Translation of Thai Culture-Specific Words Into English in Digital Environment: Translators' Strategies and Use of Technology

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Article information	Abstract
	The present research investigates how translators deal with the challenges of translating culture-specific words from Thai into English within a digital environment. Using strategies suggested by Baker (2018), the study collected data from surveys, written sources and observations to examine which approaches are used by translators. It also addresses how technology impacts the decision making of translators as they create translations employing both Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1977, 1990) and the Actor-Network Theory proposed by Latour (1987, 2005). The findings show that translators use eight primary strategies when translating culture-specific words, with the use of loan words being the most common and literal translation the least used. The habitus of translators possibly influences their translation choices, with technology playing a crucial role in determining which solutions and strategies translators choose. This proves the extent to which technology currently influences translators in the completion of translation tasks in digital environments. Consideration of these factors should be considered as a way to improve translation training in a Thai context.

INTRODUCTION

Translation skills are considered necessary in the study of foreign languages and when pursuing a career in Thailand. A 2017 (B.E. 2560) announcement from the Ministry of Education outlining the qualifications and standards required of undergraduate English majors stipulated that translation is one of the necessary skills. Students are required to complete at least 9 credits or 3 courses in translation-related subjects. Thus, translation courses have been required in English major student curriculums in many Thai higher education institutions, recognizing the current significance of translation skills.

Translation involves transferring a source idea or concept to a target language. This transfer is closely related to not only words and grammar but also to culture since language is an integral part of social norms and interactions. The connections between language and culture enable the conduct of everyday lives and activities (Bassnett, 2014). This close relationship between language and culture demonstrates the significance of cultural aspects in translation. In addition,

some words in a source language might not have precise equivalents in a target language. The translation of these culture-specific words poses a challenge for translators (Baker, 2018). This dilemma has inspired the current study to focus on the translation of culture-specific words, especially the ways in which translators find solutions to these problems. In this study, *culture-specific words* have been defined as terms in a source language which are related to abstract or concrete cultural concepts such as religious beliefs, social customs, or names of dishes/food (Baker, 2018, p. 19).

Many research projects in translation studies, (Chaleegul & Nathalang, 2019; Guerra, 2012; Newmark, 1995), have investigated strategies in order to provide guidelines for work in both academic and professional contexts. According to Gambier (2010), these strategies generally involve decisions made by translation agents, including translators, and often result in the development of effective methods for solving translating problems or challenges. The term 'methods' is sometimes used interchangeably with 'procedures' (Newmark, 1995; Vinay & Darbelnet, 2000) or 'techniques' (Nida, 1964). Studies focusing on these translation issues within a Thai context have investigated several text types, including audiovisual texts (Janthajumrusrat, 2018), novels (Chaleegul & Nathalang, 2019; Inphen, 2020; Thappang, 2012), songs (Wongthananan, 2016), academic texts (Arsairach et al., 2017) and articles (Khongbumpen, 2008). However, even though there are many studies within a Thai context, most of them have focused analysing end-products. In contrast, the present research extends current knowledge by going beyond consideration of the end-product, also investigating the decision-making process of university students handling the translation of culture-specific words.

Nowadays, technology, especially online resources, has had a huge impact on people's lives. In Thailand, the Internet has become closely intertwined with people's daily activities. According to 2021 statistics from 'We Are Social', Thai people spend around 8 hours a day on the Internet (Kemp, 2021). Google is the website most visited by Thai people, and the words "แปล" (*plae*[1] or translation) and "แปลภาษา" (*plae phasa* or language translation) ranked second and eighth among the top queries of this search engine (ibid). This is an example of how technology provides key resources for translators (Díaz-Cintas, 2015). These resources are now easily accessed on the Internet, and include online dictionaries, dictionary applications, machine translation programs (e.g., Google Translate), search engines, social media and various other relevant. These technological resources enable translators to search for word meanings while also examining relevant contexts in both source and target languages. In addition, they can exchange and gain knowledge about translation practices (Wongseree, 2018, 2020). These potential uses of resources demonstrate the impact of technology in the digital era. However, other than Wongseree (2018, 2020), little research in a Thai context has addressed how these resources influence translations. To address current contexts of translation, this study therefore considers the impact of technology on how translators address issues associated with culture-specific words.

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[1] All Thai words in this article have been transliterated based on the Office of the Royal Society's standards regarding converting Thai into Roman script (1999).

By paying particular attention to translation strategies and the impact of technology, the present research investigates how translators cope with culture-specific words in digital environments. As the study of translation at a university level is a prime concern, subjects included a group of translators chosen from university students. An online Thai article about northern Thai traditions was selected as the source text (ST) due to a significant number of culture-specific words in the text. To address the main objective, this study examines strategies used in translating culture-specific words, leading to the first research question: What strategies are used by translators when transforming culture-specific words from Thai into English?

In addition, the present research observes the impact of technology, resulting in the following questions:

1. How do translators use technology in dealing with culture-specific words?
2. How does the use of technology influence translators when they make strategy decisions?

To fulfil the objective of investigating translation strategies, the current analysis adopts a methodology proposed by Baker (2018), derived from standard practices of professional translators. However, as the research did not consider translation quality, the translated texts were not evaluated. The impact of technology on translators was explored by employing the sociological concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). This concept highlights the disposition of agents inculcated by their social surroundings, including past experiences, and such a disposition also plays a part in structuring a society. This model was used to explain the decision-making and normative behaviour of translators using technology to solve the challenge of translating culture-specific words. Furthermore, connections between translators and technology were examined using the theoretical framework of Actor-Network Theory (ANT). Proposed by Latour (1987, 2005), this model explores the interactions of human and non-human actors that produce social practices.

To provide some background on the present research, the following sections discuss literature about translation strategies, especially studies with a Thai context and those exploring how technology impacts translation studies. The concepts and analytical frameworks adopted in the current study are also explained.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Translation strategies

As briefly addressed in the introduction, translation strategies have been examined quite extensively, and translation strategies used to cope with culture-specific words have also been widely investigated in various cultural environments, ranging from European to Asian contexts. For instance, Filep (2009) highlighted the importance of finding appropriate strategies to deal with the political sensitivity of translating interview data collected in Central-Eastern European settings. Focusing on literary texts, Guerra (2012) analysed strategies used by university students

translating cultural items from English into Spanish and vice versa. An Asian context was addressed in Yousefi's analysis (2017), using a case study of Gulistan of Saadi from Persian into English. In a Southeast Asian context, Arifin (2019) focused how culinary terms in a tourism magazine were translated from Indonesian into English. Also, with a focus on Thai-English translation, Chaleegul & Nathalang (2019) examined strategies used to translate cultural terms found in *The Story of Jan Dara* while Aungsuwan (2017) focused on Buddhist texts. These previous studies had similar findings, showing that culture-specific items are a key obstacle to translation, requiring translators to have competency in and knowledge of linguistics and culture. Thus, studies of translation strategies help translators cope with these challenges. The results of these studies demonstrate the importance of having the present research further investigate this issue, especially in a Thai context.

Strategies used in Thai - English translations have been examined in various text genres as specified in the introduction. Some of them employed concepts proposed by both international and Thai scholars. For example, Janthajumrusrat (2018) adopted the Nord's concepts and two Thai scholars to investigate preferred strategies used to translate English action movie titles into Thai and study audience reaction. In literary texts, Thappang (2012) studied strategies used to translate English compound nouns found in an official Thai translation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by adopting concepts of translation strategies from many scholars, (e.g., Beekman & Callow, 1974; Prasithrathsint, 2004; Saibua, 2007, as cited in Thappang, 2012). While employment of mixed concepts from both Thai and international scholars allows researchers to select strategies more likely to fit the choices of translators working with Thai and English, they might be unnecessarily detailed as they include a few overlapping strategies. That is, some of the studies proposed up to 19 strategies, with one main strategy divided into two or three individual ones. For example, the use of loan words was separated into two categories: a simple list of loan words and itemization of loan words including Thai and English language explanations. As the present research looks at strategies in order to identify how translators solve problems encountered during the translation of culture-specific words in digital environments, obtaining a detailed list of translation strategies is not a primary goal. Therefore, this study decides to adopt one concept of translation strategies in its analysis of Thai-English translations of culturally specific items in an informative text.

Baker's translation strategies of non-equivalent words

Many translation scholars have suggested strategies as guidelines for translators facing problems. These key scholars include Newmark (1995), Vinay & Darbelnet (2000), and Baker (2018). However, the present study has adopted Baker's concept for the investigation of translation strategies because although Newmark (1995) cites 18 detailed strategies, some seem to overlap in terms of usage. For example, there is no distinct explanation of the differences between the procedures of equivalents (cultural, functional and descriptive) and synonymy, which he defines as near-equivalence between a target and a source language (Newmark 1995, p. 84). Moreover, despite the usefulness of the seven translation procedures proposed by Vinay & Darbelnet (2000), some of them such as literal translation and equivalence seem to be more appropriate when investigating translation strategies at a sentence level, not the focus of this research.

However, the strategies suggested by Baker (2018) are most appropriate for the present research as they reflect tactics actually employed by professional translators. In addition, Baker (2018, p. 19) recommends that these strategies be used in the translation of culture-specific words, the main focus of the current study. Baker (2018) identified the following translation strategies for non-equivalence at a word level.

1. ***More general:*** using a more general word or choosing a word at a higher semantic level.
2. ***More neutral/less expressive:*** choosing a word that has a less expressive meaning.
3. ***Cultural substitution:*** replacing a culture-specific word with one that has a similar impact in the target language.
4. ***Loan word with optional explanation:*** using a loan word with or without an explanation.
5. ***Paraphrase with a related word:*** using a different word form/part of speech in the target language.
6. ***Paraphrase with an unrelated word(s):*** explaining the meaning of a word.
7. ***Omission:*** omitting a word from translation if its meaning is considered insignificant to the text.
8. ***Illustration:*** including an illustration within a translation.

The above strategies have been adopted by many translation studies, such as Arifin (2019), Khongbumpen (2008) and Warachananan & Roongrattanakool (2015). Studies have proven the feasibility of employing these strategies in a research project. When trying to find effective translation strategies, translators are often able to use available resources to help them complete their tasks. In the current digital era, technology has taken a dominant role in translation and, as described below, its impact is worth investigating.

Impact of technology in translation

Not only does this study focus on translation strategies, it also investigates the impact of technology on translators' choices. Thanks to the Internet, translators, both professional and non-professional, can easily access resources such as dictionaries, software and other programs which facilitate translation. Díaz-Cintas (2015) pointed out that translators currently need technological tools to produce their work. He also considers it necessary for both professional and non-professional translators in the digital era to acquire the skills needed to use these tools. As technology in translation advances, close relationships between humans and technology are also being developed. Kenny (2017) states that as humans use technology, they help to extend the ways in which it can be employed to benefit translation activities.

Wang & Lim (2017) also marked the impact of technology by studying its uses in translation, comparing students and academic scholars to explore what resources translators use and at what frequency. The roles of technology in translation are demonstrated in detail in Wongseree (2020). Her study discloses that technology, such as subtitling programs, dictionaries and online video clips, are resources that facilitate the efforts of non-professional Thai translators conducting fan translations (translations created by engaged audiences of the texts). These tools enable translators to not only make subtitles on digital platforms but to also build an online fan

community for their translation interactions. These interactions result in the establishment of trust between translators and translation technology (Wongseree, et al, 2019). Such relationships are also presented in a study by De Barra-Cusack (2014) as she found that the trust is key in the decision making of translators when they use an online terminological resource.

The impacts described above shows the importance of further investigations into the use of online resources by translators and into the influence of technology on translators' decision making. To explore this area in more depth, the current study adopts Bourdieu's habitus concept (1977, 1990) to examine how accumulated experiences and behaviours of translators influence their use of technology in translation. In addition, the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) proposed by Latour (1987, 2005) is employed to highlight the actual interactions occurring between translators and technology when producing translations. The habitus concept and ANT framework are discussed below.

Bourdieu's habitus concept

To better explain the impact of translation technology, the present research takes a sociological approach. This focuses on translators and their roles in the process as they function within the cultural settings which comprise modern social systems (Inghilleri, 2009). The habitus concept (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) is employed in this study because it highlights the interactions of agents and social structures, including those which form part of a digital environment. Habitus is defined as "systems of durable and transposable dispositions" which are internalised by past conditions, enabling agents to deal with various situations (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). In other words, habitus is presented as a form of dispositions that have been accumulated from past experiences in a durable and systematic way. Those experiences are acquired when agents take different roles and/or positions in a field or constituted social space. Those historically and socially situated conditions give rise to a free production of thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions oriented towards past experience (Bourdieu, 1990). Therefore, dispositions are a product of an organising action, demonstrating a way of being or a habitual state (Bourdieu, 1977).

In translation studies, habitus is regarded as a product of translators' cultural backgrounds and is reflected in the ways they perform translation practices (Gouanvic, 2005). It is also closely linked to how norms influence translators' choices (Simeoni 1998). Norms are considered sociocultural constraints which determine how translations should be produced, thereby affecting translators' decisions (Schäffner, 2010). Habitus is relevant to not only translators' professional realms but also to their status as socialised individuals, as both of these characteristics affect decision-making when creating translations (Meylaerts, 2008; Simeoni, 1998). Habitus of translators can be a result of norms and at the same time may create norms themselves (Simeoni, 1998). The habitus of translators is also affected by their dispositions, shown by the recurrent behavioural patterns demonstrated by translators' choices (Yannakoloulou, 2014). In other words, habitus is an important factor in regularities of behaviour maintained through translators' decisions influenced by their acquired knowledge and experience (Inghilleri, 2005). The application of habitus has proven feasible in many previous translation studies. The habitus concept allows researchers in translation studies to focus on translators as social and cultural

agents who make a specific impact on the process of producing translations (Inghilleri, 2005). It also takes a translator's individual background and motivations into consideration, factors which norms may overlook (Yannakopoulou 2008). The concept is believed to help analyses of translating skills, demonstrating how their outcomes have originated from past social encounters (Simeoni, 1998). Moreover, its application is considered useful in analysing how translators are embodied by their social trajectories in their translations of literary works (Gouanvic, 2005; Meylaerts, 2008; Yannakoloulou, 2014). Habitus has also been employed in the study of how translators respond to work in professional industries, including an explanation of how the dispositions of translators in the Finnish translation industry have been shaped and have subsequently affected their work-related decisions (Abdallah, 2014).

It is clear that habitus is closely related to translators' decision-making processes. The present research will take this notion into consideration, adopting it to help explore the ways in which translators use technology to deal with culture-specific words.

Actor-Network Theory (ANT)

The previous section introduced the concept of habitus to highlight the role of translators as social actors, making decisions to solve translation problems raised by culture-specific items in digitally-mediated environments. In addition, the role technology plays in translations cannot be overlooked, so the framework of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) as proposed by Latour (1987, 2005) comes into play. ANT is related to the sociology of science and technology studies and values the movements of human and non-human actors. Relationships are formed when they enrol or assemble in a setting, have interactions, and/or negotiate their roles, leading to the mobilisation or the formation of a practice (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1987). The influence actors have on each other is expressed in how they act and how their roles are transformed, and these interrelationships later form an association or network (Latour, 2005). This means that through their association, human and non-human actors all have agency or an ability to act (Buzelin, 2011) and play a role in forming a practice. ANT treats human and non-human actors equally in a network (Latour, 1987, 2005), and this aspect is considered a main contribution of this framework (Córdoba Serrano, 2020). With such equal treatment, ANT is useful in the exploration of interlinguistic transfers in a technological environment (Buzelin, 2007). Another contribution of this framework is that it gives actors the flexibility to freely interact with one another without intervention from the researcher (Hekkanen, 2009). This is especially relevant to the current study which gives translators a non-restricted environment to enable the use of online technology for coping with the challenges of translating culture-specific words.

With its focus on the field of translation studies, ANT has been employed in various contexts. It has helped provide an understanding of how literary translations are produced, considering not only translators but also other translation agents such as publishing houses and editors (Buzelin, 2007). Furthermore, the framework has been used to acquire in-depth insights into the work and satisfaction levels of translators, both in a professional translation production network (Abdallah, 2010), and as part of a network of volunteers working on Facebook in Poland (O'Hagan, 2017). More importantly, when ANT is adopted, it can help highlight the role of technology, a key non-human actor, in transforming the behaviour of translation agents, especially translators, producing their work (Risku & Windhager, 2013; Wongseree, 2020).

The ability of ANT to emphasise the role of non-human actors enables the present study to explicitly show the role of technology in translation. It allows researchers to focus on technology as a key non-human actor in the translation process. Moreover, previous studies, especially Risku & Windhager (2013) and Wongseree (2020), have proven ANT can help investigate how online translation resources affect human actors when making choices, completing translation tasks or solving a problem in the translation of culture-specific words.

The employment of ANT, along with the concepts of habitus and translation strategies, leads to the research methods and data collection discussed in the following section.

RESEARCH METHODS

The two previous sections gave an overview of the aims of the current study. This leads the present research to use a mixed-methods approach, adopting a combination of several methodologies to collect and analyse the data (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014).

To answer the first research question, the current study focuses on text analyses comparing a translation with a particular aspect of its source text (Williams & Chesterman, 2012). In this study, the translated culture-specific words are examined and compared with the source text. This demonstrates a product-oriented perspective on the data of written sources, e.g., translated texts (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). To answer questions about how technology impacts translators, this study takes a sociological perspective. By employing the habitus concept and the ANT framework, the research can focus on translators and explore what they do in order to understand the relationships between texts, languages, societies and cultures (Chesterman, 2007). Data were collected from participants as described below.

Participants

The participants include second-year students at a large university in northern Thailand who were enrolled in the second out of the three required translation courses within the English major curriculum. This second translation course encourages students to pay particular attention to linguistic and cultural differences in translation, and translation strategies proposed by Baker (2018) are also introduced. As part of the course assessment for these 75-minute translation classes, the students are generally asked to translate a text from English into Thai and vice versa. In addition, all translation courses in this university include student use of online resources during class exercises.

Research participants were recruited on voluntary basis through an online announcement posted on a social media platform. The target number of subjects was set to a maximum of 25 students, limited by the complexity of collecting in-depth data. The recruiting process began after receiving approval from the ethical review board of the researcher's home institution. Before signing a consent form, participants were informed about key details of the research, including the overview, objectives and data collection methods.

After the recruitment, 23 students showed interest and took part in the research. They all completed the translations and the two online questionnaires. However, in the screen recording process, four of all participants could not complete their recording, and two of them could not record their screen at all due to technical problems, possibly a bad internet connection. Therefore, the data of these six participants have been removed. However, the remaining data of 17 participants/translators, described as Participants 1-17, are believed to be sufficiently valid considering the in-depth collected data and their triangulation.

Instruments

1. Written sources or students' translated texts

To investigate which translation strategies are used when dealing with culture-specific words, the text produced by a translation process or the translated text (TT) was collected. This data provided evidence of translators' decision-making methods and some insights into their translation process (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014).

The participants were asked to translate part of a Thai article about a northern Thai merit-making and donation tradition called "*Tan Kuai Salak*" (ตานก๋วยสลาก). This source text (ST) was adapted from the Art & Culture Magazine website, silpa-mag.com[2]. Due to the participants' limited translation experience, the length of the chosen ST was limited to about 10 lines and the type is informative. Only the translated culture-specific words were analysed due to the present focus on this issue.

2. Questionnaires

The present research collected survey data before and after the participants completed their translations. A questionnaire was used to acquire background information as well as opinions and/or attitudes of the participants (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014).

The first questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section explored the participants' experience in translation and the other was about their use of technology in translation. There were nine items, including both open-ended and closed questions.

The second questionnaire consisted of three sections with 18 open-ended and closed questions. They were about (1) the translators' decision-making process when solving translation problems, especially those concerned with culture-specific words; (2) their use of technology; and (3) their expectations of translation courses.

Both questionnaires were conducted online and privately to avoid creating a potentially stressful environment for the participants (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014) and to eliminate close personal contact during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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[2] https://www.silpa-mag.com/culture/article_38356

3. An observation

The researchers used an observation method to explore participants' behaviour as they used technology to translate the given texts, paying particular attention to culture-specific words. The present research followed a detached observation approach which included listing key behaviours involved in the most important aspects of translation (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). To ensure that details were not overlooked, the participants were asked to record their screen while translating and submitted the resulting video to the researcher after finishing their translation tasks. This procedure created a more relaxed environment for translators during the task.

For ethical considerations, all identifying information for the participants has been kept confidential and accessed by only the researcher. To protect privacy, participants are referred to by numbers (e.g., Participant 1, 2, 3) in the data, analysis and discussions. After collection, the data were triangulated or cross-checked, and analysed based on the relevant theoretical frameworks, including Baker's translation strategies (2018), the habitus concept (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) and the ANT framework (Latour, 1987, 2005). This ensured the study's credibility and validity. Further details of the data analysis are provided below.

Almost all data collection were conducted online to comply with safety measures in effect due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation in Thailand.

Data analysis

After data collection, the written sources were analysed by comparing a translation with its source text, paying particular attention to the culture-specific terms. Based on the written source data, there were 27 culture-specific items in the ST that needed to be compared with the translated words retrieved from the TTs. The culture-specific words were identified by the researcher based on the definition proposed by Baker (2018), and the ST included the following examples: ตานก๋วยสลาก *(Tan Kuai Salak)*, ล้านนา *(Lanna)*, สลากภัต *(Salakkaphat)*, กุศล *(kuson)*, อุทิศส่วนกุศล *(uthitsuankuson)*, จำพรรษา *(champhansa)*, เดือนยี่เหนือ *(dueanyinuea)*, ข้าวสาร *(khaosan)*, ชะลอม *(chalom)*, ไส้อั่ว *(sai-ua)*, ขนมชั้น *(khanomchan)* (see Appendix). Although the participants were informed about the Thai culture-related topic of the ST, the 27 culture-specific words were not marked or otherwise specifically identified. In the analysis, the strategies that the participants used in translating these words were tallied, and their frequency percentages were calculated.

Both sets of questionnaires were analysed to reveal the impact of technology on translators. While the analysis of the first set focused on the past experiences of the translators in using technology, the second set concentrated on how the translators used technology to solve translation challenges.

Observation data derived from the participants' screen recordings were then transcribed, paying particular attention to how the culture-specific words were translated. The transcription included a list of the culture-specific words in the source and target languages, the types of technology that the participants used, and how they used them.

RESULTS

Based on the data analysis described in the previous section, the following results have been divided into three sections that respond to the research questions.

Strategies used in the translation of culture-specific words

In response to the first research question about translation strategies and based on the data collected from all written sources, eight primary strategies were used to translate 27 culture-specific items from Thai into English.

As illustrated in Figure 1, translators most often used the strategy of choosing **loan words with and without explanation** (24%). This strategy was employed mostly when the translators translated proper nouns, including names related to tradition [e.g., ตานก๋วยสลาก *(Tan Kuai Salak)* and สลากภัต *(Salakkaphat)*], a name of a past kingdom in northern Thailand [ล้านนา *(Lanna)*], and names of ceremonial objects [e.g., ก๋วย *(kuai)* and เส้นสลาก *(sensalak)*].
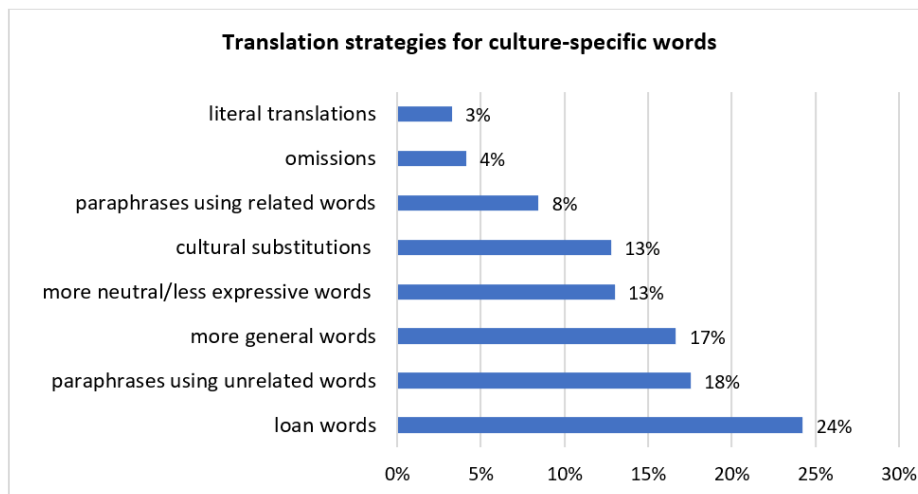

Figure 1 Translation strategies for culture-specific words

The second most common strategy involved **paraphrases using unrelated words** (18%). This strategy was mostly used to translate ST words related to food, including ไส้อั่ว *(Sai-ua)*, ขนมต้ม *(Khanomtom)*, and ขนมชั้น *(Khanomchan)*. When faced with the Thai word ไส้อั่ว (*Sai-ua or* a northern Thai sausage made of pork mixed with Thai herbs), around half of the translators chose to translate it as "northern Thai spicy sausage". Furthermore, more than half of them translated ขนมต้ม (*Khanomtom or* a Thai traditional round dessert made of rice flour, sugar and coconut) by using the English words "coconut balls" or "coconut dumplings". Moreover, the Thai word ขนมชั้น (*Khanomchan or* a Thai traditional square dessert made of coconut milk, sugar and flour) was translated as "Thai steamed layer cake" or "layer sweet cake". These examples show that many translators used the strategy of focusing on a main detail when choosing an English equivalent for some culture-specific words.

The third strategy that many translators (17%) used when translating cultural-specific terms related to places was selecting **a more general word**. For instance, ยุ้งฉาง (*yungchang or* a place used to store rice) was translated as "barn", a more general term as it refers to a large farm building which can be used to store grain or keep animals. Also, more than half of the translators translated วิหาร (*wihan or* a Buddhist central hall containing a Buddha statue) as "temple" which generally refers to buildings used for worship in several non-Christian religions, not only Buddhism. These examples show that in some cases, choosing a translated word that has a broader meaning than the source language is an option when translating culture-specific words.

Many translators were likely to employ the strategy of using **a more neutral/less expressive word** (13%) when translating terms related to Buddhism. For example, the word หยาดน้ำ (*yadnam or* a Buddhist ceremony of pouring water dedicated to the deceased) was translated as "pour water" by the majority of translators. Also, for the Thai word จำพรรษา *(champhansa)*, related to a time when Buddhist monks stay in one place during the rainy season, almost all the translators chose "stay", a word generally used in everyday life settings.

At the same time, the strategy of **cultural substitution** (13%) was adopted by many translators for words like เข้าพรรษา *(khaophansa)*, ให้ศีลให้พร *(haisinhaiphon)*, เดือนยี่เหนือ *(dueanyinuea)*, and แคบหมู *(Khaepmu)*. The words เข้าพรรษา *(khaophansa)* and ให้ศีลให้พร *(haisinhaiphon)* are closely related to Buddhism. The first Thai word refers to a duration of three months when Buddhist monks are required to stay in a temple, and the second word refers to monks wishing people luck and prosperity. These two words were translated by the majority of the translators into ones used in Christianity, "the (Buddhist) Lent" and "bless", respectively. Moreover, เดือนยี่เหนือ *(dueanyinuea)* refers to the second month of the lunar calendar for the Lanna (northern Thai) people. Six translators used the word for this month in the modern-day Gregorian calendar, "November". For แคบหมู *(Khaepmu)*, a northern-style crispy fried pork skin, more than half of the translators used "pork crackling" or "pork rinds", types of western snacks.

The strategy of **paraphrasing by using a related word** (8%) was employed when translating compound nouns like พระประธาน *(phraprathan)*. This word, referring to the main Buddhist statue installed in a central hall, was translated as "a principal Buddha image". That is, the position of the head noun, พระ *(phra)*, was moved to the end and the noun ประธาน *(prathan)* was changed into an adjective, "principal". Furthermore, a strategy of omission (4%) seemed to be used when a translator assumed that the context was sufficient. For example, a Thai word in the ST, ทำทาน *(thamthan)*, was placed next to the word, ทำบุญ *(thambun)*. Both words are used in Buddhism and are closely related in meaning. The first one involves the act of giving to the poor while the second means giving to Buddhist monks. Therefore, although the two Thai words have slightly different usages, some translators decided to use only one verb, "to make merit", to represent both of them in the English translation. Another example is the English translation of the Thai word, ชะลอม *(chalom)*. In the Thai culture, this word refers to a type of bamboo basket woven in a cylinder shape which is used to carry things. Since a broad description of the word [ตะกร้าสานด้วยไม้ไผ่ *(takrasanduaimaiphai)* or woven bamboo basket] is given in the ST before the occurrence of the word itself, some translators decided to omit an English translation.

The least commonly used strategy was **literal translation** (3%), which is not included in Baker's suggested strategies. This strategy was adopted in the translation of the Thai word ทำทาน *(thamthan)*, with four participants translating it as "give alms". The translation strategy of the word was the same as applied in Aungsuwan's study (2017). Moreover, the word พุทธกาล *(phutthakan)*, a period of time when the Lord Buddha was alive, was literally translated into "the Buddha era" by six translators.

It seems that the strategies selected by translators to convey meanings in English were based on their personal preferences. The post survey results included examples of these thought processes. Participants 1 and 5 stated that they chose a loan word strategy to translate proper nouns related to tradition because "it is difficult to explain the whole concept in English," and "it is difficult to find an explanation (in English)." Moreover, Participant 12 mentioned that her choice to paraphrase unrelated words in the translation of food-related terms was because "readers in western contexts might not have encountered these types of food before, so an explanation is needed to help them to picture the food."

Meanwhile, one translation strategy common among the translators was identified based on the observation data. Technological tools, especially search engines, might have strongly influenced the strategies selected by the translators. For instance, the strategies of translating วิหาร *(wihan)* as a "temple" (a more general word) and จำพรรษา *(champhansa)* as "stay" (a more neutral/less expressive word) were suggested by dictionaries and a search engine. A similar process was applied when they used the strategy of cultural substitution, paraphrasing by using a related word. Further details about these resources are addressed in the following section.

Impact of technology on translators' decision making

When deciding on strategies for translation of culture-specific words in digitally-mediated environments, the survey data revealed that all translators used technology. This section, based on the observation data, will reflect the translators' heavy reliance on technology in translation, responding to the second and third research questions which focus on the impact technology has on translators' interpretations of culture-specific words. The relevance of the habitus concept and ANT is described in detail below.

Habitus of translators in using technology

The transcribed observation data illustrates that all of the translators (100%) used Google's search engine and various dictionaries, both online and applications, to help them translate culture-specific words (see Figure 2). In addition, all of them except Participant 11 (94%) looked at other websites to help them find appropriate translations. The majority of them, including Participant 11 (82%), also visited social media sites, such as Facebook pages, blogs and forums, to assist them. Machine translations, especially Google Translate, (76%) and Wikipedia (59%) were also tools facilitating translation.
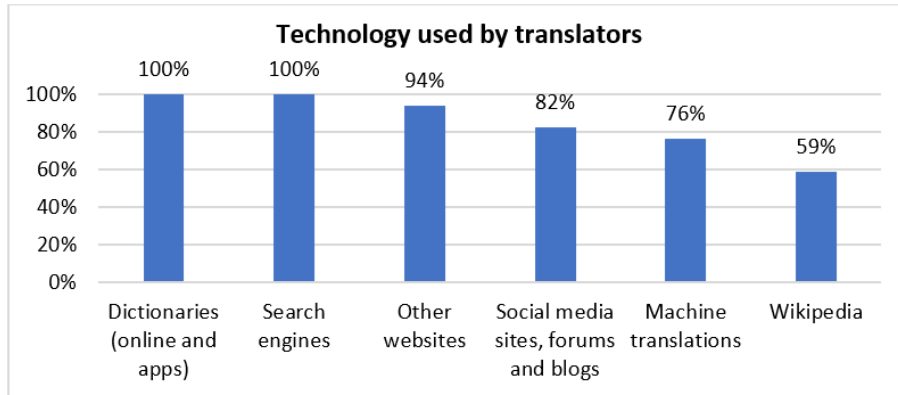
Technology used by translators

100% | 100% | 94% | 82% | 76% | 59%

Dictionaries (online and apps) | Search engines | Other websites | Social media sites, forums and blogs | Machine translations | Wikipedia

Figure 2 Technology used by the translators

The observation data in Figure 3 illustrate the frequency with which the translators used these technological tools when they were translating culture-specific words
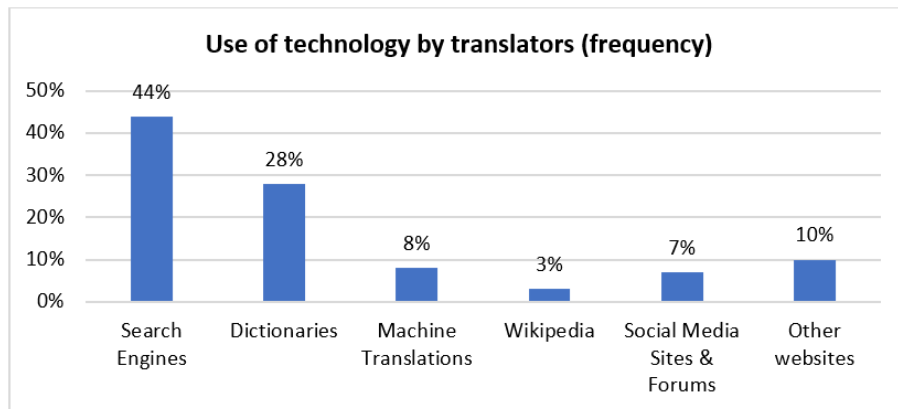
Use of technology by translators (frequency)

44% | 28% | 8% | 3% | 7% | 10%

Search Engines | Dictionaries | Machine Translations | Wikipedia | Social Media Sites & Forums | Other websites

Figure 3 Use of technology by translators (frequency)

As demonstrated in Figure 3, the translators primarily relied on search engines such as Google (44%) when they translated culture-specific words. Dictionaries were the second most common tool (28%), following by reliance on other websites related to the translated topics, such as cooking and tourism (10%). Furthermore, the translators accessed machine translations (8%), especially via Google Translate, and consulted social media sites, forums and blogs (7%), such as Facebook pages and Pantip[3]. They also visited Wikipedia (3%) for background information when they translated culture-specific words.

Figures 2 and 3 show that all of the translators used the Internet to help them solve translation challenges, and they seemed to be well-acquainted with using these resources. They also had habitual patterns of behaviour. When the translators looked for ways to handle the translation of culture-specific words, the first two resources visited by all of them were Google and

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[3] A well-known Thai-language website and discussion forum

dictionaries. This was evidence of which technologies they initially felt would be most useful when looking for solutions to problems involved in translating culture-specific items as shown in Figure 4.
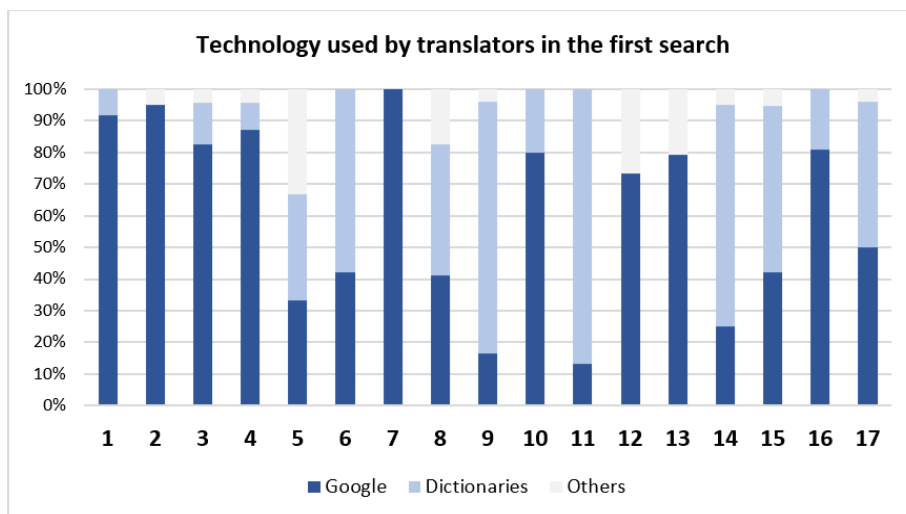

Figure 4 Technology used by translators in their first search

Figure 4 shows that around half of the translators relied heavily on Google when they first looked for assistance with translating culture-specific words. This might have been due to their assumption that Google, as search engines, might lead them to a wide variety of information which could them solve the translation problems. Meanwhile, a few of them first consulted dictionaries as a key resource, Surprisingly, almost all the translators turned to the online Longdo dictionary, while Participant 9 mainly used a dictionary application.

The results from Figures 2, 3, and 4 suggest that search engines, particularly Google, were commonly selected by all the translators. Such selections seem to fit Thai people's preferences, as most of them frequently visit Google and often use it to assist with translation (Kemp, 2021). Moreover, the translators' reliance on dictionaries, both online and applications, is evident. Their choice of this tool seems to be consistent with what they normally did in translation classes, and it is also aligned with the responses they gave in the pre-survey when being asked about resources used. They also used these technological tools in the same ways mentioned in the pre-survey. That is, they checked word collocations, searched for word meanings and understood the contexts of translated topics and issues. The same goes for tools like machine translations, which were chosen by 13 translators in the pre-survey. However, these tools are not often recommended by the university's translation courses. Although they are quite popular, they are often of somewhat dubious quality. These normative behaviours of the translators imply the influence of their past experience and knowledge of translation. The way they selected and used technological resources reflected their habitus. Such habitus is one piece of evidence showing the impact of technology on translators when choosing strategies to translate culture-specific words. Additional findings regarding the influence of technology on translators have been detailed in the following section.

Roles of technology on translators' choices based on ANT

The previous section discussed the influence of habitus on translators' use of technology when they translated culture-specific items. These interactions of translators and technology[4] can also be analysed based on ANT. The observation data indicated that technology takes a dominant role as tools assisting translators in their decision-making process. As shown in Figure 5, through their access in digital environments, the translators used these technological resources to search for translation suggestions and to scan topic-related content in Thai and/or English to better understand the context. Furthermore, technology also helped them consider word choices and grammar (e.g., parts of speech) when seeking suggested English translations. These ways in which technological tools assisted the translators are consistent with how preliminary and post surveys described their purposes.
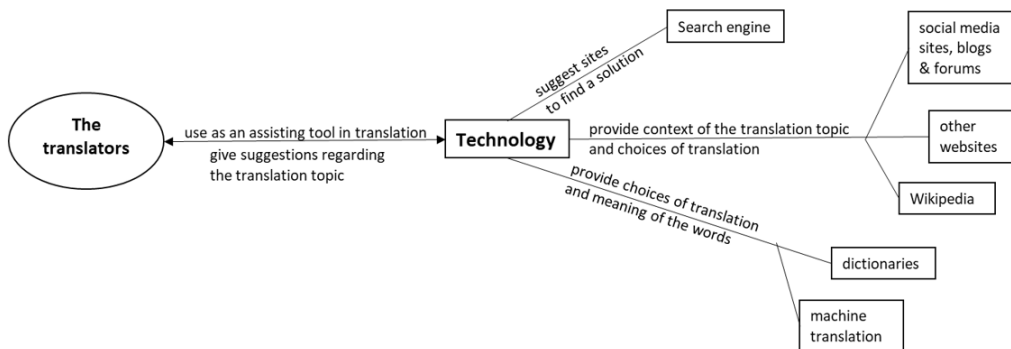

Figure 5 Interactions of translators and technology when translating culture-specific words

Such interactions with technology are likely to influence the strategical decisions translators make when faced with culture-specific words. For example, this was clearly illustrated in the translation of the proper name of the tradition, ตานก๋วยสลาก *(Tan Kuai Salak)*, cited as one of most challenging words in the post survey. The example shown in Figure 6 presents the movements of human and non-human actors (i.e., translators and technology) coping with this problem. To find a solution, the majority of the translators began their search with Google (see Figure 6). This choice was correlated with their habitual behaviour in using technology in translation as discussed in the previous section. Google results on the first page guided the translators in their search for an English translation by suggesting other sites or tools, including websites and forums related to traditions, Wikipedia, or machine translations. Therefore, to achieve a satisfactory result, the translators often reused this tool during the process of translation, leading the search engine to be the most commonly used technological resource (see Figure 3).

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[4] The interactions between the translators and technology are represented in a bidirectional arrow as shown in Figure 6.
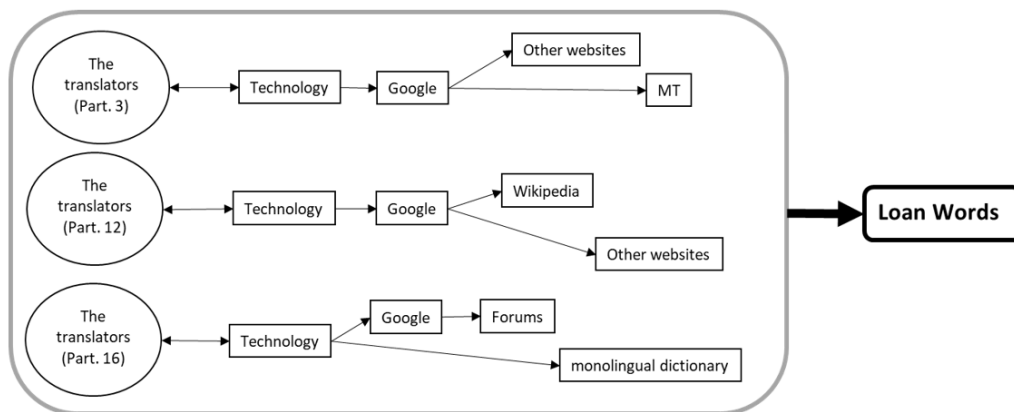
Figure 6 Example of technology's influence on the choices made for translation of ตานก๋วยสลาก *(Tan Kuai Salak)*

As demonstrated by the search descriptions in Figure 6, Wikipedia, forums (e.g., answers.yahoo.com), and other websites (e.g., m-culture.go.th) provided background on the Thai tradition. However, a machine translation suggested "Tan Guay Lottery", which does not quite fit the context since this tradition is not relevant to the lottery. As most of the results were provided in Thai with no English equivalents, this may have encouraged the translators to use loan words as their main strategy.

Moreover, suggestions on Google result pages can prompt translators to consult similar online sites, leading them towards very similar choices of strategy. This was demonstrated in the translations of Thai desserts found in the ST, such as ขนมต้ม *(Khanomtom)*. After a Google search, food-related sites were shown with a few suggested English translations. Following those results, some of the translators, including Participants 2, 3, 10, 13, selected the English word "coconut balls" from the Facebook food page. Meanwhile, a few of them, such as Participants 6 and 16, chose "coconut dumplings" from the food website, mcdang.com. This example demonstrates how the translators came up with the strategy of paraphrasing using unrelated words. As discussed in the translation strategy section, this choice was made thanks to social media sites and websites suggested by the search engine.

In addition to the aforementioned technological resources, dictionaries, in both online and application forms, played a part in the selection of translation strategies. An example was the translation of religious words, which was cited as the most difficult challenge by respondents to the post survey. In the translation of จำพรรษา *(champhansa)*, several translators (e.g., Participants 1, 14, 15) accessed the online Longdo dictionary or a dictionary application (Participant 9) and translated the word as "stay", a word suggested by both dictionaries. This employment of a more neutral/less expressive word proves that technology can help translators find a strategy to use when translating culture-specific words.

The interactions described in this section show how technological tools affect translators' decision-making processes when faced with culture-specific word translations. This provides evidence of how technology affects translation tasks in digital environments.

DISCUSSION

The results from the surveys, written sources and observation data show that the translators thought of many different strategies that used technology as a tool in digital environments to translate culture-specific words appearing in the ST. The translators used seven out of the eight Baker strategies (2018) in the translation of culture-specific words. Among them, the strategy of loan words was used the most, especially when proper nouns were translated. Literal translation was a strategy not specified in Baker (2018) and it was the least commonly used. Omissions were used the second least, generally employed when words with similar meanings could be found next to the omitted translation. Moreover, when considering the strategies used by the translators, it is interesting that despite a slight difference in word choices, the translators were likely to use the same strategies or even make the same word choices most of the time. Further investigation of this result demonstrated that their choices were correlated with their use of technology, adopting a sociological approach with a habitus concept (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) and the ANT framework (Latour, 1987, 2005).

To find solutions to translation problems caused by culture-specific words, the translators were likely to consult Google, dictionaries, and other resources such as machine translation. This normative behaviour in their use of technology in translation implies that the habitus of the translators was possibly influenced by their past experience using the tools in their everyday lives, particularly for the purpose of translation, and their past learning experience of translation in the university. These ways of using technology implicitly reflected the way the translators performed the practice, evidencing the influence of the translators' acquired knowledge and experiences on their habitus (Gouanvic, 2005; Inghilleri, 2005). These recurrent behavioural patterns and the habitus of the translators seemingly affected their translation decision making (Meylaerts, 2008; Simeoni, 1998; Yannakoloulou, 2014).

Furthermore, the interactions illustrated in Figures 5 and 6 demonstrate the close relationship between translators and technology as key human and non-human actors in translation of culture-specific words. This was based on ANT, echoing a finding from Kenny (2017). Specifically, technology played a crucial role in shaping the translators' decision making. Technological resources, including search engines, dictionaries, social media sites and forums, and Wikipedia, enabled the translators to receive suggestions for the meaning of words, word choices and contexts for the translation topic, leading them to choose strategies to translate culture-specific items. Furthermore, the way that the translators seemed to believe in the suggestions made by the technological resources in translation implied a trustful connection between translators and technology, similar to the studies of De Barra-Cusack (2014) and Wongseree, O'Hagan & Sasamoto (2019). This shows evidence of the impact of technology on translators in creating translations of culture-specific words.

IMPLICATION FOR TEACHING IN DIGITAL ERA

The findings about approaches used to deal with translating culture-specific words suggest that these strategies can be introduced in translation courses in Thailand as possible ways to

handle these challenges, especially in regard to cultural differences. In addition, the findings about the influence of technology on translators' decision-making marked technology's currently close connection with Thai translators. In addition to a heavy reliance on search engines and dictionaries, other websites such as online communities and forums play a crucial part in translation. This implies that at present, technological tools of translation are not necessarily limited to dictionaries. The evidence for the role of technology presented in the study echoes the importance of technical skills acquired by translators nowadays (Díaz-Cintas, 2015). Such findings should be taken into consideration when designing translation training. Particularly in the curriculum of translation courses in Thai universities, it may be a good idea to suggest appropriate ways in which technological resources can be made available to students. In addition, computer-assisted translation tools (CAT tools) such as translation memory software, may also be introduced. In the meantime, a balance between a reliance on technological resources, such as machine translation, and translators' skills and experience may also need to be struck.

CONCLUSION

The present research explores the ways in which translators cope with the challenges of translating culture-specific items in digital environments. It reveals that strategies used by translators derive from suggestions received from available online technological resources, showing how much translators rely on technology. The great reliance of translators on technology proven by the present research implies that translators are very aware of what technological resources are available to them for use in translation.

Moreover, the concepts and framework adopted in the study enabled the researcher to answer the key questions about translation strategies and impact of technology. While Baker's translation strategies (2018) can be useful when describing strategies employed by translators, Bourdieu's habitus (1977, 1990) and Latour's ANT (1987, 2005) can help show the close relationship between translators and technology when working together to solve the problem of translating culture-specific items. The application of these concepts and the applied framework will help to broaden translation studies in Thailand in the digital era by investigating translation practices from a sociological viewpoint.

The current study was conducted mostly online due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Unstable internet connections caused some collected data to be incomplete and unusable for the analysis. Participant interviews are advisable in future research to further enrich the data and analysis, especially in the understanding of the habitus of translators or how their past experience and knowledge plays a part in translation strategy decisions. However, the complete collected data was still useful, providing in-depth results for achieving the main goal of the research.

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APPENDIX

List of 27 culture-specific words in the analysis

1. ตานก๋วยสลาก *(Tan Kuai Salak)*
2. ล้านนา *(Lanna)*
3. ภาษาไทยภาคกลาง *(phasathaiphakklang)*
4. สลากภัต *(Salakkaphat)*
5. พุทธกาล *(phutthakan)*
6. ทำทาน/ทาน *(thamthan/than)*
7. กุศล *(kuson)*
8. เดือน 12 เหนือ *(dueansibson nuea)*
9. เดือนยี่เหนือ *(dueanyinuea)*
10. จำพรรษา *(champhansa)*
11. เข้าพรรษา *(khaophansa)*
12. ข้าวเปลือก *(khaoplueak)*
13. ข้าวสาร *(khaosan)*
14. ยุ้งฉาง *(yungchang)*
15. วันสุกดิบ *(wansukdip)*
16. แคบหมู *(Khaepmu)*
17. ไส้อั่ว *(Sai-ua)*
18. ขนมต้ม *(Khanomtom)*
19. ขนมชั้น *(Khanomchan)*
20. ก๋วย *(kuai)*
21. ชะลอม *(chalom)*
22. เส้นสลาก *(sensalak)*
23. พระประธาน *(phraprathan)*
24. วิหาร *(wihan)*
25. ให้ศีลให้พร *(haisinhaiphon)*
26. หยาดน้ำ *(yadnam)*
27. อุทิศส่วนกุศล *(uthitsuankuson)*