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## Technicolor Thai Translations versus Monochromatic English Translations of Japanese TV Dialogues

**Abstract** Speakers possess a linguistic repertoire of various codes (languages) and speech styles such as regional dialects, registers of (in)formality, and sociolects indexing gender, sexuality, neurodivergence, and more. Speakers alternate among these styles to express multiple identities, shifting relationships, and changing stances (i.e., speaker's attitude toward a topic, message). Japanese entertainment media masterfully deploys Japanese speech styles and their associated linguistic features (e.g., pronouns, verb forms) to develop storylines. However, these indexical features are largely lost in English-translated subtitles, resulting in one-dimensional characters, flatter interactions, and storylines with less depth while erasing the voices of marginalized groups (e.g., regional, LGBTQIA+) and perpetuating images of a monolithic Japan. The current study investigates the degree of erasure of Japanese speech styles in Thai translations of several TV shows. English appears to act as a pivot language in streaming platforms such as Netflix whereby Japanese is translated into English and then, into a third language like Thai, reflecting English translation/linguistic constraints. Yet, direct Japanese-to-Thai translations appear to allow for more accurate representation of these shared indexical features (e.g., multiple first- and second-pronouns, verb forms) and their associated speech styles and thereby, create richer characters, interactions, and stories.

**Keywords** communicative repertoire, speech styles, translation, Japanese, Thai, English, pivot language, Netflix, audiovisual translation

### 1 Introduction

Globalization and technology have allowed for greater media representation of ethnic and linguistic diversity breaking the Anglo-American stranglehold on worldwide media production. Japanese culture continues to appeal to large audiences around the world with its movies, TV shows, anime, manga, videogames, and music groups, promoting the Japanese language and culture. The Japanese-language series *Shogun* became in 2024 the first non-English-language TV show to win a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Drama Series and awards in another 17 categories. The popularity of Japanese culture drives steady foreign language enrolments in Japanese



language courses in English-speaking nations, despite drops in other foreign languages (cf. Japan Foundation 2023).

Yet, Japanese media may still be viewed through the lens of Anglo-American colonialism before being streamed worldwide. American streaming platforms decide what programs to show viewers. More importantly, translations of subtitles or dubbed dialogue into third languages often go through (American) English, leaving fingerprints of the (American) English language or culture, diluting the original language and culture. This phenomenon needs to be examined as 70% of global viewership on Netflix, for example, is done through subtitles or dubbed dialogues (Netflix 2024).

This study examines the Thai translations of speech styles in three Japanese Netflix programs, focusing on the translation of multiple first- and second-person pronouns, address terms, (im)polite verb forms, and sentence-final particles (SFPs) in Japanese. The study compares the Thai translations against both the Japanese original dialogue and English translations through documenting the linguistic features and interpreting their indexical associations and effects. Results suggest that Thai subtitles are likely mediated by English-language translations of subtitles and dubbed dialogue.

## 2 Communicative repertoire of speech styles

Language speakers possess a linguistic or communicative repertoire of codes (i.e., languages) and/or speech styles (i.e., variations in one language) such as (im)politeness registers, regional dialects, and sociolects (i.e., social dialects) of gender, generation, LGBTQIA+ sexuality, and other social groups. These various speech styles may vary linguistically by phonology, lexicon, syntax, pragmatics, discourse style, orthography, paralinguistics, and other linguistic domains. For example, Japanese features multiple first-person pronouns, second-person pronouns, address terms, (im)polite verb forms, sentence-final particles, and other features. The usage of a particular speech style and its associated linguistic features may index identity, define relationships, designate status, shape situations, express stance, and more (Eckert 2019; Hanks 1996).

Additionally, given linguistic dynamism, no discrete linguistic speech styles really exist as speakers shift among speech styles, mix styles, or insert elements of one speech style into the mainframe speech style (cf. codeswitching, codemixing, codeborrowing). Both metaphorical and situational switching among speech styles index multiple, fluid, evolving identities, relationships, and stances. Thus, the use of a particular speech style and shifting among speech styles (i.e., styleshifting) bear pragmatic consequences.

Entertainment media deploys speech styles and their features to create recognizable character identities, reflect or construct relationships, describe or shape situations, reveal stances (i.e., what the speaker thinks about what is being said), and more. Shifting among speech styles (i.e., styleshifting) activates the social associations of these speech styles to demonstrate fluid identities, evolving relationships, developing situations, changing stances, and other effects. Indeed, entertainment media manipulates these speech styles and styleshifting to drive the storyline of TV shows,

movies, books, and other media. Moreover, it should be noted that there are exaggerated speech styles used in media, specifically anime, to depict particular, recognizable characters, i.e., ‘role language’ *yakuwarigo* or ‘character language’ *kyarago* (Kinsui and Yamakido 2015), cf. pirate voices or villain voices in US media. *Yakuwarigo* may be used in any language for pragmatic reasons in the sense that speakers may consciously project or hide particular identities, converge/diverge with their interlocutors, express humor, and more (e.g., Kansai dialect, LGBTQIA+ sociolects, etc.).

Yet, linguistic differences between languages such as a lack of counterpart features (e.g., multiple first- and second-person pronouns) compounded by subtitling conventions (e.g., subtitle length, timing) can constrain translation, requiring different strategies to create the same effects. The alternative of somehow not translating these linguistic features and thereby, their associated speech styles, is that translated subtitles and dubbed dialogues may result in erasure which may ‘render some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible’ (Irvine and Gal 2000: 38).

By contrast, linguistic similarities between languages can allow more faithful translations, resulting in similar pragmatic effects. For example, sharing multiple first- and second-person pronouns as Japanese and Thai do, unlike English, can promote more faithful translations. However, the advantage of sharing linguistic features can be potentially erased if translation between typologically similar languages is mediated by a third language which is typologically different. Indeed, this seems to be the case where original dialogue in Japanese TV shows may be mediated through English as a pivot language by human translators or by AI translations, relying on large language models primarily trained on immense English-language datasets. That is, translations into Thai from the original Japanese, if mediated through English, will likely result in less-than-faithful translations as they do not or cannot exploit shared linguistic features between Thai and Japanese to express various speech styles.

### 3 Comparison of Japanese, Thai, and English features for various speech styles

#### 3.1 Japanese speech styles and features

The linguistic repertoire of Japanese speakers may consist of active and receptive codes (languages) and speech styles such as regional dialects (cf. standard Japanese), (im)politeness registers (e.g., honorific language), and sociolects of gender, LGBTQIA+ sexuality, socioeconomic status, and more. Speakers read the room (i.e., situation) or read the air (i.e., *kūki o yomu*),<sup>1</sup> as said in Japanese. Speakers may shift among these speech styles in response to social cues. For example, speakers may use speech styles in response to the (in)formality of the situation, to express one’s stance (i.e., what a speaker thinks about what is being said), and other factors. Shifting

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<sup>1</sup> A modified Hepburn transcription is used throughout this article.

in Japanese is also triggered by common Japanese social behavior such as inside versus outside groups (*uchi-soto*), social hierarchy (*jōge kankei*), private versus public face/thoughts (*honne-tatema*), and more. These cues naturally interact to activate styleshifting.

In Japanese these speech styles can be highly codified and differ in linguistic form as seen in Table 1. One well known speech style in Japanese is honorific language (*keigo*). This speech style is commonly divided into respectful language (*sonkeigo*), polite language (*teineigo*), and humble language (*kenjōgo*) using both suppletive forms (i.e., completely different root or word) and inflected forms (i.e., same root adding different grammatical or pragmatic morphemes). For example, when referring to a listener's actions, a speaker may use *meshiagarimasu* 'eat' or *o-tsukuri ni narimasu* 'make' to show respect (*sonkeigo*) while using *itadakimasu* 'eat' or *o-tsukuri shimasu* 'make' to refer humbly to one's own actions (*kenjōgo*). Furthermore, a speaker may use polite language (*teineigo*) to show politeness, social distance, lack of intimacy, and more (cf. Hasegawa 2015) by using *tabemasu* 'eat' or *tsukurimasu* 'make' for both the listener and themselves. These registers would also include casual styles where the speaker would use *taberu* 'eat' or *tsukuru* 'make' for the listener and themselves or even coarse, male forms where the speaker would use *kū* 'eat' for the listener or themselves. There are also many other forms (e.g., *-(r)are* morpheme to show respect: *suru* to *sareru* 'do'). Additionally, these speech styles are fluid in that a speaker might mix and match them, that is to say shift among them, within one conversation or interaction depending on the cultural cues. For example, a speaker may say the humble form of 'eat' *itadaku* to express politeness while not appending the *-mas-* polite morpheme in order to express intimacy; such usage may also demonstrate sophistication as a type of beautified speech (*bikago*), stereotypically associated to older, female speakers when speaking among their friends, but perhaps used among other groups such as gay men.

Suppletive form	Inflected form	Speech style
<i>meshiagarimasu</i>	<i>o-tsukuri-ni narimasu</i>	respect ( <i>sonkeigo</i> )
<i>itadakimasu</i>	<i>o-tsukuri itashimasu</i>	humble ( <i>kenjōgo</i> )
<i>tabemasu</i>	<i>tsukurimasu</i>	polite ( <i>teineigo</i> )
<i>taberu</i>	<i>tsukuru</i>	informal
<i>kū</i>	–	coarse, male

Table 1. Suppletive and inflected linguistic forms varying by Japanese speech styles (cf. Hasegawa 2015)

Speakers must make conscious decisions about using particular speech styles and their associated linguistic forms shaped by context for horizontal honorifics (i.e.,

polite *-mas-* verb forms versus informal plain verb forms) and by relationship, status, and other factors for rank-based vertical honorifics (e.g., respect speech styles). Indeed, using the plain style may be a conscious decision as the polite *-mas-* form may be the default as noted by a reviewer; however, the reverse might be plausible given that children are socialized into using the polite *-mas-* form upon entering school as the plain form is generally used at home among family and friends and as inner dialogue. Regardless, speakers must make conscious decisions in using particular speech styles and their associated linguistic forms informed by their personal language ideology.

In addition to verbs and their forms, pronouns or other address terms are another area where speech styles can be manipulated for effect. Pronouns in particular are associated to particular genders, age, and other characteristics while being wielded in different situations just as the verb forms are. As seen in Table 2, a speaker might use several words for ‘I’ such as these multiple Japanese first-person pronouns (and their generalized nuances): *watakushi* (super formal), *watashi* (polite), *boku* (casual, male), *atashi* (casual, female), *ore* (coarse, male), *washi* (older male, somewhat rustic), and more. Also, speakers may use many words for ‘you’ such as *anata* (public, polite in some cases), *kimi* (casual, male), *omae* (coarse, male), *kisama* (aggressive, male), *anta* (casual, dialect), and more, including not overtly using any second-person pronoun which might be indicated by context, verb forms (e.g., respect forms), and more. Address terms including first and family names can be used as second-person

First-person pronouns	Approximate level of formality, nuance	Second-person pronouns	Approximate level of formality, nuance
title, term of address	Depends on term, context, etc.	title, term of address	Depends on term, context, etc.
<i>watakushi</i>	super formal	<i>anata</i>	formal, public (e.g., surveys)
<i>watashi</i>	polite	<i>kimi</i>	casual, used by males to address both genders
<i>atashi</i>	casual, female	<i>omae</i>	coarse, used by males to address both genders
<i>boku</i>	casual, male	<i>jibun</i>	casual, dialect
<i>ore</i>	coarse, male	<i>anta</i>	casual, dialect
<i>washi</i>	older male	<i>temee</i>	coarse, aggressive
<i>jibun</i>	casual, male	<i>kisama</i>	coarse, aggressive

Table 2. Sample of first- and second-person pronouns varying by Japanese speech styles (cf. Hasegawa 2015)

pronouns, oftentimes adding the morpheme *-san* or *-sama* to the term for politeness: teacher (*sensei*), customer (*o-kyaku-sama*), middle-aged man/uncle (*ojisan*), young man/older brother/older male (*onisan*), police officer (*o-mawari-san*), upper classmate (*sempai*), family name (e.g., *Tanaka-san*), and more.

Many of these terms are context-dependent. For example, a younger sibling may call their older brother *onisan* as would younger people to older males who are relatively young while older people may call a young adult male by the same term. Also, men may use the coarse second-person pronoun *omae* in many ways: a male superior may address a subordinate at the workplace to show some familiarity; males may use this pronoun with people close to them; male strangers may use this pronoun to show condescension or ‘fighting words’. There is an interplay of many context-dependent factors that determine usage and their interpretation.

Japanese also features a rich repertoire of sentence-final particles. These particles function to show questions, emphasis, pragmatic meaning, and more and may also express stance among many other functions (Hasegawa 2015) as shown in Table 3. These sentence-final particles are generally avoided in formal speech where speakers, particularly those of lower social status, tend to avoid showing stance, i.e., emotions.

Form	Approximate description of a possible function
<i>ne</i>	seeking agreement among many meanings
<i>yo</i>	emphasis
<i>wa</i>	emphasis (if high pitch in standard Japanese, female/marking hyperfemininity, oftentimes combined with <i>ne</i> , <i>yo</i> as in <i>wa ne</i> , <i>wa yo</i> ); emphasis (if low pitch in Kansai dialect, gender neutral)
<i>ze</i>	emphasis (male, standard Japanese)
<i>zo</i>	emphasis (male, standard Japanese)
<i>no</i>	question (casual)

Table 3. Sample of sentence-final particles and their approximate usages and meaning in Japanese (cf. Hasegawa 2015)

Another speech style potentially present in a Japanese speaker’s communicative repertoire is regional dialect. Speakers may switch to regional dialects or mix regional dialect elements into standard Japanese in informal and other situations (e.g., Yamaguchi dialect, Okamoto 2008). Regional dialects may vary by linguistic features as exemplified in the second-most commonly spoken dialect after standard Japanese centered on Tokyo: the Kansai dialect spoken in Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe, and Nara in the historical, cultural center of Japan. Standard Japanese and the Kansai dialect can vary linguistically as seen in Table 4.

Standard Japanese	Kansai dialect	English meaning
<i>tabenai</i>	<i>tabehen</i>	not eat (casual form)
<i>da</i>	<i>ya</i>	casual form of the be-copular
<i>arigatō</i>	<i>ōkini</i>	Thank you
<i>arigatō</i> low + high + low + low + low pitch	<i>arigatō</i> low + low + low + high + low pitch	Thank you
<i>iku yo</i>	<i>iku wa</i> (low pitch on <i>wa</i> )	I'm going!

Table 4. Sample of differences between standard Japanese and the Kansai dialect

Additionally, many sociolects are commonly used in Japanese. Gendered sociolects are seemingly common in Japanese, but tend to be more highly exaggerated in entertainment media. For example, as seen in Table 3 sentence-final particles can be gendered: *iku wa* (female) versus *iku zo* (male, gender neutral) ‘(hey) I will go!’ (emphasis). There are other tendencies such as morphemes: *o-sushi* (beautified speech) versus *sushi* (common, casual); grammar: *suki yo* (female) versus *suki da yo* (male, gender neutral); pronunciation (e.g., pitch), and more. Other sociolects may include those associated to various communities: LGBTQIA+, neurodivergent, etc. These sociolects may overlap with other sociolects and vary by gender, generation, formality, regional dialect, and more. Furthermore, Japanese speech styles can vary by genre, (e.g., academic, literary, specific field-related) which may exploit the triple lexical layer of native Japanese words, Sinitic-based words, and Western (primarily English) words with their respective nuanced meaning, e.g., *tatemono*, *kenzōbutsu*, *biru(dingu)* ‘building’; *hataraku*, *shigoto (o) suru*, *(aru)baito (o) suru* ‘to work’ although *baito* from German ‘Arbeit’ means ‘part-time, casual work’ in Japanese.

Together, these linguistic features in the potential speech styles of a Japanese speaker’s communicative repertoire are manipulated as part of the pragmatics of interacting with other speakers. Shifting among different linguistic forms associated to varying speech styles requires highly proficient linguistic competence (i.e., knowledge of linguistic forms) and communicative competence (i.e., knowledge of pragmatics of when and how to use these forms) to navigate interactions. Wielding these speech styles with great fluidity can define both the speaker’s and listener’s identities, relationships, stances, contexts, and more.

Additionally, we might categorize language usage by lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic levels as summarized in Table 5. That is, speakers may select specific lexicon or grammatical structures associated to particular speech styles. Or lexicon and grammatical structures may differ in their pragmatic value as shaped by context, thereby being associated to particular speech styles. For example, polite *-mas-* verb

Linguistic domain	Japanese	English	Thai
Lexical	Multiple first-person and second-person singular pronouns.	Address terms (e.g., <i>sir</i> , <i>ma'am</i> ), including derogatory terms, used with second-person pronouns.	Multiple first-person and second-person singular pronouns.
Grammatical	Multiple verbs by formality.	Formal verbs: to consume, ingest, partake, dine, etc. (to eat), to terminate (to end), to commence (to start), to purchase (to buy), etc.	Multiple verbs by formality.
Pragmatic	<i>-mas-</i> polite verb forms versus plain style verb forms.	<i>Your highness</i> , <i>sir</i> , <i>ma'am</i> , etc. used in polite situations as well as sarcastic situations.	<i>Khrap</i> (male) and <i>khâ</i> with falling tone (female statement)/ <i>khá</i> with high tone (female question).

Table 5. Schematic comparison of lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic differences among languages

form usage among female friends can be interpreted according to context as projecting gentility or sophistication, formality if speaking in a discussion in a classroom, or a more distant stance among many possible interpretations. Table 5 provides a schematic comparison of Japanese by lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic differences with potential analogous counterparts in English and Thai, where possible. Such a schematic categorization provides an analytical framework to demonstrate with concrete examples the possible gaps between monochromatic versus technicolor translations.

### 3.2 Thai speech styles and features

Thai also features a range of speech styles indexed by various linguistic features. Thai verbs may differ by register as seen in Table 6. for the word 'eat'. We see suppletive forms rather than inflected forms as Thai is an analytic language generally lacking in inflectional morphology. Additionally, these forms are not necessarily available for all verbs as is the same case for Japanese suppletive forms for a limited number of verbs.

Thai also possesses a wide range of first- and second-pronouns. First-person pronouns reflect speech styles from higher to lower formality intersecting with other indexical features such as gender, regional dialect, etc. at times as seen in Table 7.

Thai also may use address terms for first-, second-, and third-person singular pronouns. *Phî* 'older sibling' for 'older person'. *Lung* 'uncle (older brother of parent)' for 'middle-aged man'. *Bpâa* 'aunt (older sister of parent)' for 'middle-aged woman'.

Form	Speech style
<i>kin<sup>2</sup></i>	common
<i>ráp bpràthaaan (thaaan)</i>	formal, polite
<i>bɔɔriphôok</i>	'consume' formal
<i>dêek</i>	vulgar, used with close friends
<i>yát</i>	vulgar
<i>chăn</i>	used for monks
<i>sàwǎi</i>	royal
<i>màm</i>	used with babies or young children
<i>cía</i>	used by Chinese-Thai

Table 6. Possible words for 'eat' in Thai varying by speech style (Diller 1985: 61–62; informed by casual discussion by researchers with native Thai speakers)

First-person pronouns	Approximate level of formality, nuance	Second-person pronouns	Approximate level of formality, nuance
<i>khâaphacâw</i>	ultra formal, male/female	<i>thân</i>	super polite, male/female
<i>kraphôm</i>	super formal, male	<i>khun</i>	polite, male/female
<i>phôm</i>	polite, male	<i>thəə</i>	casual, male/female
<i>dīchán</i>	casual, female	<i>naay</i>	casual, male/female
<i>chăn</i>	casual, male/female	<i>raw</i>	casual, male/female
<i>raw</i>	casual, male/female	<i>mung</i>	coarse, male/female
<i>kháw, tua eej</i>	very casual, female	<i>tua, tua eej</i>	very casual, female
<i>kuu</i>	coarse, male/female		

Table 7. Sample of first- and second-person pronouns in Thai varying by speech style (Iwasaki and Ingkhaphirom 2005: 50–51)

<sup>2</sup> Transcriptions use a modified international phonetic transcription (IPA) phonetic transcription (cf. Iwasaki and Ingkhaphirom 2005). Diacritics indicate tones: ◌ mid, ◌ low, ◌ falling, ◌ high, ◌ rising

In addition, Thai uses sentence-final particles. Sentence-final particles often convey questions, emphasis, and pragmatic meanings such as softening utterances, conveying friendliness, asking for agreement, and more as seen in Table 8.

Form	Approximate possible function
<i>khráp</i> (statement, question)	politeness marker (male)
<i>khâ</i> (statement) <i>khá</i> (question)	politeness marker (female)
<i>nà</i>	express insistence, request acceptance
<i>cá</i>	friendly, casual versions of <i>khâ</i> , <i>khá</i> ; generally used by female speakers
<i>ná</i>	makes utterance softer, gentler; seeking agreement
<i>sí</i>	shows emphasis

Table 8. Sample of sentence-final particles and their approximate usages and meaning in Thai (Iwasaki and Inghaphirom 2005)

Lastly, as seen in some of the language samples above, Thai features regional dialects and sociolects, including spoken versus written forms.

### 3.3 American English speech styles and features

English also features various speech styles but in ways that differ from Japanese and Thai. Verbs may vary by speech style where English might exploit the lexical strata of native English words and those from Latin, Greek, and French. For example, English uses phrases such as *Please refrain from using your phone* versus *Don't use your phone*. For 'eat' English speakers might use many of the following: *consume*, *dine*, *chow down*, *dig in*, and more; these may not only indicate formality but also other nuanced meanings. English may also use other parts of speech (e.g., adverbs) to create phrases that apply to others out of politeness or aggression that are somewhat analogous to Japanese respect versus humble verb forms. For instance, English has *Could you kindly provide me with information* but generally not *I will kindly provide you with information*, or *what the eff are you doing*.

English pronouns are much more limited than those in Japanese and Thai. First-person singular pronouns are mostly limited to *I* although there is the royal *we* or *me* or *myself* in dialect as in *me thinks something is odd*. Second-person pronouns are a little richer. While modern English has lost the older distinction between informal *thou* and formal *you* that remains in many European languages, the archaic casual form pops up in historical dramas, for example. The plural second-person pronoun features variation as in the Southern American English or

African-American English *y'all* (seemingly spreading among young English speakers around the world) or *youse* or *you guys* or *yinz* and more. English, however, has a large range of address terms. In Southern American English using *sir* or *ma'am* along with *Mr* or *Miss* attached to first names is common as a form of politeness or gentility as in *Mr. Bob* or *Miss Karen* while in General American these are not used and/or carry different pragmatics, e.g., *ma'am* may cause some women to feel that they are being called old. People may be called by their job titles as in *doc/doctor*, *professor*, *officer*, etc. and by endearments such as *honey*, *sweetie*, *kiddo*, etc. These are not second-person pronouns, but they have some functions similar to pronouns, e.g., pragmatic meaning showing stance as in *this biyatch* (i.e., *I*) *is gonna hit you* or *you mother effer are one crazy dude*.

English does feature some types of sentence-final particles. For example, Canadian English speakers attach *eh* to sentences to confirm information, show agreement, and many more meanings. Many English varieties also attach *you know*, *right*, *see*, *like*, *no*, *though*, *man*, and more to either the end or beginning of sentences for various meanings in a similar manner to sentence-final particles in Thai.

English features a wide range of regional dialects and sociolects as well. These may differ by the presence or absence of particular lexicon, differences in meaning of shared words, or in the frequency or usage of particular lexicon. Australian English tends to prefer to use *heaps* for American English *lots*, but both words are mutually understood, and Australian English speakers bandy about the *c-word* to refer to one's friends or enemies, whether male or female, with much greater frequency to the shock of many American English speakers although American English speakers may use the word *bitch* in the same way. Moreover, these dialects and sociolects may vary by accent, grammar, pragmatics, paralinguistics, and more.

These linguistic features associated to various speech styles in Japanese, Thai, and English are used as deductive categories in analyzing the data in our study and are not exhaustive.

## 4 Current study

### 4.1 Research questions

The current exploratory study seeks to answer the following questions:

- Do Thai subtitles appear to be translated from the English-translated subtitles or from the original Japanese dialogue?
- Could Thai subtitles be potentially more faithfully translated from the original Japanese dialogue by using shared linguistic features?

These two research questions are informed by the following secondary objectives:

- To describe and interpret the linguistic forms and functions of Japanese speech styles in the original Japanese dialogues, focusing on multiple first- and second-person pronouns, (in)formal verb forms, and sentence-final particles (SFPs).

- To observe and interpret the linguistic forms and functions of the English and Thai translated dialogues, i.e., subtitles, dubbed dialogues, as compared to the targeted Japanese speech styles in the original Japanese dialogues.
- To compare the English- and Thai-translated dialogues of the original Japanese dialogues to determine the possible effect of English-mediated translations on Thai translations from the Japanese.

## 4.2 Materials

The following three Netflix shows were examined:

### 4.2.1 *Rurouni Kenshin: The Beginning* (2021)

This show is based on the manga of the same name. The story revolves around the protagonist, Himura Kenshin, an assassin, caught up in the struggle between pro- and anti-(Shogun) government factions during the Bakumatsu period (1860s) before the rise of modern Japan.

### 4.2.2 *The Door into Summer* (2021)

Although this movie is based on the book of the same name by the American author, Ray Bradbury, it is produced in Japanese. This science fiction show tells the story of an inventor of robotic technology whose work is stolen by his business partner and girlfriend and who is then put into cryogenic sleep for 30 years. Once he wakes up he is assisted by an android to change the past by returning to 1995.

### 4.2.3 *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* Episodes 1–2 (2019)

This TV series is based on the *yaoi* (i.e., boys' love) manga comic. The story depicts the daily life of a middle-aged gay couple. They work as a lawyer and hairdresser who enjoy cooking and eating food.

## 4.3 Analysis

The current study focuses on the Thai translations (e.g., subtitles, dubbed dialogues) of the original Japanese dialogue and compares them to the Japanese original and English subtitles previously analyzed in another study (Schaefer and Warhol forthcoming). We analyze the Thai translations considering both linguistic constraints and translation constraints.

First, as part of linguistic constraints, we examine the translated subtitles and dubbed dialogues by functional equivalence, acceptability, and readability (Pedersen 2017). That is, we answer the following questions:

- (1) *Functional equivalence*: Do the subtitles convey speaker meaning?
- (2) *Acceptability*: Do the subtitles sound correct and natural in the target language (i.e., domestication versus foreignization)?
- (3) *Readability*: Can the subtitles be read in a fluent and non-intrusive way?

Second, as part of translation constraints, we consider the subtitle guidelines for English employed by streaming platforms like Netflix and their possible impact on translation. For example, Netflix advocates up to 20 characters per second (cps) or 240 words per minute (wpm) for adult programs (Netflix n.d.). Guidelines further advise two lines with 42 characters maximum per line. When examining the translation of dubbed dialogues, analysis also considers lipsyncing. Translated dialogue must match mouth movement both in the length and lip movement (e.g., closed lips for /m/, /p/, or /b/) of the original dialogue and some paralinguistic features such as body movement, gestures, facial expressions, visuals, and more and thereby, influencing translation.

Third, our analysis also takes into account the influence of English as a pivot language: Japanese original to English pivot translation to Thai translation. That is, we attempt to determine what linguistic and translation constraints of English impact the Thai translations as compared to the original Japanese dialogue. Additionally, we surmise there would be traces of English whether translations are done by human translators or Large Language Models (LLMs), i.e., artificial intelligence, which are trained on English as a medium and thereby, resulting in translations being mediated through English between languages, e.g., Japanese to English to Thai rather than directly from Japanese to Thai. However, we do not expect to be able to easily differentiate between human and AI translations but note in either case the possible impact of English.

Lastly, our analysis of the Thai translations references initial observations of the Japanese-to-English translations in the same three shows (Schaefer and Warhol forthcoming). The current article extends analysis to the Thai translations as compared to both the original Japanese dialogue and English translated dialogue as possibly mediated by translations through English as a pivot language.

The previous study (Schaefer and Warhol forthcoming) analyzed the English translations of original Japanese dialogues and arrived at the following observations:

- Show one: *Rurouni Kenshin: The Beginning* (2021)
  1. Japanese regional dialects (e.g., standard, Kansai, Western Japan) are used for the be-copula to indicate different factions: standard for the government factions (e.g., *da*), Kansai for the Kyoto locals (e.g., *ya*), and Western Japanese for the rebel forces (e.g., *ja*). This technique allows the characters, dialogue, and thereby, the storyline to be easily followed.
  2. Spoken accents (e.g., trilled /r/, gravelly voice) and sentence-final particles may indicate stance (e.g., aggression, politeness) and questions, emphasis, agreement, and more, respectively, where English translated subtitles may rely on punctuation, font (e.g., bold, italics), grammatical structure, etc. although at times accents and sentence-final particles seem to be difficult to render into English.
- Show two: *The Door into Summer* (2021)
  3. Hierarchical relationships are indicated by multiple pronouns, (im)polite verbs, and other linguistic features.

4. Humor may be created by flouting the socially-expected usage of particular pronouns, address terms, and other linguistic features that indicate one speech style when another is expected in the given social situation.
  5. Japanese multiple pronouns used in a relationship may change over time to indicate growing intimacy between speakers, e.g., from *omae* (male, coarse, condescending) to *kimi* (male, friendly) both meaning ‘you’.
- Show three: *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* Episodes 1–2 (2019)
    6. The gay couple use hyper-masculine versus ‘boyish’ language as exemplified in the first-person male pronouns of *ore* and *boku*, respectively. Such language usage depicts a hierarchical relationship stereotypical of male-female relationships. This portrayal may reflect the writer’s worldview as a straight female or her desired depiction writing *yaoi* (boys’ love) manga targeting a straight female audience although such relationships may exist in reality among gay men and in the end are after all fictional relationships depicted in media.
    7. Native speakers of Japanese may interpret some of the gay couple’s dialogue as occurring between an older and younger person such as between a father and child or between a male speaker and female speaker.
    8. Gay terms (e.g., *bottom*, *top*, *bear*) are mainstreamed but tend not be understood by non-LGBTQIA+ viewers of the original Japanese while mostly understood by English-speaking viewers of the English translations. The nuanced difference between *gei* ‘gay’ versus *dōseiaisha* ‘homosexual’ appear to differ in Japanese as compared to English and is lost in the English translation. That is, *dōseiaisha* ‘homosexual’ seems to carry a politeness given its more academic nuance (i.e., Chinese-based word similar to Latin-based words in English) while in English it seems to be somewhat outdated in non-clinical conversations and thereby, seems to carry negative, biased connotations toward gay men.
    9. Speakers shift between highly linguistically marked speech styles using various pronouns, (im)polite verbs, sentence-final particles, and more to show identities, relationships, and/or stances (i.e., what the speaker thinks about what it is being said). For example, the mother of one of the gay men mother uses ‘motherese,’ i.e., speech style used stereotypically by mothers to their children while her son shifts to polite Japanese when he feels exasperated by his mother’s behavior, e.g., badgering her son to come out as a gay man in his law office.

## 5 Results: Thai translations of original Japanese dialects

### 5.1 Regional variations of the be-copula

We now document Thai translations of the original Japanese dialogues as compared to the English translations.

We note the translation of the be-copula in *Rurouni Kenshin: The Beginning* (2021). In the original Japanese dialogue, regional variations of the be-copula reflect the

affiliation of various factions as seen in Table 9. By contrast, both English and Thai translations use one form of the be-copula that does not show any regional variation in the two respective languages. However, there are cases where translations of the be-copula in Japanese were rendered into English and Thai without using a be-copula.

Be-copula form in Japanese	Speech style	English translations	Thai translations
<i>da</i>	Modern standard dialect form = Tokyo (or Edo government)	be-verb: am, are, is	<i>bpen</i> (be-copula)
<i>ja</i>	Western Japanese dialect from Satsuma and Chōshū = rebel forces	be-verb: am, are, is	<i>bpen</i> (be-copula)
<i>ya</i>	Kansai dialect = local speakers in Kyoto	be-verb: am, are, is	<i>bpen</i> (be-copula)

Table 9. be-copula regional forms in *Rurouni Kenshin: The Beginning* (2021)

## 5.2 Register variations in pronouns, address terms, and verb forms

We describe the translation of register differences in pronouns, address terms, and verb forms in *The Door into Summer* (2021). In the original Japanese dialogue in Table 10, the human protagonist uses the coarse male second-person pronoun *omae* in his initial encounters with the human android. He also uses casual verb forms. In comparison, the android employs respectful linguistic forms commonly used by service industry workers toward the human protagonist. As such, when the human android styleshifts into very casual, male Tokyo dialect while speaking to himself, the stark contrast in speech styles creates a humorous moment.

By contrast, the English translation and Thai translation do not juxtapose coarse and polite speech styles to create the condescending versus respectful interaction between the two characters and the ensuing humorous moment. The English uses ‘I’ and ‘you’ for the coarse, first- and second-person pronouns of *ore* and *omae*, respectively. The Thai translation uses *phǒm* and *khun* which are both polite forms for ‘I’ and ‘you’, respectively. However, Thai could have used coarse male language such as *kuu* for ‘I’ and *mung* for ‘you’ to create a similar interaction as the Japanese original dialogue. However, the English translation for the super polite service industry term *kashikomarimashita* ‘understand’ as ‘acknowledged’ renders the response as formal or even how a computer AI is expected to respond in English while the Thai translation using *sâap* which is politer than the more common *rúu* ‘to know’ along with the polite male sentence final particle (SFP) *kháp* makes the utterance polite in Thai. Moreover, the *mendokusē* in Japanese is male, coarse language associated with Tokyo speakers. The English translation may not be as impactful but still shows impoliteness by its

meaning while the Thai translation is impolite due to its meaning and dispensing with the socially-expected polite male sentence-final particle *kh-ráp*.

Speaker	Japanese original dialogue	English translation	Thai translation
Human protagonist (Takakura)	俺は退院する	I'm leaving.	ผมจะไป
	<i>Ore wa taiin suru</i>		<i>Phǒm cà bpai.</i>
	1MS-(coarse)=TOP leave + hospital + do-NPS		1MS-POL will go
Human protagonist (Takakura)	ヒューマノイドなんだろ?これは命令だ	You're a humanoid robot, right? This is a command.	คุณเป็นหุ่นยนต์มนุษย์ใช่ไหม นี่คือคำสั่ง
	<i>Hyūmanoido nan daro? Kore wa meirei da.</i>		<i>Khun bpen hūnyonmanút chāi mái? Nī khun kham-sàng</i>
	Humanoid explanatory/emphasis morpheme COP. CJT-CAS. This = TOP command-COP-CAS		2NS-POL COP android right SFP-Q. This COP command
Human android (PETE)	かしこまりました 担当のもちつきをお呼びいたします	Acknowledged. I'll go get the person in charge.	รับทราบครับ ผมจะไปตามผู้รับผิดชอบ
	<i>Kashikomari-mashi-ta Tantō no Mochizuki o o-yobi itashimasu.</i>		<i>Ráp sâap kh-ráp phǒm cà bpai dtaam phūu rāppitch-wǎp</i>
	'understand'(HUM)-POL-PST In-charge = GEN Mochizuki (family name) = OBJ BEA-call (verb stem) do-(HUM)-POL-PST		Receive knowledge SFP-POL-MAS 1MS-POL will go follow person.take.responsibility
Human android (PETE)	めんどくせえ	What a pain.	วุ่นวายจริงๆ
	<i>Mendokus-ē</i>		<i>Wūnwaai jinjin</i>
	Annoying-MAS (Tokyo dialect)		Annoying really (duplicative for intensity) lack of a SFP-POL-MAS

Table 10. Casual versus formal forms in *The Door into Summer* (2021)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Transcriptions of dialogue adopt a modified form of the Leipzig Glossing Rules (Comrie, Haspelmath, and Bickel 2015) as informed by Zisk (2023) for Japanese in Tables 10–13 and any full-sentence examples. Phonetic transcriptions use a modified Hepburn system rather than the International Phonetic Alphabet given the Hepburn system is fairly transparent and commonly used.

In another interaction the human protagonist’s coarse casual language is pointed out by the android as being rude. The English subtitle translates *omae* as ‘you’. In turn, the Thai translation uses *khun* which is a polite form of ‘you’ in Thai when a coarse, male second-person pronoun *mung* could have been used to relay the impact of the Japanese original *omae*. The result of such a similar translation of pronouns is that both the English and Thai translations show a disconnect in discourse meaning.

Speaker	Japanese original dialogue	English translation	Thai translation
Human protagonist (Takakura)	お前何やってんの？	What are you doing here?	คุณมาทำอะไรตรงนี้นี้นะ
	<i>omae nani yatte n no</i>		<i>Khun maa tham àrai dtrong nī nīa</i>
	2MS-AHO what do-NPS-CAS (reduced form) STP-Q-CAS		2NS-POL come do what right here SFP (contraction of <i>nīi</i> + <i>nā</i> = just discovered fact + seeking a response)
Human android (PETE)	初対面で’ お前’ は失礼です	Please be more courteous.	กรุณาสุภาพกว่านี้ด้วยครับ
	<i>Hatsutaimen = de ‘omae’ wa shitsurei desu</i>		<i>Kàrúnaa sùphâap kwàa ni dūay khráp</i>
	First.meeting = LOC 2MS-AHO = TOP rude COP.POL-NPS		Please polite more this also SFP-POL-MAS

Table 11. Coarse second-person pronoun in Japanese and its English and Thai translations

In one more interaction this unequal relationship between the human protagonist and human android plays out humorously through styleshifting by the android going from a respectful style to a casual, if not rude, style as seen in Table 12. In the Japanese original the human android attaches *-sama* which is an even more respectful morpheme than *-san* to the human protagonist’s name. When asked by the human protagonist to dispense with such respectful language, the human android uses the human protagonist’s last name only which is considered rude in Japanese in this context as their relationship is not one of friendly male camaraderie (cf. military) similar to calling a stranger by their last name in American English. In this case, the English translation manipulates English address terms of ‘sir’ versus ‘dude’ to create a similar humorous effect. By comparison, the Thai translation juxtaposes the polite

second-person pronoun *thân* against the casual second-person pronoun *phûak* with its apparently slang meaning of ‘dude’ in Thai as well as the polite sentence particle *kháp* with the casual, somewhat insistent *sì*.

Speaker	Japanese original dialogue	English translation	Thai translation
Human android (PETE)	お待ち下さい 高倉様	One moment, sir.	รอก่อนครับ ท่าน
	<i>o-machi kudasai Takakura-sama</i>		<i>Rw kòwn kháp thán</i>
	BEA-wait please Takakura (family name)-RSP		Wait first SFP-POL-MAS 2NS-RSP
Human protagonist (Takakura)	あと その'高倉様'ってやめろよ	Don't call me sir.	อย่ามาเรียก 'ท่าน' นะ
	<i>ato sono 'Takakura-sama' tte yamero yo</i>		<i>Yàa maa riak 'thán' ná</i>
	also that Takakura (family name)-RSP CMP stop-IMP ASR		Do not come (= all this time; persistently) call 2NS-RSP SFP (softener)
Human android (PETE)	お待ち下さい 高倉	One moment, dude.	รอก่อนสิ พวก
	<i>o-machi kudasai Takakura</i>		<i>rw kòwn sì phûak</i>
	BEA-wait please Takakura (family name)		Wait first SFP-EMP 'dude'

Table 12. Polite address morpheme in Japanese and its translation

In an interaction where the two main characters part ways as seen in Table 13, the human protagonist styleshifts from the coarse second-person pronoun used by males of *omae* he has been using throughout their relationship to the familiar second-person pronoun used by males of *kimi*: *kimi ga ite kurete yokatta* [Somewhat literally: (That) you are (here) was good.] This could be interpreted as a shift in the human protagonist's attitude toward the human android: from a condescending attitude toward a machine to one of a friendship toward a sentient being.

Contrary to the Japanese original, English translates the dialogue by restructuring the Japanese in a way needing the plural first-person pronoun rather than the second-person pronoun in the original: *I'm glad we met*. The Thai translation mirrors this English structure although Thai could somewhat mirror the original Japanese dialogue in its use of the second-person pronoun, e.g., *I am glad I met you*. Additionally, Thai uses the polite first-person pronoun *phǒm* which is a departure from the

protagonist’s normal use of the coarse, male first-person pronoun *ore*. This change in first-person pronouns by the human protagonist in Thai could possibly be interpreted as a shift in his relationship toward the human android.

Speaker	Japanese original dialogue	English translation	Thai translation
Human protagonist (Takakura)	君がいてくれてよかった	I’m glad we met	ผมดีใจนะที่เราได้เจอกัน
	<i>kimi ga ite kurete yokatta</i>		<i>Phǒm dīi cai ná thī raw dtāi jəə kan</i>
	2MS-CAS = NOM exist-SEQ good PST		1MS-POL good heart SFP (softener) subordinating conjunction marker we can meet together

Table 13. Usage of casual second-person pronoun by human protagonist to address android robot

The analysis of the Thai translations concerning pronouns used by the human protagonist and human android appear to be directly translated from English translated subtitles rather than from the original Japanese dialogue. This interpretation is suggested by the existence of the rich repertoire of Thai first-person and second-person pronouns that could be used to mirror the manipulation of pronouns in the Japanese original dialogue to define the relationship between the human protagonist and human android in a similar manner.

### 5.3 Hypermasculinity, hierarchy, heteronormativity, and gay terms

Next, the relationship between the gay couple in *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* (2019) feels reflective of a stereotypical heteronormative relationship as one male spouse uses hypermasculine language while the other uses boyish, almost feminine speech patterns. For example, the hypermasculine spouse uses the coarser language forms of *omae*, *meshi*, *umai*, and more while the more boyish, somewhat effeminate spouse (as reinforced by body language, pitch, voice quality) uses more boyish, neutral, or polite forms such as *boku*, *gohan*, *oishii*, and more as noted in Table 14.

By contrast, English and Thai translations do not reflect the differences in the identities of the two men and thereby, their relationship in Thai and English appears more egalitarian. Again, Thai could exploit Japanese linguistic counterparts with its multiple first- and second-person pronouns and (im)polite verbs to recreate a similar hierarchical, stereotypical heteronormative relationship.

Masculine partner	Neutral/boyish/somewhat effeminate partner	English translation	Thai translation
俺 <i>ore</i>	ぼく <i>boku</i>	I	ฉัน <i>chăn</i>
メシ <i>meshi</i>	ご飯 <i>gohan</i>	– ( <i>gohan o taberu, meshi kuu</i> translated as ‘eat’ only)	ข้าว <i>khâao</i>
食う <i>kuu</i>	食べる <i>taberu</i>	eat	กิน <i>kin</i>
うまい <i>umai</i>	おいしい <i>oishii</i>	(tastes) good	อร่อย <i>àròi</i>

Table 14. Language usage differences between the gay middle-aged couple in *What Did You Eat Yesterday?* (2019) and their translated English, Thai counterparts

Heteronormativity and gay terms are mainstreamed. Gay relationships have stereotypically heteronormative male-female roles imposed upon them using terms such as *onna-yaku* ‘female role’, *tachi-neko* ‘masculine-acting bottom’ as seen in Table 15. Additionally, some terms such as *nonke* ‘straight’ in Japanese may not be well known by non-LGBTQIA+ viewers while the English counterpart ‘straight’ is likely well known by non-LGBTQIA+ viewers. On the other hand, the Thai translations seem to be more literal descriptions (e.g., *fàai ráp* ‘receiving role’) or somewhat off (e.g., *hùn mii* ‘teddy bear’).

Japanese gay term	English translation	Thai translation
女役 <i>onnayaku</i> ‘woman role’	the woman in the relationship	บทฝ่ายหญิง <i>bòt.fài yǐng</i> role female ‘female role’
タチネコ <i>tachi-neko</i> ‘masculine-acting bottom’	–	–
ネコ <i>neko</i> ‘bottom’	bottom	ฝ่ายรับ <i>fài ráp</i> group receive ‘receiving side/faction’
ヒゲクマ系 <i>hige-kuma-kei</i> ‘facial hair-bear’	bear	หุ่นหมี <i>hùn mii</i> puppet bear ‘teddy bear’
ノンケ <i>nonke</i> ‘straight’	straight	ชอบผู้หญิง <i>chòwp phũuyǐng</i> like women
カミングアウトしてる <i>kaminguauto shiteru</i> ‘coming out do progressive form’	You’ve come out.	ว่าลูกเป็นเกย์ <i>wâa lûuk bpen kee</i> say child COP gay ‘(you) say you are gay’

Japanese gay term	English translation	Thai translation
ゲイ <i>gei</i> 'gay'	gay	เกย์ <i>kee</i> gay
同性愛者 <i>dōseiaisha</i> 'homosexual'	gay	เกย์ <i>kee</i> gay
ぼくのほうが男なんですよ。 <i>Boku no hō ga otoko na n desu yo.</i> 1MS-CAS = GEN part/ side = NOM man explanatory/ emphasis morpheme COP.POL- NPS ASR	I'm more of a man than he is.	ผมนะรับบทฝ่ายชาย <i>phǒm nà ráp bôt.fāai chaai</i> 1MS-POL particle (emphasizes topic, i.e., I) receive role male 'I play the role male'

Table 15. Gay terms and their Netflix translations

## 6 Discussion/conclusion

Our interpretations of the Thai translations of the original Japanese dialogue present several themes.

On the micro-level, we note that linguistic features associated with different Japanese speech styles (e.g., regional dialects, sociolects, etc.) are generally not translated into English or Thai. For example, both Thai and English do not feature a be-copula varying by regional dialect, and so, do not translate these regional differences directly (e.g., no regional forms of the be-copula) or indirectly (e.g., using other regional linguistic features). English has more dissimilar linguistic features with Japanese in contrast with Thai which shares some similar linguistic features (e.g., multiple first- and second-pronouns). However, the Thai translations do not exploit the rich repertoire of pronouns in Thai to indicate hierarchical interactions, evolving relationships, changing stances, and more. The Thai translation generally uses the polite forms of *phǒm* and *khun* rather than the coarse forms of *kuu* or *mung* to reflect 'I' and 'you', losing the social and pragmatic information encoded in the usage of the coarse first-person and second-person pronouns of *ore* and *omae* used to reflect 'I' and 'you' in Japanese, respectively. Given the possibility of a more nuanced translation from Thai into Japanese, the lack of coarse language seems to suggest that the Thai subtitles are being translated from the English 'I' and 'you'. As such, the Thai translations do not exploit linguistic similarities with Japanese to evoke the same effects. On the macro-level the result is that characters may seem more one-dimensional; dialogues are more difficult to follow along; interactions are flatter; and the storyline is poorer in nuances. The overall effect is that the story is less colorful (i.e., monochromatic) compared to the technicolor Japanese original, despite the potential in Thai to reproduce a more technicolor version.

Not all dialogues lack nuance, however. In cases where English can translate the nuance of particular address terms associated to a particular speech style, the Thai attempts to do as well (e.g., the translation of deleting *-sama* as ‘dude’ in English or *phûak* in Thai in a polite relationship for a humorous effect caused by the use of a socially unexpected linguistic form). There is some attempt to render polite verb forms into similar counterparts in English and thereby, into Thai: Japanese super polite service industry language such as *kashikomarimashita* as ‘acknowledged’ and then, polite *ráp sâap khráp* ‘understand (instructions)’ in Thai. Yet, these instances are limited given the typological differences in how Japanese and English speech styles are encoded linguistically.

Additionally, we note that even if regional variation of the be-copula existed in English or Thai, and were applied to the English and Thai translations, or if other regional linguistic forms were applied, they would not activate the social associations of the original Japanese. These English or Thai linguistic forms would likely activate culture-specific associated regional stereotypes and thereby, likely create a dissonance with the original Japanese culture, e.g., Western Japanese dialects translated into Southern American English. Nevertheless, it should be noted that regional dialects are rendered in a standard form like General American (GA) which could be considered a dialect that may be associated to middle-class, cisgender, heteronormative speakers with other possible additional social associations and thereby, in essence is not a neutral variety.

As for sociolects, the hierarchical relationship and hypermasculine, effeminate, and/or boyish identities seem to be erased in the English translations. The Thai translations also seem to erase the hierarchical relationship and identities despite the Thai repertoire of multiple first- and second-person pronouns and (im)polite verb forms. Again, this seems to indicate that the Thai translations are mediated by the English translations rather than being direct translations of the Japanese original dialogue. Interestingly, the English translates most of the terms used in the gay community while the Thai seems to consist of descriptions rather than jargon.

In sum, as noted on the micro level, Thai translations seem not to fully employ the linguistic repertoire of available pronouns, verb forms, sentence-final particles, and other linguistic features including pronunciation (not discussed in the results) and regional dialectal features. Instead, there is a tendency to translate Japanese speech styles into Thai through the medium of standard (American) middle-class English (GA). Thus, Thai seems to mirror English translations by mostly employing standard Thai used in the capital of Bangkok. This tendency results in lower linguistic and social information: Identities (regional, social, gender), relationships, situations, stances, and more are generally erased in translated subtitles which in turn results in marginalized groups among both Japanese and international viewers being erased. Moreover, this monochromatic representation of various speech styles means that styleshifting and its pragmatic meaning are also erased.

On the macro level, translated Thai dialogue does not fully take advantage of its available repertoire of linguistic features, resulting in a less effective depiction of the multiple, fluid identities, description of evolving relationships,

expression of changing stances, and more, impacting the story background and development of the story. There are less colorful characters, flatter interactions and relationships, and difficult-to-follow dialogues and storylines due to these linguistic and translation constraints compounded by using English as a pivot language. Furthermore, Japan may be portrayed as a monolithic society as representation of various communities is diluted or completely erased through the non-translation of their speech styles.

In response, we recommend direct translations from Japanese into Thai so that they are representative of various social groups. Nevertheless, we do realize that there may be fewer translators available as compared to Japanese into English or Thai into English, but advocate team translations (e.g., Japanese-English and Thai-English translators) or at least utilizing a Japanese language consultant to inform the English-Thai translator(s) about the original Japanese dialogue. To resolve translation constraints, we recommend possibly using telops, i.e., texts or images such as captions, subtitles, scrolling tickers, etc. superimposed on the screen (e.g., commentary floating across the screen as in the beginning of Star Wars movies). That is, commentary might be added to the screen in some capacity.

Lastly, we note that the question remains if translation could ever replicate the similar social connotations associated to particular speech styles from one language to another. For example, translating a Japanese regional dialect into Southern-American English in a Japanese-to-English translation and then, into a Northeast (Isaan) Thai regional dialect ignores the long, social history of these dialects on both sides of the translation divide and creates a confusing dissonance among viewers by tying the stereotypical social associations of a particular speech style in English or Thai to Japanese characters or contexts.

Although we used deductive analysis based on the languages' grammar, broadly defined, our approach has limitations. First, we have no firsthand knowledge of Netflix's translation process. We neither observed translation nor dubbing in the process or interviewed translators and dubbers. We acknowledge also that the objective of translations may be localized translations, i.e., domestication and not foreignization, of commercial products geared toward domestic consumers. Second, although we attempted to use an objective template for analysis, our subjective interpretations may have influenced our observations, particularly those related to macrolevel concerns such as how colorful the translation is. Nevertheless, the careful analysis of the microlevel grammatical features of the Thai translations demonstrates that they are not taking advantage of the rich communicative repertoire of speech styles available in Thai. The result is translations with low-level information rather than robust character and scene depictions.

Other limitations concern the scope of the current study which serves as multiple case studies rather than a virtual ethnography or a large corpus analysis. As a next step to gain more information to interpret the translations, we recommend these follow-up tasks to this current study. We suggest testing native speakers on their interpretation of subtitles and dubbed dialogue in the original Japanese, translated

English, and translated Thai dialogues. We also recommend having Japanese-Thai bilinguals do direct translations from Japanese into Thai to compare with the seemingly English-mediated Japanese-to(-English-to)-Thai translations.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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### Abbreviations

1MS	first person masculine singular	HUM	humble
2MS	second person masculine singular	IMP	imperative
2NS	second person neuter singular	MAS	masculine
AHO	anti-honorific	NPS	nonpast
ASR	assertive	OBJ	object
BEA	beautificatory	POL	polite
CAS	casual	PST	past
CJT	conjunctural	RSP	respectful
CMP	complementizer	SEQ	sequential
COP	copula	SFP-Q	sentence-final particle, question
		TOP	topic

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