So, the viewer is left asking what the word is supposed to mean. This effect is different from the one the source text has on its viewers, since "spook" has two established meanings in English. So, the viewer merely asks which meaning is intended. And, as mentioned above, the context makes Coleman's intended meaning clear. Thus, there is little mystery in the source text. By contrast, the subtitles create a sense of mystery to the target text that is not present in the source text. The presence of furigana here has a jewelry box effect in that it hints at a multilayered significance to the subtitle without revealing the contents inside.

This clever use of furigana is only one way Japanese subtitlers can enhance their own standard subtitles and effect source text growth. For her part, Matsuura uses a different orthographic enhancement to indicate the presence of multilayered meaning in her subtitles for *Bridge of Spies*: Western-style quotation marks.

In *Bridge of Spies*, a New York attorney, James Donovan (Tom Hanks), negotiates a prisoner exchange between the U.S. and both East Germany and the Soviet Union. The deal Donovan brokers returns Soviet spy Rudolf Abel back to the USSR in return for Francis Gary Powers, pilot of a U-2 spy plane shot down over Russia, and Frederic Pryor, a student studying economics in West Germany who is arrested by the East German police without reason. Because the sensitive nature of the negotiations and the fact that the parties involved are representatives of states embroiled in a cold war, the characters use cryptic language and vacillate between sharing and concealing information with each other. Thus, the dialogue of *Bridge of Spies* tends to be encoded speech and, therefore, difficult to translate.

As in the example above, Matsuura's subtitles tend to make explicit the cryptic language the characters use. Nevertheless, she manages to recover opportunities for target text viewers to infer meaning through strategies that can only be found in translation, not in the source text. By using quotation marks to highlight specific snippets of the subtitles, Matsuura prompts the viewer to recognize marked text as thematically significant and use their powers of inference to interpret the meaning of the dialogue the subtitles stand for. Matsuura deploys the strategy throughout the film and uses it for three distinct purposes: 1. to indicate an expression will be a motif throughout the film, 2. to indicate another person's thoughts, or 3. to induces the viewer to recognize the dialogue as the encoded speech of espionage gamesmanship.

First of all, Matsuura uses quotation marks to highlight thematically significant text. For example, in an early scene in which Donovan is discussing with a CIA agent what makes them Americans, he asserts that it is only one thing. He repeats the line "one" three times for emphasis: "One, one, one." The subtitles read: "１つ　１つ　１つ" [*hitotsu hitotsu hitotsu*] with quotation marks. The phrase "one, one, one" is a motif throughout the film, with Donovan using it several times in different contexts. Matsuura's use of quotation marks here is similar to the use of furigana in *The Human Stain*: it prompts viewers to recognize that the expression has a multilayered significance without indicating what that significance is. Thus, through this usage, the quotation marks have a jewelry box effect.

This effect cannot be found in the source text, which provides no signals that the dialogue will be thematically significant, other than Hanks delivery of the line—which is not particularly emphatic. The source text rewards observant viewers who recall the line being said early in the film and recognize it as a theme later in the film. Over the course of the film, such viewers can search for and gradually come to grasp the dialogue's significance. This is a common way of uncovering themes in literature and film. But the subtitle's jewelry box effect is different. It prompts the viewer to start searching for thematic significance immediately. The target text viewer does not need to recall previous dialogue to make sense of the theme; rather, she must retain the gist of the dialogue in the back of her mind and search for confirmation throughout the

film. Thus, the source text viewer's interpretation process and the target text viewer's interpretation process differ significantly.

Another way Matsuura uses quotation marks is to indicate in shorthand that the speaker is discussing another character's thoughts. In a negotiation scene between Donovan and Ivan Schischkin, a Soviet agent, Schisckin warns Donovan about how the U.S. government's actions will be seen by the Soviets. He tells Donovan that Francis Powers, the American pilot, was caught taking photographs from a U.S. spy plane. "People in my country would consider that an act of war," he warns. The subtitles read: 我が国の人々はそれを"戦争行為"と見なす [*Waga kuni no hitobito wa sore o "sensōkōi" to minasu*], with the expression *sensōkōi* or "act of war" in quotation marks. The quotation marks serve two purposes here: they highlight the text, and they attribute the idea of "act of war" not to the speaker Schischkin, but to unnamed Soviet figures. It is an evasive mode of expression that mimics the evasiveness found in the source text. Schischkin's phrasing indicates he refuses to take responsibility for the idea. The quotation marks in the subtitles make this evasion more explicit. But they also stop the target text viewer from reading the subtitles literally. The presence of the quotation marks raises questions about to whom we should attribute these ill feelings: Schischkin, Soviet citizens, Soviet officials, etc. In other words, it creates a mystery for the reader to puzzle over.

The third way Matsuura uses quotation marks in her subtitles is perhaps the most significant. Throughout the film, she deploys quotation marks as a means to replicate the multilayered meanings behind certain source text dialogue. For one thing, she uses quotation marks to indicate the presence of irony in several scenes. For example, midway through the film, Donovan asks CIA Agent Hoffman for a new coat after having his coat stolen by East German thugs. Hoffman asks Donovan how he lost his coat, and Donovan replies with exasperation, "You know, spy stuff." The subtitles read: "スパイ稼業" の宿命だ [*"Supai kagyō" no shukumei da*], or "It's the fate of 'spy business.'" Later in the film, Donovan reveals to Hoffman that he spent the previous night in an East German prison after an argument with an official named Vogel. With the same exasperation as the previous scene, Donovan says, "Vogel

arranged for me to spend some time in the East." The subtitles read ヴォーゲルの"手配"で東側の留置場に [*Vōgeru no "tehai" de higashigawa no ryūchijō ni*], or "I was in a detention center of the East side by Vogel's 'arrangement.'" Vogel himself speaks sarcastically when criticizing the Soviets for not helping East Germany recover from WWII. He tells Donovan, "Our Russian friends have decided that we should not rebuild our capital city." The subtitles read: "ソ連の友人"は我々の首都を再建するなと, with the expression ソ連の友人 [soren no yūjin] or "our Soviet friends" in quotation marks. In the above examples, the quotation marks cue the viewer to read irony into the dialogue.

Matsuura also uses quotation marks to reproduce the gamesmanship of the source text dialogue. In the aforementioned negotiations between Donovan and Schischkin, Matsuura uses this strategy for several lines of dialogue (see **Table 1** below).

Table 1: Dialogue excerpts from the negotiation scene between Schischkin (S) and Donovan (D), with Japanese subtitles. "Ch" stands for character.

	Ch	**Original Dialogue**	**Japanese Subtitle**	**Back-Translation**
1	S	If we release Powers, it is only to promote good will between our countries.	パワーズの釈放はあくまでも米ソの— "友好の証し"	The release of Powers can only be a Soviet-U.S. "proof of friendship."
2	S	So, it cannot be an exchange.	従って"交換"であってはならない	So, it cannot be an "exchange."
3	D	No, the just won't work for us at all. See, we need this to be an exchange.	それでは困る あくまでも"交換"ではなくては	That's trouble....if it's not definitely an "exchange"

4	D	You can call it what you want, but an exchange it must be.	細かいことは構わないが“交換”だ	I don't mind the details, but it's an "exchange."

With the quotation marks, Matsuura makes explicit the circuitous nature of the conversation. The quotation marks here function to indicate that there is a double meaning to the expressions they surround, giving the viewer a clear signal that the words are meant to be evasive. Target text viewers share this understanding with source text viewers but for different reasons. When source text viewers watch this scene, they apply their knowledge of the source culture to make snap judgements about the underlying meaning in dialogue like "it cannot be an exchange." Specifically, they likely rely on their knowledge of spy movies, which often feature this kind of evasive, indirect dialogue. Target viewers, on the other hand, may approach this scene differently. Although there is little reason to assume target text viewers have no knowledge of English-language spy movie conventions, the presence of quotation marks alter the interpretational process. It is true that when watching this scene, target text viewers might apply previous knowledge about spy movie dialogue to interpret the underlying meaning behind the subtitles, but the quotation marks direct their attention to specific points in the subtitles and induce them to re-evaluate meaning. For example, the subtitle in lines two through four of **Table 1** features the subtitle 交換 [*kōkan*], or "exchange," in quotation marks. Without the quotation marks, the viewer may read the subtitle literally and think Schischkin is actually refusing the exchange. But with the quotation marks, the viewer re-interprets the meaning as insinuating that Schischkin has concerns about image such an interaction would project to the citizens and government of the Soviet Union. Thus, the quotation marks direct target text viewers not to read the subtitles literally, but rather read them as a sign of the character's underlying intentions.

With this usage, the quotation marks subvert the jewelry box effect. The standard subtitles present the viewer with a recognizable and comprehensible expression: *kōkan*

is a common everyday word. In other words, they give viewers a full look at the contents inside the jewelry box. But the presence of quotation marks undermines the otherwise clear meaning of the word and reveals it to be an illusion. *Kōkan* does not mean "exchange" here; rather, it means the *appearance of an exchange* presented to Soviet citizens and bureaucrats. So, the quotation marks act like a distorted jewelry box. Normally, the box conceals the precious contents inside, but in this case the contents have already been revealed. Instead they show contents to be an empty illusion.

Thus, the presence of the quotation marks prompt the target text viewer not to use their knowledge of spy film genre conventions as the source text viewer does, but to make quick, snap inferences about the characters' intentions from ambiguous orthographic signs. This mode of inference is not available to the source text viewer.

4. Conclusion

Like all interlingual film subtitling, Matsuura Mina's subtitles for *Bridge of Spies* relies on explicitation as a way of guiding the viewer through the complex narrative. Moreover, this explicitation provides viewers with the translator's interpretation of the source text, thus eliminating the opportunity for viewers to use their own powers of inference to interpret the text themselves. In other words, Matsuura's explicitation strategies result in translational loss.

Nevertheless, some of Matsuura's other strategic choices actually generate opportunities for target text viewers to experience and interpret the source text in a way others cannot. In using orthographic enhancements, specifically Western-style quotation marks, Matsuura's subtitles produce what Yanabu calls a "jewelry box effect." Originally, Yanabu intended the jewelry box effect to refer to neologism imported from foreign cultures that had no meaning to Japanese readers but still seemed to have importance. Likewise, in the case of Matsuura's subtitles, the quotation marks signal to the viewer that the contents bear thematic significance or multilayered meaning; and they do so without revealing that thematic significance or meaning to the viewer. Thus,

this strategy prompts viewers to search for thematic or ironic meaning behind the subtitles. It does this in a way that differs from the way source text viewers search for meaning. In this sense, Matsuura's subtitles generate opportunities for target text viewers to draw inferences in a way source text viewers cannot, thus bringing about what Nord calls "qualitative growth."

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