"Just Pull a Bardot": Subtitling French Cultural References in "Call My Agent"

🆔 **Lessinger Enora** ✉
Oxford Brookes University

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Abstract

The translation of cultural references has taken centre stage in translation studies in the last few decades, particularly since the cultural turn observed in translation studies from the 1980s onwards. With the emergence of audiovisual translation (AVT) as an increasingly important subfield of translation studies, new tailored typologies of cultural references and corresponding translation strategies started appearing at the turn of the century. This paper investigates the interplay between the multiple sets of challenges faced by interlingual subtitlers dealing with source texts where cultural references abound, through a case study of the subtitles in English and Spanish of the French series "Call My Agent" ("Dix pour cent").

Relying primarily on Newmark's classification (1988) of culture-specific items (CSIs) and Pedersen's typology (2011) of translation strategies for extralinguistic cultural references (ECRs), I provide a contrastive overview of the strategies used for the translation of cultural references in both languages. The results obtained show that foreignisation prevails in both English and Spanish, and that French cultural references with high cultural significance (e.g. cuisine, fashion and cinema) are more likely to be foreignised.

Key words: audiovisual translation, AVT, subtitling, culture-specific items, cultural reference, foreignisation, domestication, French, "Call My Agent", television series.

✉ elessinger@brookes.ac.uk, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8168-1180

Introduction

Following Jakobson's inclusion of intersemiotic transfer in his seminal definition of translation (1959) and the technological turn of the mid-1990s (Gambier, 2006), audiovisual translation emerged in recent decades as an important subfield of translation studies. The increasing mass of audiovisual content consumed on streaming platforms and the internationalisation of the audience led to a sharp rise in demand for audiovisual translation, with subtitling remaining the most popular mode.

In parallel, the translation of cultural references has taken centre stage in the field of translation studies since the cultural turn observed from the 1980s onwards. From Venuti's concepts of "foreignisation" and "domestication" (1995) to Zhang's definition of translation as a "cross-cultural communicative act" (2013, p. 1919), a plethora of scholarly works have sought to classify cultural references and their translation techniques (e.g. Aixelá, 1996; Davies, 2003; Pedersen, 2011).

It has been shown that genre, media, and target audience largely influence the technique used by translators to render cultural references in their target language (see e.g. Leppihalme, 2011; Blažytė & Liubinienė, 2016). The audiovisual dimension plays a key role: the linguistic, visual and audio channels complement each other through what Chaume describes as intersemiotic cohesion (2004). For instance, viewers may not know what "tartiflette" means, but if it appears on screen at the same time as it is mentioned in the dialogue, it saves the subtitler from having to explain that a "tartiflette" is a cheesy dish.

Another key factor differentiating subtitling from written translation is the impact of technical constraints on the options available to the subtitler. In Zojer's words, "[t]he big challenge in subtitling lies in projecting lines of text onto a pre-existing canvas of sound and image while being severely restricted by the negotiation of space and time" (2011, p. 399).

This article proposes to investigate the representation of French culture in the audiovisual translation of the popular French series "Call My Agent" (original title: "Dix pour cent"), available on Netflix. The corpus comprises all four seasons of the show (2015–2020) and is subtitled in English and Spanish. The series portrays the personal and professional lives of four agents and the French actors they represent, and is deeply rooted in French culture. Unsurprisingly, cultural references abound and often play a key role in the plot.

1. Methodology

1.1. Terminology

The terminology adopted here is largely Pedersen's (see "Theoretical Framework), but following Gambier (2009), I restrict my use of the word "strategy" to refer to the translator's overarching

approach. Translation strategies occur at the macro level, while translation techniques occur at the micro level.

1.2. Subtitlers' Guidelines

While it is rare for translation studies researchers to have access to the translator(s)' brief, in the present case, publicly available Netflix guidelines provide a rare indication of what the show's subtitlers were probably working with. These guidelines, which come with a helpful change log indicating the dates of revision, can be accessed in their generic form (Web 3) or in language-specific format, including English and Spanish (Web 4, 5). These guidelines are particularly useful to researchers because of Netflix's prominent place in the VoD industry: "streaming leader Netflix has been setting the trends on subtitling conventions for the past decade" (Díaz Cintas & Hayes, 2023, p. 8). Because a number of large LSPs (Language Service Providers) work with the platform, the subtitling guidelines put forward by Netflix quickly "become adopted as the de facto industry standard" (Díaz Cintas & Hayes, 2023, p. 8).

Netflix's guidelines cover some of the types of cultural references that are most relevant in "Call My Agent", such as proper names and brand treatment. For instance, both the English and Spanish versions instruct subtitlers not to translate proper names "unless Netflix provides approved translations", and to avoid "swapping out names of brands, companies or famous people for other names" (Web 4 and 5). The guidelines also recommend using key names and phrases (KNP) tables "to ensure consistency across episodes and seasons" (Web 3).

Overall, the platform's guidelines can be described as largely source-oriented; however, it seems likely that subtitlers were also working with a show-specific brief which cannot be publicly accessed, and it cannot be assumed that Netflix's generic and show-specific recommendations are perfectly aligned.

1.3. Source and Target Texts

The source text (ST) is understood here as the audio channel of the French original text, and the target texts (TTs) correspond to the interlingual subtitles in Spanish and English. This definition is motivated by the fact that subtitlers visibly worked with the French audio channel (or a transcript of it) as the source text, rather than with the French subtitles available on Netflix. This is evidenced by the fact that some cultural references are omitted in the French subtitles but present in the English and/or Spanish subtitles.

Reverter Oliver and Carrero Martín rightly point out "the omnipresence [in Spanish] of English and of its use as a pivot language to translate francophone material" (2021, p. 391). However, in the case of "Call My Agent", the Spanish subtitlers did not appear to be working with English as a source language: on several occasions, some elements are retained in Spanish but not in English.

Finally, since processing a written sentence takes longer than processing a spoken utterance, subtitling inevitably leads to the condensing of the spoken source text by about a third (Gottlieb, 1997, p. 73). The fact that some references were present in the English and Spanish subtitles but not in the French subtitles could be an indication of the perceived importance of these references on the part of the translator(s).

1.4. Method of Analysis

The present investigation corresponds to what Gambier describes as "content analysis" (2009, p. 23), more specifically, the study of the same audiovisual text in different languages. It roughly follows Toury's proposed method of analysis (1995, p. 38), summarised by Pedersen as:

> 1. Present a target text, and its standing in the target culture. 2. Establish the source text and map (all of, or parts of) the TT onto it, particularly coupled pairs, and establish what relationship pertains between these pairs. 3. Formulate first-level generalizations. (Pedersen 2011, p. 27)

The first stage is covered in sections 1 to 3, the second stage in section 4 and the third in section 5 and in the conclusion.

In terms of data collection, cultural references and their translations were manually extracted from all four series of the show (a total of 24 episodes), and classified according to the typology described in section 3. The results are quantitatively and qualitatively analysed and trends and patterns identified, which are summarised in graphs in section 4 and discussed in section 5.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cultural References

When it comes to categorising culture-specific items, Newmark's 1988 typology was among the first of its kind. It includes ecology, material culture, social culture, social organisations, and gestures and habits. Nedergaard-Larsen's 1993 typology, however, comprised only four broad categories of "extralinguistic culture-bound problem types": geography, history, society and culture. Another notable, even more condensed taxonomy is that of Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007), distinguishing three types of "culture-bound terms": geography, ethnography and socio-political references.

2.2. Translating Cultural References

Along with their typology of cultural references, scholars typically propose a categorisation of techniques that can be used to translate these references. Leppihalme, for instance, distinguishes

between seven "micro-strategies": direct transfer; calque; cultural adaptation; superordinate term; explicitation; added explanation; and omission of the realia (2011, p. 129). Davies' taxonomy (2003) includes six translation techniques that she calls respectively preservation, addition, omission, globalisation, localisation and transformation. As for Díaz Cintas and Remael, their classification comprises no less than nine techniques: loan, calque (or literal translation), explicitation, substitution, transposition, lexical recreation, compensation, omission, and addition (2007, p. 202).

These classifications are often organised according to their position on a spectrum ranging from source-text to target-text orientation – or, in Venuti's words, on the foreignisation-domestication axis. The distinction originally stems from Schleiermacher (1813): "Schleiermacher allowed the translator to choose between a domesticating method (…), bringing the author back home, and a foreignizing method (…), sending the reader abroad" (Venuti, 2004, p. 20). Different case studies exploring the subtitling of cultural references on the domestication-foreignisation cline find conflicting results (see Sobhan & Saeed, 2015), and suggest that beyond language pair and language direction, genre conventions play a key role in translation choices.

2.3. Subtitling Cultural References into English and Spanish

2.3.1. Subtitling Techniques

Given the specificity of subtitling in terms of technical constraints, target audience and norms, the typologies used to analyse the subtitling of cultural references should be specific to that translation mode, and not be the same as those created for traditional translation. For instance, due to technical constraints, shorter solutions are generally preferable, so that literal translations are more likely to be used than extended paraphrases. Typologies created ad hoc for the subtitling of cultural references include Nedergaard-Larsen's (1993), Tomaszkiewicz's (2001) and Pedersen's (2007, 2011; see "Theoretical Framework"). Nedergaard-Larsen, for instance, proposed six techniques: verbatim transfer, culturally-neutral explicitation, paraphrase and target language adaptation. Tomaszkiewicz, however, distinguishes between only four techniques: omission, direct transfer, adaptation and substitution.

The domestication-foreignisation spectrum, on the other hand, is just as relevant to subtitling as it is to textual translation: "subtitling [cultural references] will always challenge the translator to decide between either amending the reference to fit foreign target audiences or leaving it untouched" (Zojer, 2011, p. 404). The need for a "cultural filter" (House, 1997, p. 29), is reduced by the fact that subtitling is an overt form of translation that cannot pretend to be an original. Unlike dubbing, for instance, subtitling presents the source and target simultaneously to the viewer. This can strengthen the perceived legitimacy of a foreignising strategy, though local preferences also play a key role in subtitling cultural references.

2.3.2. The Role of Norms and Conventions

The notion of norms, first introduced by Toury in the late 1970s, refers to "regularities of translation behaviour within a specific sociocultural situation" (Baker, 2001, p. 163). The subtitling of cultural references is no exception: overall trends are largely dependent on culture-specific norms and conventions. Among numerous other factors such as power relations between languages, a given country's tradition of audiovisual translation can play a part in the tendency to foreignise or domesticate cultural references. In particular, "[a]udience research has shown that people tend to prefer whatever form of translation they grew up with" (Nornes, 2007, p. 191). It is therefore important to give an overview of the translation tradition and the latest AVT trend in the target cultures[1].

Spain has historically been a dubbing country, though the picture is more nuanced if we look at the Spanish-speaking world as a whole: "in Latin America, subtitles and dubbing are both common forms of translation" (Jarvinen, 2012, p. 114). Today, however, subtitling appears to be the dominant form of AVT in Spain: "the demand for subtitling is the highest (74.5%), distantly followed by that for dubbing (32.7%)" (Reverter Oliver & Carrero Martín, 2021, p. 386). While this might seem surprising given that "Spain is considered as a primarily dubbing country (Chaume, 2004)" (Reverter Oliver & Carrero Martín, 2021, p. 391), this change can be at least partly explained by the recent apparition of VoD (Agulló García, 2020).

The picture is equally contrasted in the anglosphere. In the UK, subtitling has historically been the dominant AVT mode. Recently, however, "Netflix has gone against the grain on AVT conventions" by investing in English dubbing (Díaz Cintas & Hayes, 2023, p. 7). After reviewing viewer preferences and concluding that "Americans are more likely to finish a dubbed foreign series than its subtitled version", Netflix adjusted its strategy accordingly, so that for instance, "the English dubbed versions of foreign content are defaulted on the platform" (Díaz Cintas & Hayes, 2023, p. 7). In spite of this emerging dubbing industry, "subtitling remains the most prominent form of localisation", but the main point is that through translation, whether subtitling or dubbing, "non-English language films, series, and non-fiction content is [now] thriving among native anglophone audiences" (Díaz Cintas & Hayes, 2023, p. 7).

In her overview of 33 studies between 2004 and 2020 on the audiovisual translation of cultural references, Yonamine found that "a general orientation towards domestication was more frequent from 2004 to 2009, with foreignization gaining force after 2010" (2022, p. 209). She observes that this trend is also present, to a point, in material with a source language other than English, "the

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[1] It is worth noting that respective audiences of the target texts are not limited to Spain and the UK, but also include non-European target audiences. Several regionalisms and/or culture-specific references even suggest that a US audience is the primary target of the English subtitles. As for the Spanish subtitles, it seems that South American viewers – particularly Argentinian ones – are the primary target audience.

hegemonic or dominant language in the international audiovisual industry" (p. 204). Still, according to Yonamine, this could "become a trend, since content in other than English languages is gaining traction in countries that traditionally preferred English spoken content before" (Yonamine, 2022, p. 204). The generally foreignising approach observed in the present study goes in the same direction.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Typology in Use

The typology used here is based on Pedersen's (2011) typology of subtitling cultural references, in accordance with Ramière (2006) and Zojer's (2011) warning regarding the importance of using an ad hoc classification for audiovisual translation. Using identical or similar classifications as other researchers makes it easier to compare results across studies and to identify global trends in a given field of research.

For the sake of consistency and accuracy, I restrict my analysis of cultural references to what Pedersen calls "extralinguistic cultural references" (ECRs), defined as "references to places, people, institutions, customs, food etc. that you may not know even if you know the language in question" (2011, p. 44) and that "refer to entities outside language" (Pedersen, 2007, p. 30). Accordingly, the data analysed does not include references that are inseparable from the French language itself, such as the use of verlan – a type of back slang widely used among younger generations of French speakers.

As mentioned above, one of the goals of this study is to establish whether the type of ECR influences the type of translation technique used. To do so, it relies on two related typologies, both based on Pedersen (2011): a typology of ECRs and one of their translation techniques.

3.2. Typology of ECRs

Pedersen's typology of ECRs comprises twelve categories: weight and measures, proper names (subdivided into personal, geographical, institutional and brand names), professional titles, food and beverages, literature, government, entertainment, education, sports, currency, technical material, and other.

Most of these categories are maintained as such in my proposed typology. However, not all are equally relevant to my corpus, and some are altogether absent from it. This is hardly surprising given that, in Leppihalme's words "[t]ypologies of realia as a rule reflect the type of textual material examined: realia in a contemporary institutional text will differ from those in an 18th-century comedy or a television soap opera" (2011, p. 127). Some of the categories, such as "weight and measures" or "technical material," were therefore removed.

Moreover, proper names were not treated as a separate category but integrated into broader categories, on the basis of two observations. Firstly, the treatment of proper names often appeared to depend on the subcategory of proper name. For instance, place names (classified here as "geography") did not receive the same treatment as famous people's names (classified here as "entertainment"). Secondly, the overrepresentation of proper names means that treating them as a single category is likely to lead to less detailed results. However, it should be noted that proper names represent over half the ECRs. This, in itself, is not unusual, but it naturally tends to lead to more foreignising strategies in general, and to Retention in particular since "names are mono-referential by nature" (Ramière, 2006, p. 159).

Based on the results obtained, seven broad thematic categories were retained, listed below. The examples provided are taken from the corpus.

1. Geography (e.g. Le Marais).
2. Branding (e.g. Le Crillon, Banania).
3. Food and Beverages (e.g. chouquettes, champagne).
4. Government (e.g. le fisc, Bercy).
5. Entertainment (e.g. Télérama, la Nouvelle Vague, le PSG).
6. Education (e.g. le bac, le CE1).
7. Transports (e.g. un RER, Roissy).

3.3. Typology of Subtitling Strategies

Pedersen's typology distinguishes between three source-oriented (foreignising) and three target-oriented (domesticating) translation strategies, as well as a seventh one outside the domestication-foreignisation spectrum: official equivalent. They were all kept here, though official equivalents received a different treatment, as explained in the next subsection. These seven techniques are presented below with examples from the corpus.

3.3.1. Foreignising Subtitling Strategies

Retention, which can be either "unchanged" or "adapted", is the most foreignising strategy, and consists of keeping a word or name as in the source language. **Unchanged Retention** occurs when no modification whatsoever is brought to the ECR in translation. **Adapted Retention** occurs when the reference is slightly modified; for instance, when it is italicised or adapted to the target language grammar or orthography. For instance, in "C'est mes Louboutin, ça?" (S4E4 44:50), the Spanish target text has Unchanged Retention for the brand name "Louboutin": "¿Esos son mis Louboutin?". The English target text, however, has Adapted Retention, adding an extra "s" in accordance with the language's naming conventions: "Are those my Louboutins?".

Specification occurs when extra information is added to make the target ECR more specific than the source one. It can take the form of either **Completion** or **Addition**. For instance, one character mentions "les émissions de Sébastien" [Sébastien's shows]. The English subtitle reads: "in Patrick Sébastien's shows", supplementing the presenter's first name through Completion (S4E2 13:05). In a comparable example, a reference to a famous French football club is clarified through the addition of the word "match". In translation, "J'ai pris deux places pour aller voir le PSG [I bought two tickets to go see the PSG] becomes "I've got tickets for the PSG match!" (S2E3 15:54).

Direct Translation is a strategy where the only difference between source and target text is the change of language; it corresponds to a literal translation where "no semantic alteration is made" (Pedersen, 2011, p. 76). The two subtypes are **Shifted Direct Translation** and **Calque**. For instance, "la Palme d'Or" is translated in Spanish with a Calque: "la Palma de Oro" [the palm of gold]. On the other hand, Shifted Direct Translations include optional shifts to improve the ECR flow. For instance, one character advises another to adopt the famous French actress Brigitte Bardot's whimsical behaviour to get her way. He does so by coining a verb from the proper name Bardot: "suffit que tu la bardottes" [you just need to Bardot her]. The English subtitle reads instead: "Just pull a Bardot": the coined verb has become a coined substantive.

3.3.2. Domesticating Subtitling Strategies

Generalisation occurs when an ECR is replaced with a less specific reference. Pedersen differentiates between **Superordinate Terms** and **Paraphrase**. One example of Superordinate Term is the Spanish rendering of "grand cru", i.e. superior wine. The phrase "un grand cru à 250 euros la bouteille" [a grand cru worth 250 euros a bottle] becomes "un vino de 250 euros" [a wine worth 250 euros] (S1E2 6:17). In English, incidentally, it is retained: "a 250-euro bottle of *grand cru*". Paraphrase, on the other hand, is illustrated in the English translation of "C'est *Télérama* et le *Parisien* réconciliés" [It's *Télérama* and *Le Parisien* reconciled]: "It's like a truce between warring critics" (S1E6 0:47).

Substitution is arguably the most domesticating strategy. It consists of replacing an ECR from the source culture with one from another culture. There are three types of Substitutions: **Transcultural**, **Target Culture**, and **Situational Substitution**. In Transcultural Substitution, a source-text-specific ECR is replaced with one that is known across cultures, since "many ECRs that once were familiar only to people in one culture will now be accessible on a global scale, and are thus not very culture-bound" (Pedersen, 2011, p. 106). One such example of this can be found in the reference to a French board game in the series: "Vous avez 'La bonne paye'?" [Have you got 'The good pay'?]. The Spanish translation refers instead to an originally American board game, Pay Day, which has become internationally known: "Tiene el Pay Day?" [Have you got 'Pay Day'?] (S4E5 38:24).

In Target Culture Substitution, the source ECR is replaced with one from the target culture. This can sometimes lead to "credibility problems" (Nedergaard-Larsen, 1993,p. 231), or in Pedersen's words to "credibility gaps" (2011, p. 94), but it can be useful in determining who the intended audience is.

For instance, the English subtitles replace "Polytechnique" – a prestigious French university specialising in science and technology – with "MIT", the well-known Massachusetts Institute of Technology (S1E5 25:41). Finally, in Situational Substitutions, "the ST ECR is removed and replaced by something that fits the situation" (Pedersen, 2011, p. 95). For instance, one character humorously refers to the French health insurance (Sécurité Sociale, often abbreviated as "Sécu") to illustrate a frustrating situation caused by administrative slowness. He asks: "Un mec qui fait la queue à la Sécu ?" [A guy queuing at the Sécu?]. In the English translation, the subtitle reads: "It's about a guy waiting for benefits?". The difficulty of getting in touch with the French healthcare system is replaced with a comparable, non-culture-specific situation. This example also illustrates the fact that two techniques are occasionally combined: the Spanish subtitle translates this ECR with a reference to "la Seguridad Social" [Social Security], which is a combination of Specification (Completion) and Direct Translation, while also being an Official Equivalent (see 3.4.3).

Omission is the last domesticating technique, though its status is somewhat ambiguous. While it has been argued to be a valid translation technique (Toury, 1995, p. 82; Leppihalme, 1994, p. 93), it stands somewhat apart from other techniques in that it involves *not* translating. Nevertheless, "it stops a problematic foreign item from entering the TT" (Pedersen, 2011, p. 96), and is thus arguably more akin to a target-oriented approach. One example is the omission of the anecdotal reference to "Kiloutou", a French rental company, in both English and Spanish subtitles.

3.3.3. Official Equivalents

An Official Equivalent corresponds to cases where the conventional translation of an ECR is used. For instance, "en Bourgogne" (S1E4 25:48) is translated into English as "in Burgundy" and into Spanish as "en Borgoña". These translations can both be found in a standard dictionary (Web 5, 6) and are what Leppihalme calls a "standard translation" (1994, p. 94). In itself, an Official Equivalent is neither domesticating nor foreignising; however, "Official Equivalents can be based on just about any translation strategy. It is most common to use Retention, but Direct Translation is also common, and so is Cultural Substitution" (Pedersen, 2011, p. 99). Official Equivalents identified in the corpus are therefore classified here according to the translation technique they are based on.

4. Results

4.1. Overview

Among the 140 ECRs analysed, there is an overwhelming majority of foreignisation, with foreignising techniques making up over 70% of all translation techniques used (see Table 1). Strikingly, the distribution is virtually identical for English and Spanish. With 134 occurrences, retention makes up

48% of all translation techniques used across the two languages (50% in English, 46% in Spanish), vastly outnumbering Direct Translation and Specification – the other two foreignisation techniques.

Still within foreignisation, there are more Direct Translations in Spanish (28, i.e. 20%) than in English (14, i.e. 10%). This is partly compensated by the presence of more Specifications in English (14) than in Spanish (7). The greater linguistic and cultural proximity between French and Spanish can probably explain why direct translation is a more popular option with this language pair.

Table 1

Overview of Foreignising Translation Strategies in English and Spanish (Absolute Numbers)
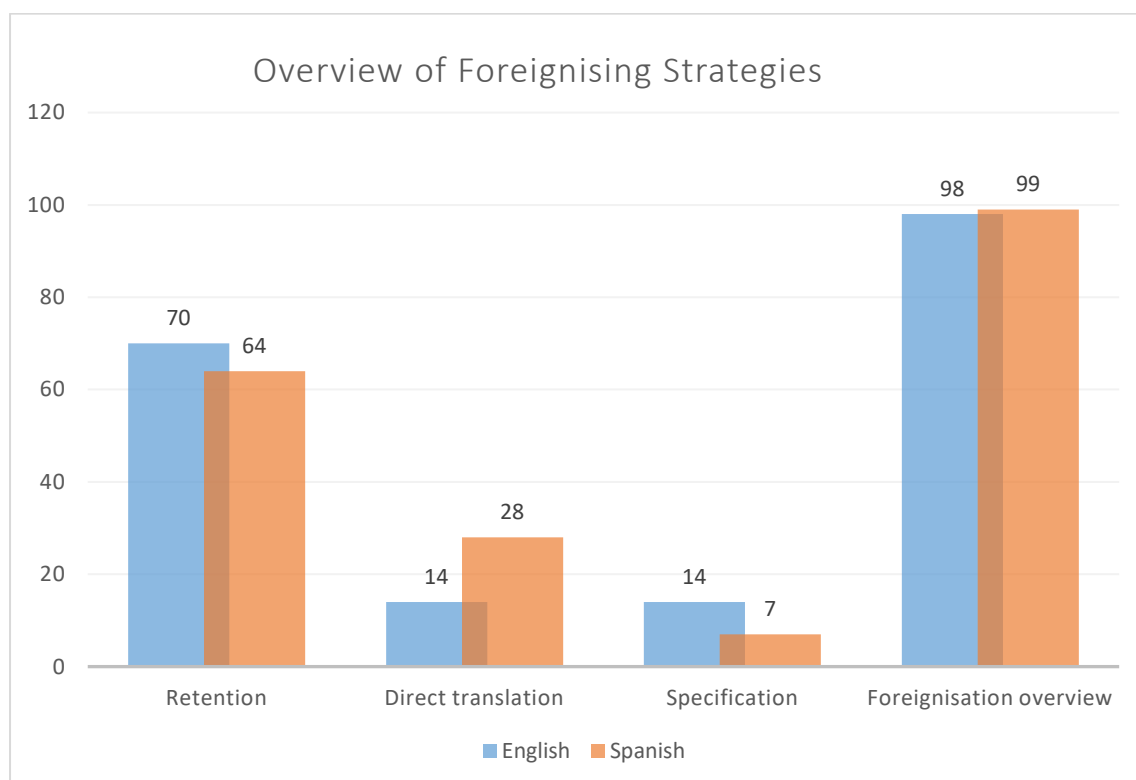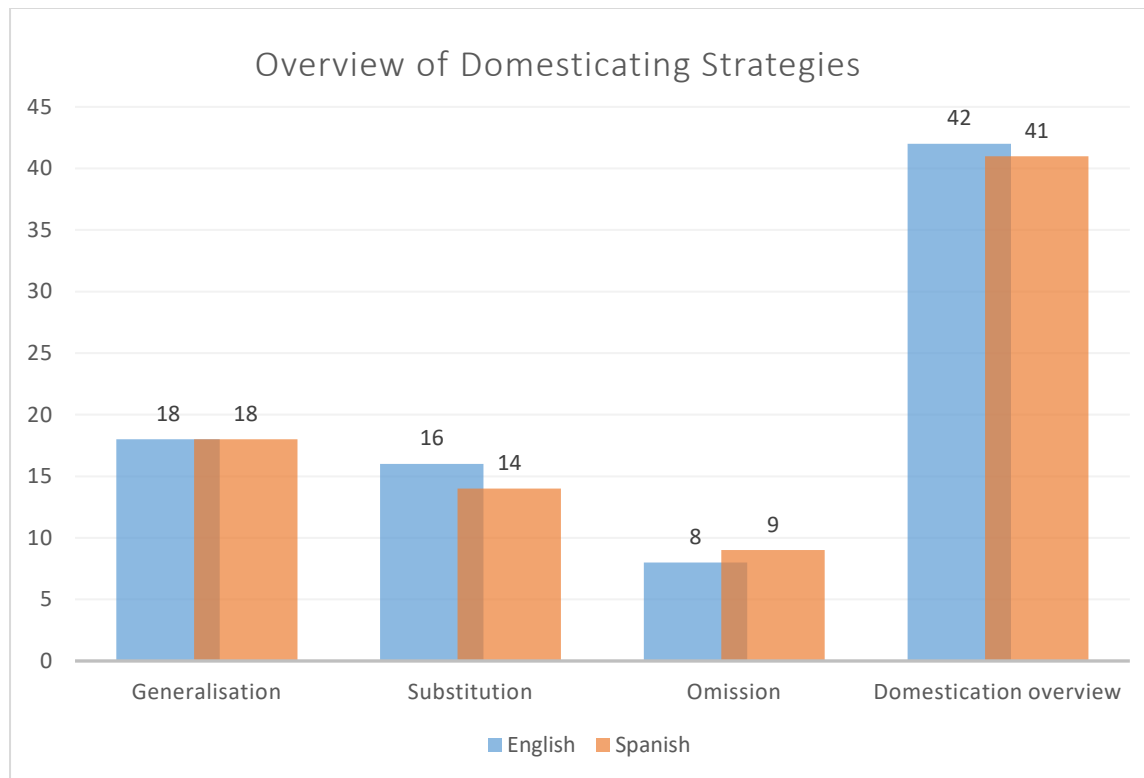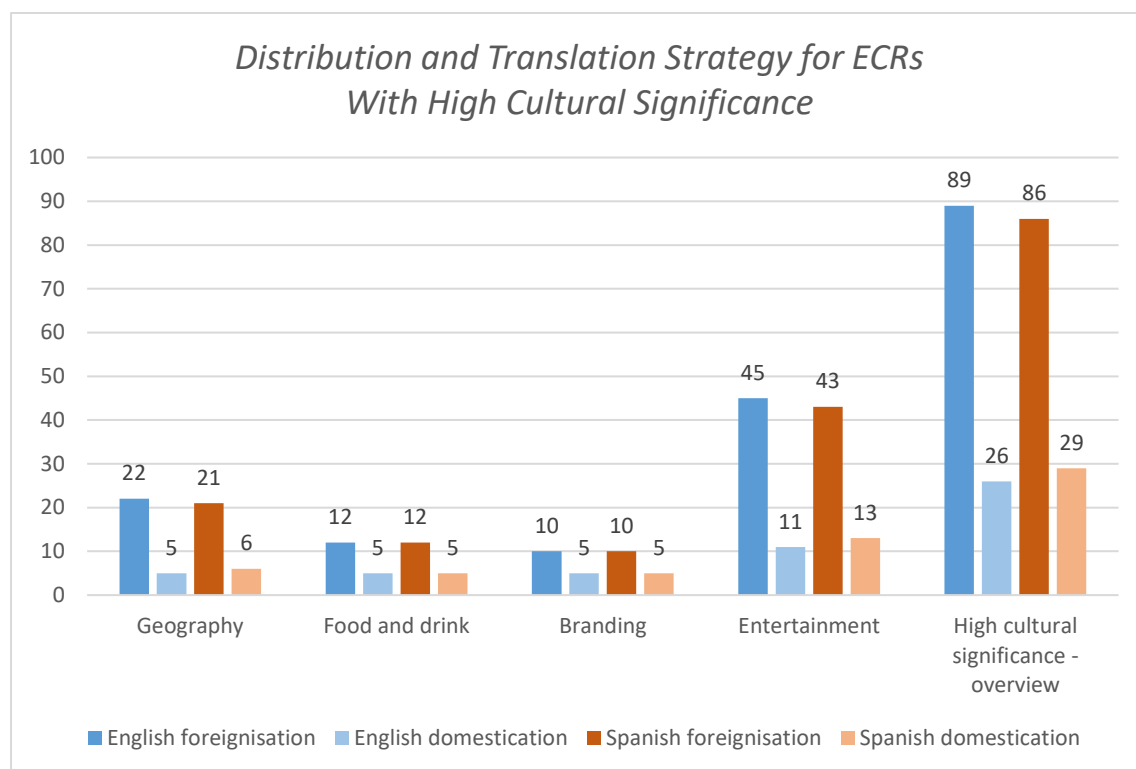
Table 2

Overview of Domesticating Translation Strategies in English and Spanish (absolute numbers)

4.2. ECRs With a Greater Predominance of Foreignising Techniques

Unsurprisingly, given the subject matter, 40% of all ECRs (56) are made up of references to Entertainment. These include a great number of references to cinema – including many film names such as "Un homme et une femme" or "Les Ch'tis", or cinematographic references such as "Palme d'or" or "festival de Cannes" – but also references linked to TV, press, literature and sports. The second largest category is Geography, which accounts for about 19% of all cultural references (27 ECRs, see Table 3). This includes many place names such as Cannes, le Marais or Vitry-sur-Seine, as well as cultural institutions such as the Eiffel Tower or the Thoiry Zoo. Then come Food and Beverages (17 ECRs, i.e. 12%), with for instance chouquette or nougat. It is closely followed by Branding (15 ECRs, i.e. 11%), which includes, among other things, fashion (e.g. Louboutin) and luxury brands such as the Carlton Hotel or the Fouquet's. Interestingly, these domains are all associated with French marketing strengths, in particular tourism, cuisine, fashion and cinema.

Table 3

Distribution and Translation Strategy for French ECRs With High Cultural Significance

Distribution and Translation Strategy for ECRs With High Cultural Significance

Category	English foreignisation	English domestication	Spanish foreignisation	Spanish domestication
Geography	22	5	21	6
Food and drink	12	5	12	5
Branding	10	5	10	5
Entertainment	45	11	43	13
High cultural significance - overview	89	26	86	29

4.3. ECRs With a Greater Predominance of Domesticating Techniques

It should be noted that the three categories in which domestication is more widely used – Education, Government and Transport – individually contain less than 10% of all references (see Table 4). This much lower number of ECRs in these categories means that results should be taken as indicative rather than conclusive. Put all together, however, these three domains amount to 25 references – 18% of all ECRs – which is still limited but less anecdotal.

The make-up of domestication techniques used in "Call My Agent" is very similar in Spanish and English, with differences of less than 1% in each category (see Table 2) – a fairly negligible difference, especially in such a limited corpus. Generalisation is the most widely used domestication technique, with 13% of all techniques used in both English and Spanish; then comes Substitution (11% and 10%), and Omission, the least used of all the techniques (roughly 6%).

In the three less represented domains – Education (8 ECRs), Government (7 ECRs) and Transport (5 ECRs) – the tendency to foreignise is much less pronounced than in other domains. In some cases, especially in English, there is even a tendency to domesticate (see Table 4). In Education, domestication prevails in both Spanish and English. With Government and Transport, domestication

is the dominant strategy in English. Spanish still favours foreignisation with these ECRs, but the tendency is less marked.

With these types of ECRs, overall, domestication is used in 64% of cases in English and 48% in Spanish. Grouping these three types of ECRs makes sense not just in order to obtain statistics, but also because there is a semantic link between these three domains: they all pertain to more mundane, everyday life lexical fields that are less widely exported than cultural references belonging to higher culture, such as art and cinema.

Table 4

Distribution and Translation Strategy for French ECRs With Low Cultural Significance

Distribution and Translation Strategy for ECRs With Low Cultural Significance
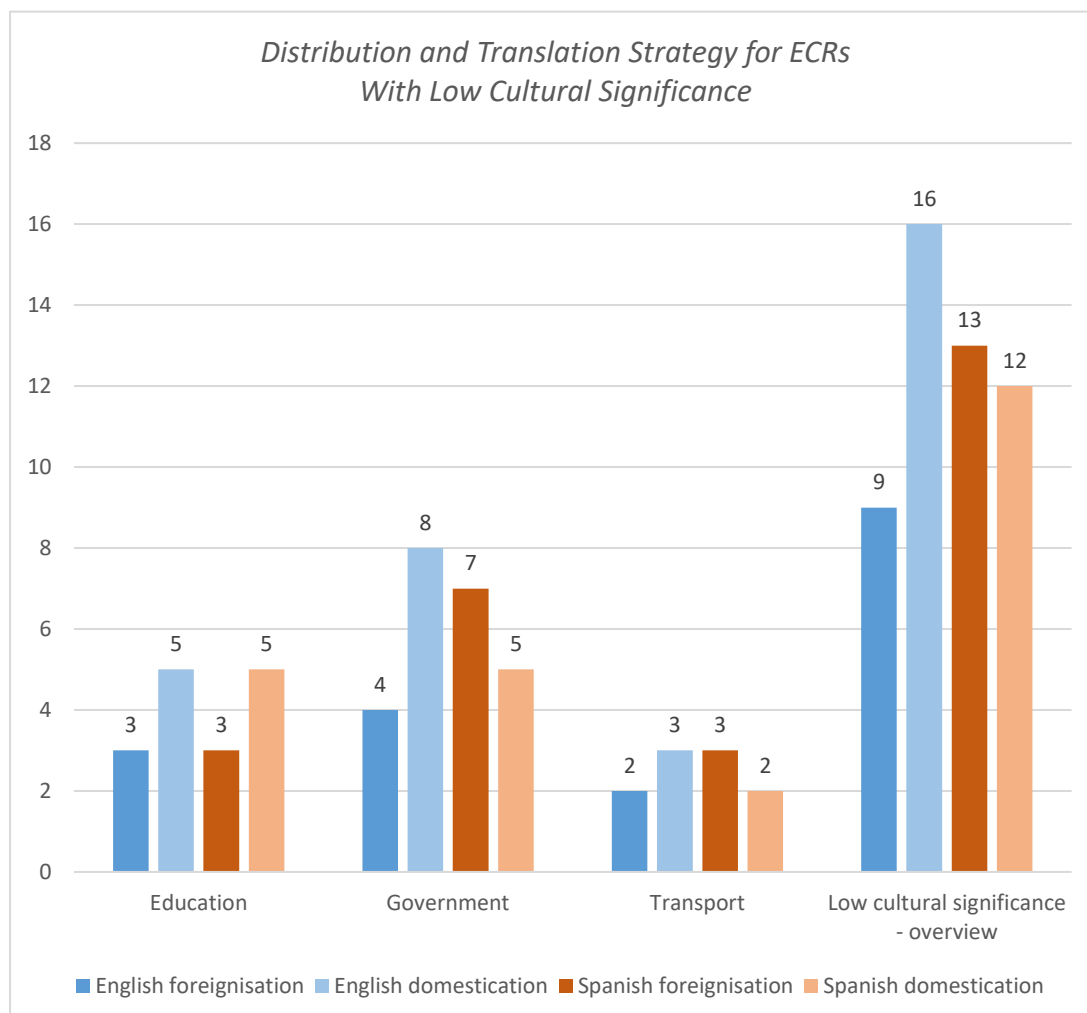
4.4. Diachronic Evolution

The proportion of foreignising strategies in English (Table 5) is 67% in the first series and 79% in the last one. This suggests a fairly marked (though not linear) evolution towards greater reliance on the target audience's understanding – or at least tolerance – of French cultural references. In Spanish, however, the prevalence of foreignisation varies very little from the first series (71%) to the last (72%).

It should also be noted that although the first three series have similar numbers of cultural references (24, 25 and 33 respectively), the fourth one has many more, with 58 ECRs. This may suggest that the producers of the series were confident that its international audience – firmly established by the end of S3 – would enjoy the plethora of French cultural references in the series.

Table 5

Diachronic Evolution of Translation Strategy per Language
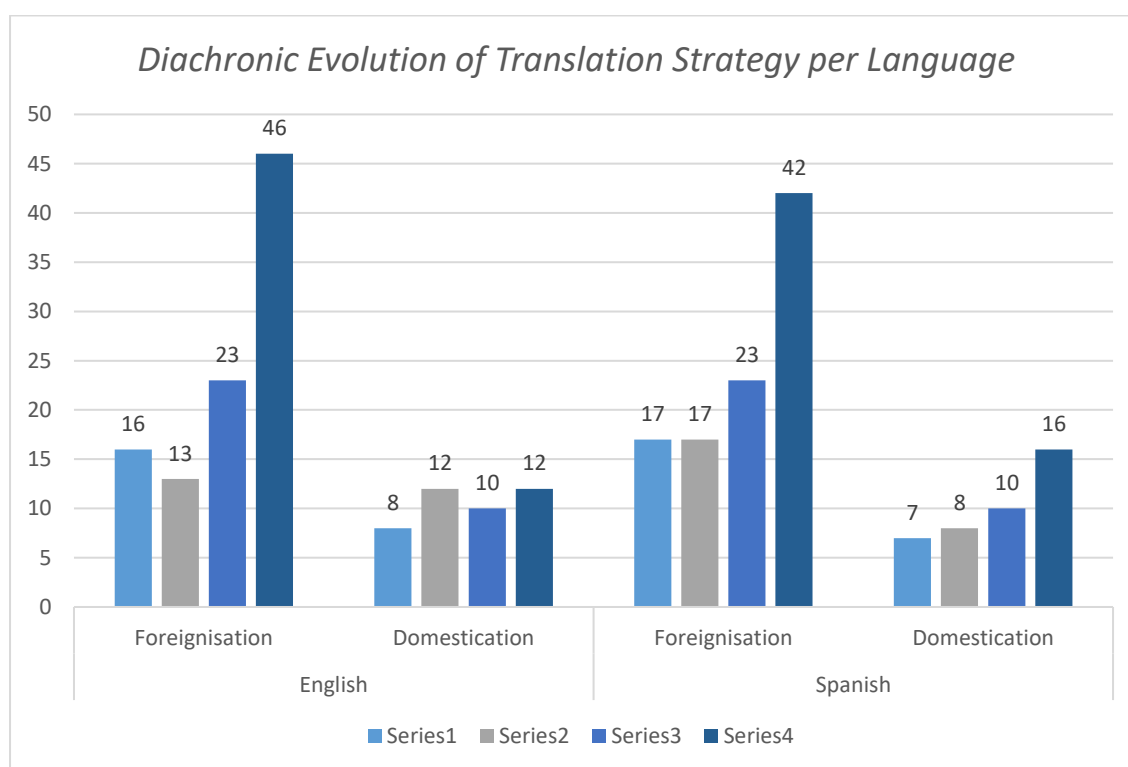
4.5. Significance of Results

In order to test the significance of the results outlined above, a chi-square test of independence was conducted. The null hypothesis posited that there is no relationship between the type of cultural reference in terms of cultural significance (i.e. whether it occupies a prominent place in French cultural prestige), and the translation strategy (foreignising vs. domesticating). The observed frequencies were 175 references with higher cultural significance foreignised and 55 domesticated, compared to 22 culture references with lower cultural significance foreignised and 28 domesticated.

The chi-square test yielded a statistic of 18.77 with a p-value of <0.00001, indicating a significant relationship between the type of cultural reference and the translation strategy. These results, strikingly similar in both English and Spanish subtitles, support the hypothesis that cultural references that are more strongly linked to French cultural prestige are more likely to be foreignised in the subtitles.

5. Discussion

5.1. Overall Strategy and Dominant Translation Techniques

The overwhelming majority of foreignising techniques observed in both languages is in line with Nedergaard-Larsen's conclusions on the subtitling of French cultural references in Scandinavian languages. In her (admittedly dated) corpus, "culture-bound features are preserved whenever possible" (1993, p. 235). Pedersen similarly observes that "Retention is by far the most common strategy for rendering ECRs" (2011, p. 78): here, they still make up nearly half the translation techniques used. This predominance of Retention can be at least partly explained by the overrepresentation of proper names in both his corpus and mine (over 60% of all ECRs in "Call My Agent"). Proper names being monoreferential by nature (Ramière, 2006), they naturally lend themselves to Retention, especially in light of the space constraints inherent to subtitling. A closer examination of the data reveals that Retention is indeed the main subtitling technique for proper names across thematic categories.

However, this correlation between proper names and Retention, particularly in the domain of Entertainment, seems to run contrary to Fawcett's results in his 2003 study on references to French TV and media personalities: "references to French TV and media personalities in the corpus were never left as such" (2003, p. 154) and "suppression and substitution [were] the main techniques [used]" (p. 162). Fawcett's corpus consisting of French films from the 1980s and 1990s, we can venture that the difference between his results and the ones obtained here stem primarily from the fact that his corpus predates mine by a few decades. The difference in medium (TV versus cinema) seems less likely to be a key factor, given that cinema is, in fact, typically associated with a greater tolerance for foreignisation. The difference between Fawcett's results and mine thus illustrates Zojer's observation that "[o]ur world seems to be developing, or rather melting, into a somewhat unified world of generally known brands, merchandise, TV programs, fashion icons and pop- and sport stars." (2011, p. 408). Furthermore, the results of the present study align with the conclusion of Yonamine's more recent work, which reviews previous studies on the audiovisual translation of cultural references and shows a predilection for foreignisation since about 2010.

Finally, within domesticating techniques, the low rate of Cultural Substitutions observed in the corpus can perhaps be explained by the vulnerability of subtitling as a mode of audiovisual translation – especially in an increasingly interconnected world. Cultural Substitution can create a "credibility gap"

(Pedersen, 2011) due to what Gottlieb names "the feedback-effect from the original" (1997, p. 93). Since viewers have direct access to the source text – the audio channel – Cultural Substitutions can thus lead to "some disharmony between the verbal audio channel and the subtitles, and the subtitle might then be seen as containing an 'error'" (Pedersen, 2011, p. 92).

5.2. ECR Category and Subtitling Technique

It seems logical that Entertainment, and cinema in particular, should make up such a large proportion of ECRs given that the series stages a group of agents and their relationships with their clients, all famous actors. This, in turn, was likely to impact the choice of translation techniques, since "[t]here is much evidence that domains affect how an ECR is rendered in a TT" (Pederson, 2011, p. 59).

Overall, what the data seems to suggest is that in domains internationally regarded as forming part of France's soft power – cinema (or high culture in general), luxury brands and food – ECRs are typically translated with foreignising techniques. If we look more specifically at brand names, for instance, we can see that fashion and food-related brands are all translated using Retention, whereas other brands (Kiloutou, Lexomyl) are rendered with either Omission or Substitution.

On the other hand, domestication appears to be much more common in ECRs from domains pertaining to everyday life and not typically central to France's marketing of its own image abroad – namely Transport, Government and Education. Here again, this finding is consistent with Pedersen's observation that in his material, which has English as a source language, Substitution is the norm in domains like titles, government, education and food. The fact that food is domesticated in his corpus and not in mine is consistent with my hypothesis that subtitling techniques are influenced by the prominence of the type of ECR in the source culture, or at least in the target culture's perception of it.

6. Conclusions

For the sake of clarity, I will give an overview of the answers brought to each research question as outlined in the introduction.

6.1. Determine the Overarching Strategy Used in the Two Subtitled Versions, Particularly in Terms of Domestication and Foreignisation

With over 70% of all ECRs throughout the series translated with a foreignising technique, foreignisation is the dominant strategy used by subtitlers of "Call My Agent" in both English and Spanish. This supports Zojer's observation of a "seemingly growing trend of not translating cultural references", due to "the dissolving cultural borders" leading to the apparition of a "melting-pot culture" (2011, p. 407). He adds that, far from leading to cultural unification through the predominance of generalising translation techniques, this form of globalisation tends, on the

contrary, to highlight "local identities and idiosyncrasies". This, in turn, resonates with what Díaz Cintas and Hayes call Netflix's "local-for-local" marketing strategy (2023, p. 7) and is consistent with Netflix's publicly available guidelines. They show that viewer preferences have significantly evolved since the turn of the century and that the boom of VoD platforms and the aforementioned EU 2018 legislation played a key role in this evolution.

As viewers become increasingly more acquainted with and tolerant of subtitles, subtitlers are able to "leave culture references untouched" (Zojer, 2011, p. 408). We might predict that the more subtitlers use foreignisation techniques in the subtitling of cultural references, the better-known these references will become to the target audience. This could result in making the foreign elements of the source become less foreign and progressively appear more acceptable to viewers and subtitlers alike. The overall foreignising strategy observed in the corpus also corroborates Yonamine's more recent observation that "starting from 2010, there is a tendency towards foreignization in subtitling" (2022, p. 206).

6.2. Provide a Contrastive Cross-Linguistic Overview of the Techniques used for the Translation of Cultural References in the English and Spanish Versions

The results on the subtitling strategies of "Call My Agent" into English and Spanish, respectively, are strikingly similar, though not quite identical. This can probably be explained in part by the relative linguistic and cultural proximity between the English- and Spanish-speaking worlds, and by the fact that the same platform produced the two sets of subtitles – Netflix – so that subtitlers are, in all likelihood, following similar guidelines.

We can further venture that these similarities are also due to the aforementioned effect of globalisation, and tend to corroborate Pedersen's argument that "it seems likely that we will be seeing more harmonization of subtitling norms, both technical and content-based ones, in the future" (2011, p. 211).

6.3. Analyse the Links, if Any, Between the Type of Cultural References and the Translation Techniques Used in Each Language

The analysis of the correlation between the type of ECR and subtitling strategy shows that the most foreignised elements in both English and Spanish subtitles are the strongholds of French cultural exportations. This is to be expected, as foreignisation can often be used "to emphasize the exotic element in foreign productions" (Yonamine, 2022, p. 204). The series' success could thus be linked to its flexible translation strategy, capitalising on the popularity of French culture in the target markets. In other words, subtitlers used an overarchingly foreignising strategy, but resorted to ad hoc domesticating techniques where French cultural references were deemed less globalised or less relevant to the communicative context. Moreover, while the proportion of foreignising techniques

does not evolve much over time, the number of cultural references in the original text grows dramatically in the last series. This, in turn, suggests that French culture is increasingly foregrounded as part of the show's marketing strategy.

Further research could help determine whether these conclusions also apply in shows with different target audiences, on different platforms, and with different language pairs, as well as to establish to what extent this phenomenon can be observed in dubbing.

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