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Translating the Postmodern: A Qualitative Analysis of Intertextual References in the Turkish Subtitles of *Mad Men*

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Abstract

This study investigates how the U.S.-based television series Mad Men (2007–2015) employs intertextuality, including literary, commercial, historical–political and popular culture references, and how these intertextual references are translated into Turkish. The study builds upon theoretical models of intertextuality, specifically Julia Kristeva's model that describes each text as composed of prior texts, and Leppihalme and Pedersen's models for the translation of allusions. A qualitative analysis is conducted of a purposeful sample of six episodes selected from the first two seasons of Mad Men, accessed via Amazon Prime Video in Turkey. 35 intertextual references were identified, of which nine representative examples were selected for detailed comparative analysis. The results indicate that the translators predominantly employed retention as the main translation strategy when rendering intertextual references in Mad Men. While this strategy preserves intertextual meaning to some extent, it has notable implications for audience reception. When references are unfamiliar or obscure to audiences with a different cultural background from the writers', the degree of intertextual resonance may be significantly reduced among Turkish audiences. The study further identifies cultural embeddedness as a secondary variable that determines the effectiveness of the official-equivalent strategy, suggesting that the availability of an established translation is insufficient if it is not widely recognized by the target audience. Finally, it introduces the notion of graduated intertextual access to account for cases in which evaluative language affords target audiences differential rather than purely dichotomous access to intertextual meaning.

Keywords: intertextuality, audiovisual translation, subtitling, translation strategies, *Mad Men*

1. Introduction

Texts do not exist in isolation but are shaped by their relationships with other texts within a broader cultural and discursive context. Intertextuality refers to the way in which a text is shaped by prior texts and, in turn, contributes to those that follow, through allusions, quotations, and other references to earlier textual knowledge. T.S. Eliot (1920, p. 44) states that "no poet or artist has his complete meaning alone"; instead, each piece of literature is influenced by past works, and thus, gains significance because of the connection to them. Julia Kristeva (1986) first introduced the term "intertextuality" within her paper titled "Word, Dialogue and Novel." Kristeva's position was that a message is never communicated directly from an author to an audience; instead, it is always transmitted through codes that carry the influence of accumulated meaning. She further states that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva, 1986, p. 37). Therefore, intertextuality is not simply an additional characteristic of textuality; it is one of the fundamental characteristics.

This theoretical complexity assumes a practical dimension for the subtitle translator. Media forms like film and television, typically use extensive webs of intertextuality. Subtitle translators face particular difficulties translating these complex artifacts due to the limitations imposed by the technical characteristics of the subtitling medium. Subtitles can last for only the time that a character speaks, usually between 1-5 seconds. Furthermore, most subtitles are restricted to 38 characters per line (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 84). These restrictions on space and time severely restrict the translator's options to explain the intended meanings of intertextual references contextually. Thus, when deciding whether to retain, if at all possible, to modify them so that they correspond to a target-culture equivalent, or simply to eliminate them altogether, translators face both practical and ideological consequences (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998; Gambier, 2008). The decision regarding intertextual references is also ideologically charged. Translation may either domesticate the ST, making it transparent and consistent with the norms of the target culture (TC), or foreignize it, retaining the cultural otherness of the source text (ST) and making the translator visible (cf. Venuti, 1995; Pedersen, 2011).

1.1. Mad Men and Postmodern Intertextuality

Since Mad Men (AMC, 2007–2015), created by Matthew Weiner and set in the New York advertising industry of the 1960s, relies heavily on intertextual references, it constitutes a particularly productive corpus for this study. The series exemplifies what Hutcheon (1988, p. 11) terms the postmodern paradox of simultaneously using and interrogating the cultural conventions of the past: its narrative is constructed not through direct historical representation but through a dense accumulation of intertextual references that collectively reconstruct the cultural world of the 1960s for a contemporary audience. Don Draper's appropriation of a real Lucky Strike slogan, the appearance of actual Frank O'Hara poetry in voice-over narration, and

the invocation of historically specific broadcast events all operate as what Kristeva (1986, p. 37) describes as intersections of textual surfaces whose full significance is only accessible to audiences who can activate the relevant cultural memory. In this sense, translation decisions do not merely affect the comprehensibility of individual lines. They also determine the extent to which the show's broader cultural argument remains legible to Turkish audiences, making Mad Men an unusually revealing object of study for subtitle translation research.

1.2. The Turkish Reception Context and Research Gap

The Turkish reception context adds a further layer to the study. Subscription-based streaming services such as Amazon Prime Video have made high-quality American prestige television widely accessible to Turkish audiences. At the same time, the cultural and historical distance between 1960s American advertising culture and contemporary Turkish audiences remains substantial. A pertinent question, therefore, is what challenges translators face when rendering prestige television characterized by dense postmodern intertextuality under the formal constraints of subtitling. Despite its scholarly relevance, there has been very limited research on the subtitling of English-language prestige television into Turkish.

This study addresses the above-mentioned gap by integrating Kristeva's (1986) theory of intertextuality and the subtitle-specific allusion translation frameworks of Leppihalme (1997) and Pedersen (2011). It seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What types of intertextual references appear in *Mad Men*?
- Which translation strategies are employed in the Turkish subtitles for these references?
- To what extent do the Turkish subtitles preserve or alter the intertextual functions of the source text?

The subsequent sections will address the theoretical and empirical literature most relevant to this research; they will also outline the methodology and analysis procedures used to conduct this study. Finally, the analysis from each of the four intertextual categories will be presented in a cross-category section, followed by the conclusion which will discuss the implications of these findings for both audiovisual translation (AVT) theory and practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Approaches to Intertextuality

Kristeva's concept of intertextuality, based upon the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (a dialogical view of language), views textual space as a confluence of writer, addressee, and other texts, where each word "moves" forward and backward through the literary universe (Kristeva, 1986). Accordingly, all texts can be viewed as dynamic dialogues in which meaning emerges from the relationships among elements within a given text or across several texts, rather than solely from an individual utterance. Moreover, Kristeva (1986) suggests that a reader's prior

knowledge of other texts plays an active role in determining meaning, rather than simply providing an option for additional interpretation. Extending Kristeva's ideas, Allen (2011) argues that because intertextuality presupposes the absence of a singular or originary text, each text participates in a broader network of cultural discourse and social memory.

Subsequent scholars have expanded these frameworks within translation studies and media studies. As such, Barthes' (1977) representation of a text as a "tissue of quotations" illustrates the way in which a reader is able to productively engage with the text in a manner that exceeds what the original author intended (p. 146). By doing so, Barthes opens up questions about how different readers, including those reading across languages and cultures, create distinct meanings from the same text. Similarly, Genette (1997) provides a systematic typology of relationships between texts through his description of transtextuality, which encompasses paratextuality, metatextuality, and hypertextuality. Genette demonstrates that texts are often linked together through multiple layers of reference and connection beyond mere quotation. Fiske (1987) develops a socio-historically oriented conceptualization of media as inherently intertextual, identifying television in particular as a medium that continuously references prior media texts, genres, and social discourses. Gray (2010) also demonstrates how audiences draw upon shared memories and prior competencies to shape meaning-making while watching television, with different audiences bringing distinct intertextual repertoires to bear on the same program.

Together, these perspectives demonstrate that intertextuality is equally applicable to the process of producing texts and to processes of audience reception. The receptive aspect of intertextuality is particularly significant in terms of audiovisual translation. If there exists insufficient overlap in the intertextual repertoires between the target audience and the presumed competence level of the ST, then members of the target audience may completely miss an allusion contained within the ST regardless of whether the surface-level content was translated into the target language (TL) appropriately (Hatim & Mason, 1990). Therefore, the issue of how subtitle translators can effectively manage the structural asymmetry between the competence levels of source and target audiences becomes a theoretical question about how cultural differences are mediated through translation.

2.2. Intertextuality and Allusions in Translation

Allusions represent another vehicle of intertextuality in audiovisual texts, and thus their translation can be challenging as they operate by evoking prior knowledge rather than providing the content itself. Intertextual signals have a pragmatic dimension that cannot be recovered solely from the surface structure of the utterance. Therefore, the loss of such signals in translation is not limited to reducing the stylistic variety, but may also alter the pragmatic force of the translated text.

Leppihalme (1997) identifies two major categories of allusion and outlines the principal translation strategies applicable to each (pp. 62–77). Proper-name allusions are defined as referring to persons, places, etc., while key-phrase allusions represent quotations, idioms or slogans. Three major strategies for proper-name allusions can be identified by Leppihalme (1997): retaining the name (possibly supplemented with additional explanations), replacing it with a source- or target-culture equivalent, or completely eliminating it (pp. 78–79). In addition to this, Leppihalme (1997) provides a broader range of options for key-phrase allusions: minimal literal translation, additional explanation of the original phrase, replacement by a target-culture term, reduction of a phrase to its sense, effect reproduction or complete elimination of the original phrase (pp. 84–85).

Pedersen (2011) develops and expands upon Leppihalme's framework with regard to subtitles and proposes seven strategies for extralinguistic references to cultures: official equivalents, retention, specification, direct translation, generalization, substitution and omission (pp. 74–100). Relevant for the purpose of the current study is Pedersen's differentiation between retention, the preservation of the source language (SL) version of a reference, and official equivalent, the use of a pre-existing, culturally accepted TL equivalent for the SL version. The latter is not made explicitly clear in Leppihalme's framework but proved to be a useful analytical tool in this study; retention was found to occur in relation to proper-name allusions.

2.3. Prior Studies on Intertextuality in Audiovisual Translation

Although empirical studies on intertextuality in the context of AVT, particularly AVT in TV series, have grown significantly over the last few decades, the distribution of such research remains uneven with regard to the SL(s) and/or the TL(s). According to Gambier (2008), the problem of translating culturally embedded references is among the most enduring in AVT. He explains that an additional challenge associated with intertextual references is the fact that their meaning is constructed collectively by competent culturally knowledgeable audiences. While translation may reproduce the form of a reference, it does not ensure that the target audience can activate or understand its meaning based on their pre-existing cultural knowledge.

Research related to specific AVT products has illustrated and expanded upon these findings. For example, Pedersen's (2011) study examined subtitling strategies used in Scandinavian television using a large-scale corpus. The results of his study indicated that translators' decisions relative to retaining references were significantly influenced by the extent to which they believed the reference was recognizable to their target audience. Specifically, Pedersen reported that when translators determined that a reference was likely to be recognizable to their target audience, they retained it. On the other hand, when translators did not believe that a reference would be recognized by their target audience, they often chose

alternative forms of expression. Similar to Pedersen's study, Pilyarchuk's (2023) study of *The Simpsons* also explored how translators determine what references to include in translations. However, unlike Pedersen's study, Pilyarchuk focused on allusions rather than humor. She explained that her results indicated that translators' ability to recognize familiarity with allusions among their target audience was much more important than the linguistic distance between their SL and TL. Chiaro (2008) provided similar evidence relative to culture-specific humor indicating that it generally cannot be directly translated. Additionally, Nedergaard-Larsen (1993) and Lievois (2017) studied historical and ironic allusions, respectively. Both researchers concluded that maintaining functionally equivalent intertextual relationships in SL and TL requires a high degree of overlap in source-culture contextual knowledge possessed by the target audience.

In sum, the existing literature highlights the central tension between preserving intertextual richness and ensuring accessibility for a target audience with diverse cultural repertoires. Yet no systematic investigation addresses the Turkish subtitling of English-language television characterized by dense postmodern intertextuality. The present study addresses this gap in three specific respects. First, it provides the first multi-category analysis of intertextual reference translation in Turkish subtitles of English-language prestige television, extending the empirical reach of AVT research into an understudied language pair and genre. Second, it suggests a refinement of Pedersen's (2011) strategy taxonomy by identifying a secondary variable, namely the depth of target-audience familiarity with available official equivalents. This variable influences whether the official-equivalent strategy is deployed even when an established equivalent exists, a finding with practical implications beyond the Turkish context. Third, it introduces the notion of graduated intertextual access. This concept accounts for cases in which a reference's evaluative language affords the target audience differential access to intertextual meaning depending on their prior cultural knowledge. Thus, it offers a more nuanced model of functional equivalence than the binary preserved/lost framework currently dominant in the field.

3. Methodology

This study employs qualitative analysis, as defined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), which prioritizes detailed textual analysis and interpretation over statistical inference. This study utilizes two complementary analytical frameworks: Leppihalme's (1997) classification system for identifying allusions in media products and her strategy taxonomy to describe how allusions are translated; and Pedersen's (2011) subtitle-specific strategy model, which identifies how translators strategically employ subtitling conventions to convey the intended message.

The data for this study were obtained through the official streaming service Amazon Prime Video, which contains both English and Turkish subtitles for the same official releases.

Six episodes were selected using purposeful sampling (Creswell and Creswell, 2018) for their density of intertextual material and collectively for their representation of all four intertextual categories: Season 1, Episode 1 (“Smoke Gets in Your Eyes”); Season 1, Episode 2 (“Ladies Room”); Season 1, Episode 8 (“The Hobo Code”); Season 1, Episode 12 (“Nixon vs Kennedy”); Season 2, Episode 1 (“For Those Who Think Young”); and Season 2, Episode 9 (“Six Month Leave”). These six episodes cover the first two seasons of Mad Men and all four intertextual categories, thereby providing a systematic opportunity for comparison across categories. Preliminary close viewing of all six episodes was used to assess the density of intertextual content.

Data collection was conducted in three phases. Phase one involved downloading and time-stamping both subtitle tracks. In phase two, each intertextual segment was identified in the ST through close viewing, utilizing the taxonomy of intertextual categories presented above. An intertextual reference was defined as a reference to a prior text, historical event, or cultural artifact outside the diegetic universe of Mad Men, the interpretation of which depends on the audience’s recognition of the external referent (Allen, 2011; Leppihalme, 1997). Once all intertextual segments were identified in the ST, those same segments were aligned with their Turkish versions at the sentence-level instead of by timestamp due to Turkish’s agglutinative morphology and verb-final word order, often resulting in different segmentation patterns for subtitles. This alignment strategy was adopted due to systematic mismatches in segmentation between the ST and TT arising from linguistic structure and subtitling conventions. In phase three, each aligned pair was analyzed through two perspectives. First, each Turkish subtitle was categorized using Leppihalme's (1997) and Pedersen's (2011) classifications. Second, each pair was evaluated for functional shifts occurring during translation relative to the extent to which the intertextual function of the ST, as related to irony, cultural relevance, characterization of characters and ideological framing, was maintained, diminished or altered in the TT. 35 intertextual references were identified across the corpus. Of these, nine were selected for detailed analysis on the basis of three criteria: representing all four intertextual categories collectively; illustrating the range of translation strategies observed in the corpus; and including cases of both functional preservation and functional attenuation, as well as the more complex case of simultaneous gain and loss. The remaining 26 references broadly corroborated the retention-based patterns observed in the selected examples and informed the cross-category discussion in Section 4.5, even where they are not individually analyzed.

4. Findings and Discussion

The following analysis provides a detailed examination of nine specific intertextual examples from the corpus, grouped into four categories based on their function. These categories are literary intertextuality, commercial intertextuality, historical–political intertextuality, and popular culture intertextuality. Drawing on Leppihalme (1997) and Pedersen (2011), each

example is examined with respect to both the translation strategy employed and the degree to which its intertextual function is retained or transformed.

4.1. Literary Intertextuality

Mad Men utilizes literary intertextuality to provide insight into characterization, to demonstrate its own self-reflexive postmodern style, and to add depth to the aesthetic identity. As Hatim and Mason (1990) point out, literary citations are especially susceptible to intentional strategic choices when they convey both denotative and connotative meanings and even slight modifications to the ST's wording can sever the relationship to the cited literary work. Two forms of literary intertextuality are examined: a key-phrase allusion in the form of direct poetic quotation, and a proper-name allusion functioning as ideological shorthand (Leppihalme, 1997).

The first example is a direct quote from Frank O'Hara's "Meditations in an Emergency." It occurs in Season 2, Episode 1, "For Those Who Think Young," and is delivered in a voiceover by Don Draper. Therefore, this reference to the poem is unusually salient, and structurally central to the scene. Functionally, the reference serves to project Don's image as an intellectual with connections to modernist literature, and through O'Hara's ideas on alienation and existential crises, creates a heightened sense of Don's inner turmoil and emotional disconnection. Intertextually, the quote provides a metatextual lens through which to view Don's psychological condition. Through O'Hara's use of language, the quote imports O'Hara's ideas into the narrative of Mad Men. The ST-TT pair for this example is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 *Literary intertext: Frank O'Hara, "Meditations in an Emergency" (S2E1)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
Now I am quietly waiting for	*Bekliyorum sessizce,*
the catastrophe of my personality	*kişiliğimin felaketinin*
to seem beautiful again,	*tekrar güzel görünmesini.*
and interesting, and modern.	*Ve ilginç. Ve modern.*
The country is grey and	*Kırlar boz ve kahverengi*
brown and white in trees,	*ve beyaz ve ağaçlar.*
snows and skies of laughter	*Karlar ve gülüşün göğü*
always diminishing,	*yavaşça yitip gidiyor hep.*
less funny, not just darker,	*Daha az şen, sadece daha kasvetli değil.*

not just grey.	*Sadece boz değil.*
It may be the coldest day of the year	*Bu, yılın en soğuk günü olabilir.*
what does he think of that? I mean, what do I?	*Bu konuda ne düşünüyor? Yani ben ne düşünüyorum?*
And if I do, perhaps I am myself again.	*Eğer düşünüyorsam, belki kendim olmuşumdur yine.*

The TT has adopted a primarily literal approach in order to preserve the semantic content of the original. In keeping with what Leppihalme (1997) refers to as a 'minimum change' translation for key-phrase allusions, the words were preserved along with most of their respective meanings (p. 85). However, the stylistic characteristics and rhythms inherent in the original quote have been severely diminished. Regardless of the intention of the translators, Díaz Cintas and Remael (2007) note that due to the structural limitations of subtitles, such as segmentation, line breaks, and reading time, it would be virtually impossible to reproduce the poetic rhythm of O'Hara's verse. Thus, despite preserving the overall thematic and emotional content of Don's reflection, his introspective melancholy remains discernible in the TT. However, the distinctly intertextual dimension of the passage has been significantly diminished. For viewers unfamiliar with O'Hara's poetry, the voice over may be interpreted as an expression of Don's interior state rather than as a direct quote from a specific literary work. This results in a partial functional displacement, where the narrative and character functions are retained in translation, but the metatextual function—the dialogue between the Mad Men episode and O'Hara's original poem—can only be fully understood by audiences familiar with the poem.

The second example of intertextuality appears in Season 1, Episode 8, "The Hobo Code." When Bert Cooper gives Don Draper a copy of Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged (1957), he positions himself as an ideologically informed mentor and frames Don's refusal to subordinate artistic judgment to client demands as consistent with Randian values. The intertextuality of the reference does not occur through the conversation surrounding the reference but through the knowledge of "Atlas Shrugged" as an indicator of American capitalism and self-sufficiency. Table 2 presents the ST-TT pair for this example.

Table 2 *Literary intertext: Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged (S1E8)*

Source Text (English)	**Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)**
Have you read it?	*Onu okudun mu?*
Rand.	*Rand.*

Atlas Shrugged.	*Atlas Shrugged.*
Very important.	*Çok önemli.*

This translation shows how clearly the retention strategy was applied. Although both the author and the book title were retained in their original English forms in the translation, no use was made of the standard Turkish equivalent for the title ("Atlas Silkindi"). Pedersen (2011) refers to this as a retention strategy, as opposed to an official equivalent strategy, which has significant analytical implications. The translators could have used the Turkish version of the book title, "Atlas Silkindi," which might have activated the intertextual link more immediately for audiences who recognize the title. The audiences who recognize the work as "Atlas Silkindi", would then need to bridge the gap between their own knowledge of the Turkish and English titles themselves, whereas those unfamiliar with the work in either language would experience no intertextual activation. Therefore, this example demonstrates how employing an official equivalent strategy could have facilitated the intertextual link more effectively than the retention strategy that was actually selected (Leppihalme, 1997; Pedersen, 2011).

4.2. Commercial Intertextuality

As a series based around a 1960s advertising agency, Mad Men uses commercial language as an intertextual resource of great pervasiveness. Unlike the aesthetic richness of literary intertexts, the effects of commercial references derive entirely from shared knowledge of specific advertising discourses, i.e., slogans, brand names and the ideological presumptions they carry. Chiaro (2008) suggests that culture-specific commercial references represent one of the most difficult forms of reference to be translated within screen texts due to their inherent intertextuality being inextricable from the advertising ecosystem(s) from which they originate (p. 580).

There are two commercial intertexts from the corpus to be considered here. The first example is the Lucky Strike slogan "It's toasted," used during the key pitch scene of Season 1, Episode 1. The slogan was not created by the writers; instead, "It's toasted" was a real advertising claim made by Lucky Strike. Therefore, the dramatic irony of the scene derives directly from audience recognition of the slogan as having been employed in a real-world context. Draper's appropriation of the slogan as a way to deflect attention away from the industry's growing concern about tobacco-related illness and death, as well as his presentation of this action as an exemplar of successful advertising logic over medical fact, can only be understood by those familiar with the real-world advertising context. Table 3 illustrates the original and subtitled versions.

Table 3 *Commercial intertext: Lucky Strike slogan (S1E1)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
It's toasted.	*Kavrulmuş.*

In comparison to the ST, the Turkish translation of the slogan contains only a single past participle adjective ("toasted"), which preserves the denotative content but eliminates the declarative construction that gives the slogan its rhetorical quality. The full sentence structure ("It's toasted"), which in English conveys a self-contained, authoritative compression typical of actual advertising copy, is reduced to a predicate in Turkish. A viewer unfamiliar with the original Lucky Strike slogan is highly likely to perceive "Kavrulmuş" simply as an ordinary descriptive adjective and might therefore receive a lessened critique of advertising ideology as presented throughout the entire scene.

A second commercially oriented intertext is found in Season 2, Episode 9, "Six Month Leave," (set on 5 August 1962), the morning following Marilyn Monroe's death. In response to her colleagues' mourning, Peggy Olson expresses herself through a pragmatic business perspective: "We are lucky Playtex did not go for that Jackie/Marilyn campaign". The reference here to this actual marketing approach depends on audiences simultaneously recognizing both cultural icons and the commodity logic at play in attempting to turn them into brand archetypes.

Table 4 *Commercial intertext: Playtex Jackie/Marilyn campaign reference (S2E9)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
We're lucky Playtex didn't go for that Jackie/Marilyn campaign.	*Playtex, Jackie-Marilyn kampanyasını istemediği için şanslıyız.*

By retaining all three proper nouns (Playtex, Jackie, and Marilyn), the Turkish subtitle remains consistent with the broader retention-based tendency observed across the corpus. For audiences familiar with the two figures, the primary commercial and popular cultural intertextual functions remain largely intact. However, two micro-level changes are significant enough to warrant additional attention. Although the original contains the colloquialism "go for", which can imply that a negotiated decision was made regarding the campaign, the translation uses the less idiomatic expression "istemediği" ("did not want"). It is important to note that while there is some loss of nuance in the commercial deliberation involved in creating the campaign, this reduction is unlikely to result in a substantial alteration of audience perception. In addition, the demonstrative "that" preceding "the campaign" has been omitted from the Turkish subtitle, further reducing a very small marker of informal conversation. While these changes do result in some shift away from aspects of the original's intertextuality, both the commercial and cultural popular references contained within them survive relatively intact

for audiences with sufficient cultural awareness to interpret these elements appropriately (Hatim & Mason, 1990).

4.3. Historical–political Intertextuality

Historical–political intertexts differ from literary and commercial references in that their force depends less on textual recognizability alone and more on shared historical memory. The first example comes from Season 1, Episode 12, "Nixon vs Kennedy," where a broadcast of Nixon's concession to Kennedy can be heard. Its intertextual force derives from the historical specificity of the 1960 U.S. presidential election discourse and from the broader symbolic weight that the Kennedy–Nixon election carries in American cultural memory.

Table 5 *Historical–political intertext: Kennedy reference (S1E12)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
And again, my congratulations to Senator Kennedy for his fine race in this campaign.	*[…] ve tekrar Senátör Kennedy'yi yürüttüğü güzel kampanya için tebrik ediyorum.*

The Turkish subtitle adopts a highly literal strategy and introduces little linguistic deviation from the ST. Beyond the limits of linguistic transfer, the intertextual force of the reference remains located at the level of historical context, which cannot be fully recreated through subtitle translation (Leppihalme, 1997). Thus, the reference may resonate with Turkish audiences who are familiar with the Kennedy political legacy. There are likely many people who do not have such knowledge. In their case, they are likely to perceive the line as simply being neutral, expository information. This constitutes a clear instance of Leppihalme's (1997) concept of a "culture-bump." Although the translation of the line was correct on linguistic grounds, it is a culturally based reference and is therefore likely to be "inert" for all Turkish audiences lacking the requisite cultural background (p. 4). No form of subtitling or captioning would be able to close this gap, due to the limitations of the media format used (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007).

The "structurally" most complex historical–political intertext is seen in Season 2, Episode 9, "Six Month Leave." In this episode, Joan Holloway mourns the death of Marilyn Monroe. In mourning Monroe's death, Holloway calls out Roger Sterling's indifference when she says: "This world destroyed her." The line exists at two separate levels. First, it can be viewed as an emotional reaction to Monroe's passing among audiences who are aware of it. Second, it can exist as a cultural/ideological reaction to the larger socio-cultural and political discourse surrounding Monroe's life and the systemic exploitation of women within mid-century American public life.

Table 6 *Historical–political intertext: Joan on Marilyn Monroe (S2E9)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
This is not a joke. This world destroyed her.	*Bu bir şaka değil. Dünya onu yok etti.*

The Turkish subtitle reproduces the broader utterance accurately, but two lexical decisions are particularly significant for the intertextual force of the line. One is the fact that "This world" was translated as Dünya ("world"), which loses the indexical deictic element "this." In the ST, "this world," along with its accusatory tone toward the celebrity, wealth, power and exploitation that Monroe experienced, is a very specific rhetorical gesture. Thus, losing "this" is an important diminution of the rhetorical specificity that the ST has, transforming the accusation against the world of celebrity, wealth, power and exploitation to simply an indictment of the world in general. Additionally, "destroyed" was translated as "yok etti" ("annihilated", "obliterated", literally made nonexistent), which is stronger than "destroyed". Therefore, the intensification of the evaluation of "yok etti" does not weaken, but instead increases the emotional weight of the evaluation contained in Joan's words. These two changes have opposing effects: one reduces the rhetorical specificity regarding the reference (loss of the demonstrative), whereas the other increases the evaluative force (lexical strengthening through use of yok etti). The operation of the concept of graduated intertextual access (elaborated in Section 4.5) is evident here: audiences who possess knowledge of the Monroe/Kennedy relationship and/or the larger social/political context around her death will be able to connect with the fuller historical allusions. Those who do not will still understand a powerful statement of how women are systemically destroyed by their engagement in public life. A reading that may be universally understood and transcends national/cultural boundaries, even though they might not understand the deeper historical references.

4.4. Popular Culture Intertextuality

Popular culture intertexts in Mad Men include a wide range of recognizable cultural icons whose names function as immediate triggers of intertextual meaning, alongside culturally specific allusions that require more specialized knowledge. Three examples across this spectrum are examined here.

The first example comes from Season 2, Episode 9, when Jimmy Barrett addresses Don Draper as "the man in the gray flannel suit," referencing the 1956 film "The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit." The film functions as a critique of postwar corporate conformity and the personal compromises associated with white-collar professional life, positioning Draper as an example of the corporate identity being criticized in the film.

Table 7 *Popular culture intertext: The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit (S2E9)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
If it isn't the man in the gray flannel suit.	*Gri takımlı adam değil mi?*

The Turkish subtitle adopts a literal rendering that preserves the surface-level meaning of the phrase but does not mark its allusive relation to the film. No reference is made to the film's already released Turkish title (Romadaki Sevgili), and there is also no signal given to show that the sentence is referencing another work. As such, it functions similarly to the Atlas Shrugged example, where an existing Turkish translation could have been used. In Pedersen's (2011) terms, it does not fully correspond to either retention or direct translation. Therefore, it is most likely to be interpreted by Turkish speakers as a simple descriptive phrase and not as a culturally encoded allusion (Leppihalme, 1997) which represents a substantial functional transformation in which the ideologically charged critique contained within the reference is diminished. A comparative analysis with the Atlas Shrugged example demonstrates a recurring pattern. In both examples, established Turkish equivalents for English language cultural texts were available but not used. This indicates that the translators tended to retain the ST rather than actively determining whether an official equivalent would better serve the intended intertextual function.

The way The Twilight Zone is treated in Season 1, Episode 2 represents a compelling example relative to the other two examples. A character asks: "Have you seen it? The Twilight Zone?" The Turkish subtitles employ Alacakaranlık Kuşağı, a commonly recognized Turkish title. Table 8 presents the ST and TT.

Table 8 *Popular culture intertext: The Twilight Zone (S1E2)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
Have you seen it? The Twilight Zone?	*Alacakaranlık Kuşağı'nı izlemedin mi hiç?*

The use of a culturally sanctioned TL title preserves both the reference and maximizes recognition which represents Pedersen's (2011) recommended translation strategy. It is one of the most practical strategies for translating proper-name references from popular culture because it allows for total intertextual preservation while minimizing space costs associated with explicitness (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007). As such, the three examples studied Atlas Shrugged, The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, and The Twilight Zone, constitute a tripartite pattern that has theoretical implications. Specifically, although established Turkish titles for both books (e.g., Atlas Silkindi and Romadaki Sevgili) existed, they were not adopted, and the retention strategy was used instead. In contrast, the pre-existing Turkish title (Alacakaranlık Kuşağı) was used for The Twilight Zone. The primary explanatory variable appears to be differential cultural familiarity. The Twilight Zone has long been a staple of television viewing

in Turkey and, therefore, its Turkish title is an established element of what the average Turkish audience knows about the show. Conversely, neither Atlas Shrugged nor The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit have similar levels of exposure for Turkish audiences. While this finding supports Pedersen's (2011) recommendation that official equivalents should be used when the equivalent can be reasonably expected to be recognized by the intended audience, it also highlights the limitations of using retention as a default strategy. Where an officially approved equivalent exists but is not well known across different sections of the population, retention may be the safest pragmatic option, despite potential loss of intertextual activation.

The third type of popular culture intertext is culturally known symbols that have the same significance worldwide with no need for additional information to understand the intertextual reference. In Season 2, Episode 1, the creative staff at Sterling Cooper discusses an idea by Playtex to advertise their products using a description of women as either "a 'Jackie' or a 'Marilyn.'" Table 9 shows one of the characters' response, along with its subtitle translation.

Table 9 *Popular culture intertext: Jackie/Marilyn (S2E1)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Turkish Subtitle)
I don't know if all women are a Jackie or a Marilyn.	*Bütün kadınların ya bir Jackie ya da bir Marilyn olduğundan emin değilim.*

The Turkish subtitles preserve both names but provide no explanation or clarification, assuming that the audience is already familiar with the intended cultural references. This corresponds to Leppihalme's (1997) notion of "retention", which is the least formal version of retaining reference, and as such is suitable due to their international celebrity status. Comparable research by Pilyarchuk (2023), conducted on a similar corpus, demonstrates that audiences are generally able to recognize icons such as Monroe's and Kennedy. Target audiences unfamiliar with these figures will interpret the line as a more generic statement about different types of women. In addition to preserving the coherence of the overall narrative, this involves an acceptable loss of the intertextual layer, which aligns with Pedersen's (2011) argument that such loss may be justified when audience recognition is sufficiently high.

4.5. Cross-Category Discussion

In the context of the nine examined examples, and in the broader sense of the four categories, the findings show a coherent, yet complex pattern of behavior related to translation in the Turkish subtitles of Mad Men. Three cross-cutting patterns emerge from the data:

First, the most common behavior across all categories was retention. This tendency aligns with Pedersen's (2011) observations on the preference for retention in TV subtitling, particularly when it is assumed that the target audience possesses sufficient cultural knowledge to interpret the reference. A general assumption regarding audience familiarity with culturally

specific material exists among translators. At times, this assumption is reasonably grounded as globally recognizable figures such as Monroe and Kennedy can reasonably be expected to be widely known. At other times, however, this assumption is less reliable. Culturally specific American advertising references may be retained in their original form to preserve the advertisement's surface text, but this does not necessarily activate the extradiegetic intertextual layer for Turkish audiences. Therefore, the findings reflect a relatively undifferentiated foreignizing tendency, rather than a consistent and systematic approach grounded in the recognizability of individual references. This results in similar outcomes at the strategic level, but inconsistent outcomes at the functional preservation level (Leppihalme, 1997; Pedersen, 2011).

Second, beyond the general preference for retention, the analysis reveals an important internal distinction within retention strategies themselves. In three cases—Atlas Shrugged, The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, and The Twilight Zone—translators had to choose between retaining the SL title and replacing it with a widely recognized Turkish title. In two of the cases (Romadaki Sevgili/The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, and Atlas Silkindi/Atlas Shrugged), an official Turkish title was available, but was not used. In the third instance (Alacakaranlık Kuşağı/The Twilight Zone), the pre-existing official Turkish title was adopted. The decisive factor appears to be the degree to which the officially recognized title is embedded in the cultural knowledge of the Turkish audiences. This finding suggests a refinement of Pedersen's (2011) framework by showing that the availability of a pre-existing official translation is not sufficient on its own. Rather, the degree of its cultural embeddedness also plays a decisive role in determining whether it is selected (cf. Leppihalme, 1997).

Third, the Joan/Monroe example presents a finding that complicates the otherwise uniform tendency toward intertextual attenuation under subtitle constraints. The translations of "This world destroyed her" produced two counterbalancing effects. On the one hand, "Dünya" loses the demonstrative "this", reducing Joan's accusation to less rhetorically specific terms. On the other hand, "yok etti" increases the value judgment involved for "destroyed". The overall effect cannot be understood as a simple gain or loss, but rather as a redistribution of meaning across different functional dimensions, where evaluative intensity becomes more prominent while referential precision is reduced. This case challenges the binary adequate/inadequate evaluation framework. It indicates the need for a more refined model of functional equivalence in intertextual translation, capable of accounting for cases in which losses occur alongside gains with respect to different aspects of a reference's meaning (Hatim & Mason, 1990).

5. Conclusion

The present study investigated how the dense intertextuality of Mad Men was treated in Turkish subtitle translation across a six-episode corpus. The analysis focused specifically on the retention, transformation, and loss of the intertextual reference function. Synthesizing the nine examples across four intertextual categories, the study yields three principal findings that contribute to AVT research at both empirical and theoretical levels.

At the empirical level, the analysis demonstrates that the dominant tendency observed in the corpus is a retention-based, foreignizing strategy across all four intertextual categories. This finding is consistent with the professional norms of AVT subtitling documented by Pedersen (2011). The study shows that there are no overt omissions of intertextual materials from the corpus. Although some references may be culturally obscure, the translator consistently retains the textual element most directly associated with the reference. This approach enables culturally competent audiences to recognize the reference if they choose to do so. This is a coherent and rational way to deal with the problem of representing intertextual meaning in subtitling (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007; Gambier, 2008). However, it also suggests that a rigid retention policy has limitations. In cases where a well-established Turkish equivalent exists but is not utilized, retaining the SL form is less likely to elicit intertextual awareness among Turkish-speaking audiences than using the available official equivalent (Pedersen, 2011).

At the theoretical level, the study yields two analytical refinements. First, it identifies a potential secondary factor within the official equivalent strategy: not only whether an established equivalent exists in the TC, but also the extent to which that equivalent is embedded in potential audiences' cultural knowledge. This distinction highlights a continuum of equivalent familiarity that current frameworks (e.g. Leppihalme, 1997; Pedersen, 2011) do not adequately represent. Secondly, the study presents the idea of graduated intertextual access. It suggests that references whose evaluative language can function independently allow the target audience differential access to intertextual meaning rather than purely dichotomous access. Finally, the study builds on this idea by analyzing a representative example. It demonstrates how subtitling can lead to functional transformations, involving not only a reduction in meaning but also an expansion of meaning, with a simultaneous loss at one level of meaning and a gain at another.

Taken together, the study offers practical implications for subtitling practice. Specifically, the fact that official equivalents were not used in cases where they could have been highlights the need for subtitle translators dealing with TV in culturally dense settings to develop more differentiated strategies. These should distinguish between instances where mere retention of an original reference is sufficient and those where a familiar TC equivalent

is available, allowing for a more effective use of the official-equivalent strategy (Pedersen, 2011; Leppihalme, 1997).

However, several limitations restrict the applicability of these conclusions. The study is confined to six episodes and nine examples, resulting in an analytically rich but necessarily partial picture of Mad Men's intertextual universe. Moreover, as the analysis focuses on the translated product rather than the translation process, no systematic investigation of translator decision-making was conducted. As a result, it is not possible to determine whether the observed strategies reflect deliberate translational choices, institutional norms, time constraints, or platform-related constraints. Additionally, no empirical data were collected on audience reception. Accordingly, claims regarding the Turkish-speaking audience's recognition of the references remain speculative. Finally, the findings are specific to one language pair (English to Turkish) and genre (American prestige drama), and they cannot be generalized across other language pairs or genres. Future research would benefit from employing audience-centered methods to directly investigate how audiences perceive, interpret, and process intertextual references.

Disclosures

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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