Between Britishness and Japanese: Examination of Translation Techniques in Bridget Jones's Diary

英国性と日本性のはざまで―「ブリジット・ジョーンズの日記」翻訳技法の分解

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Abstract

This paper examines the translation strategies of foreignization and domestication in the Japanese versions of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, focusing on how culturally and linguistically specific elements of the British original are adapted for a Japanese audience. The analysis draws on both the Japanese translation of the novel and the subtitles of the film adaptation, highlighting the different strategies employed across different media. It identifies foreignization techniques such as gikun, katakana-English, and the retention of British cultural references, which help preserve the tone, setting, and humor of the original. At the same time, the study explores domestication strategies, including euphemization, and cultural rewriting. As well as the use of Japanese women's language (*joseigo*), with particular attention to Bridget's mother. Her voice is overly feminized and mother-like. Particular attention is paid here to how gendered speech patterns, such as sentence-final particles, affective interjections, and pronoun choices, transform the character. The analysis reveals that translation functions not only as a form of cultural transfer but also as a powerful mechanism for reinforcing domestic gender norms. The Japanese version of *Bridget Jones's Diary* emerges as a hybridized text that selectively preserves foreignness while aligning characters with localized expectations of femininity, social behavior, and humor.

Key words: translation, humor, foreignization, domestication, women's language,

1. Introduction of the paper

Translating *Bridget Jones's Diary* into Japanese requires more than simple word-for-word substitution; it demands a careful negotiation of cultural, social, and ideological meaning. As a novel deeply rooted in British urban femininity, wit, and intertextual play, Helen Fielding's (b. 1958) work presents unique challenges for translators who must preserve its distinct voice while also making it intelligible and relatable for Japanese readers. These challenges are amplified when the story is transferred into different media formats, such as the widely popular film adaptations, where visual and auditory cues combine with subtitles to shape interpretation in ways that differ from the novel.

This paper investigates how these translational tensions are managed in both the Japanese translation of the novel and the Japanese subtitles of the film adaptation. The analysis employs the influential frameworks of foreignization and domestication, as theorized by Lawrence Venuti, to examine how linguistic and cultural meaning is either preserved in its foreign form or adapted to meet target-language expectations. While earlier scholarship often focused on the retention or substitution of lexical items, this study expands the scope to include stylistic, ideological, and even paratextual dimensions of translation.

In particular, attention is given to foreignization techniques such as the use of *gikun* (kanji-katakana mismatch), katakana-English, and the deliberate retention of British cultural references. These strategies serve to preserve the original text's humor, setting, and "Britishness," thereby resisting complete assimilation into the Japanese cultural sphere. At the same time, the paper explores domestication techniques, which include euphemization, cultural rewriting, and the strategic use of Japanese women's language (*joseigo*). The latter is especially significant in the case of Bridget's mother, whose voice is reshaped through exaggerated feminine speech

markers, highlighting how translation actively constructs gender identity within the target culture.

Beyond these linguistic strategies, the paper also considers the broader cultural and historical context in which Bridget Jones emerged. The late 1990s and early 2000s were marked by shifting ideals of body image, lifestyle habits such as smoking, and new portrayals of flawed female protagonists. Such cultural references pose difficulties for translators, as they may resonate differently, or even clash, with Japanese social norms and expectations. Likewise, the intertextual homage to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* complicates the process of translation, since the degree of audience familiarity with Austen's works varies significantly between British and Japanese readerships.

By drawing on insights from translation theory, sociolinguistics, and intertextual studies, this paper argues that *Bridget Jones's Diary* in Japanese is more than a simple transfer of meaning. It is a hybridized text that selectively preserves foreignness while aligning characters with localized expectations of femininity, humor, and social behavior. Ultimately, the analysis demonstrates that translation functions not only as a mechanism of cultural transfer but also as a powerful site where identities, ideologies, and cultural memories are renegotiated and reproduced.

Introduction of Author

Helen Fielding, the British novelist and journalist behind *Bridget Jones's Diary*, first introduced the character of Bridget Jones in a newspaper column in *The Independent* in 1995. Drawing inspiration from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Fielding crafted Bridget as a modern, self-deprecating, single woman navigating the complexities of love, career, and self-image in late-20th-century London. The diary format lent the narrative an intimate, confessional tone, resonating particularly with female readers and marking a shift in popular fiction toward the genre now widely known as "chick lit." Fielding has acknowledged Austen's influence explicitly, positioning *Bridget Jones's Diary* as both homage and parody. The novel, published in

1996, achieved critical and commercial success, leading to sequels and a successful film franchise. Fielding's reworking of Austen's themes through the lens of contemporary urban womanhood allows *Bridget Jones* to function as both a romantic narrative and a satirical commentary on gender norms and societal expectations. Her work exemplifies the postmodern adaptation of canonical texts into popular culture, raising important questions for translators tasked with conveying not only plot but also literary intertextuality and cultural critique across languages.

Introduction of Translator

Yoshiko Kamei（亀井よし子 , b. 1941）is one of Japan's most accomplished and respected literary translators, widely recognized for her ability to render contemporary English-language fiction into elegant and culturally resonant Japanese. Born in Tokyo and a graduate of Toyama University's English Department, Kamei began her professional career in corporate and technical translation before establishing herself in the literary field. She rose to prominence through her acclaimed translation of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, a best-selling novel that blends humor, introspection, and cultural critique. Kamei's translation captured the protagonist's self-deprecating wit and nuanced emotional journey, making the work accessible and relatable to Japanese readers while preserving its British sensibility.

Importantly, Kamei was chosen to translate J.K. Rowling's first adult novel, *The Casual Vacancy* (2012), marking a significant post-*Harry Potter* literary development in Japan. She also translated *Lipstick Jungle* by Candace Bushnell, widely known as the author of *Sex and the City*, offering Japanese readers another insight into the lives, ambitions, and emotional complexities of powerful women in New York City. While *Sex and the City* itself was translated by a different translator, Kamei's engagement with Bushnell's later work further reflects her specialization in fiction that explores gender, career, and identity in contemporary settings. Through her meticulous attention to voice, tone, and cultural nuance, Kamei has played a vital role in transmitting Anglo-American women's literature to Japanese readers,

shaping cross-cultural understandings of modern femininity and literary voice.

Over her prolific career, Kamei has translated more than 100 works by internationally renowned authors, introducing Japanese audiences to a broad range of contemporary voices. Among these is Bobbie Ann Mason, a Pulitzer Prize finalist whose novel *In Country* and short stories exploring post-Vietnam American life were brought into Japanese literary consciousness through Kamei's sensitive renderings. She also translated major works by Ann Beattie, a central figure in American literary minimalism, and Erica Jong, whose feminist landmark *Fear of Flying* was followed by *Fear of Fifty*, translated by Kamei as 五十が怖い. In British fiction, she introduced the works of Nick Hornby, known for his ironic portraits of modern masculinity, and Rachel Joyce, whose debut novel *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

Introduction of Story

Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) is a contemporary British novel that reimagines Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* through the lens of late-20th-century urban womanhood. Presented in the form of a personal diary, the story follows Bridget Jones, a single woman in her thirties living in London, as she navigates the trials of work, romance, self-improvement, and social pressure. With a humorous and self-deprecating voice, Bridget documents her fluctuating weight, alcohol consumption, romantic misadventures, and personal goals, often with ironic detachment and raw honesty. Her romantic entanglements, particularly the contrast between the charming but unreliable Daniel Cleaver and the reserved, morally upright Mark Darcy, mirror the classic tensions found in Austen's novel, while reflecting the dilemmas of modern femininity. The novel's candid tone, witty social commentary, and sharp reflections on gender expectations struck a chord with readers worldwide, establishing Bridget as a cultural icon and inspiring a major film adaptation in 2001. Through its playful yet pointed narrative, *Bridget Jones's Diary* became both a celebration and critique of contemporary womanhood, and its popularity continues to

shape discussions around gender, genre, and adaptation.

Introduction of the Era

Cultural Context of the Late 1990s and Early 2000s

Understanding the translation of *Bridget Jones's Diary* requires a careful reconstruction of the cultural and historical atmosphere in which the novel (1996) and the film adaptation (2001) emerged. The late 1990s and early 2000s were a period marked by shifting ideals of femininity, rapid globalization of popular culture, and evolving attitudes toward lifestyle choices such as body image, dieting, and smoking. These contextual factors not only shaped how Helen Fielding created Bridget Jones but also strongly influenced how international audiences, including Japanese readers and viewers, interpreted her struggles. The "era" is thus not a neutral backdrop but an active force that frames the reception of Bridget's character and informs the translational challenges discussed in this study.

Western Beauty Ideals and "Heroin Chic"

One of the most striking cultural features of the time was the dominance of what came to be known as the "heroin chic" aesthetic in Western fashion. Supermodels such as Kate Moss epitomized this look, characterized by extreme thinness, pale skin, and an almost fragile appearance. Within this media landscape, a woman like Bridget, whose diary obsessively records her weight at around 136 pounds (approximately 62 kilograms), was portrayed as slightly overweight or at least failing to embody the glamorized standard of her time. Importantly, medical science would regard this as a healthy weight, yet within 1990s British urban culture it became a marker of deficiency and self-discipline gone awry. Bridget's constant monitoring of calories, alcohol units, and pounds gained or lost reflects not just her personal neuroses but a broader societal fixation on women's bodies as sites of scrutiny and judgment.

Japanese Perspectives on Body Image

In Japan, the average female body size is smaller compared to Britain, and thinness has long been associated with beauty, delicacy, and self-control. This means that Japanese readers may not have perceived Bridget's weight anxieties as exaggerated satire but rather as realistic or even relatable. What Western readers criticized as unhealthy obsession could, in the Japanese context, be interpreted as natural self-discipline. The translator therefore faced the challenge of conveying Bridget's self-deprecating humor without erasing the cultural dissonance: should Bridget's complaints be softened, treated as comedic exaggeration, or left intact, even if Japanese readers might agree with her self-criticism? This tension illustrates how the cultural climate of the era complicated the transfer of humor and irony across languages.

Smoking as a Cultural Marker of Empowerment

Another defining element of the late-1990s lifestyle was the normalization of smoking, especially among young professionals and media personalities. At the time, smoking had not yet acquired the overwhelmingly negative public health associations it carries today. Celebrities such as Angelina Jolie, Kate Moss, or fictional figures like Carrie Bradshaw in *Sex and the City* (1998) embodied cigarettes as emblems of urban independence, rebellion, and even sex appeal. For many women, smoking was intertwined with a sense of edgy feminism, a performance of refusing traditional respectability and embracing modern urban sophistication. Bridget's habitual smoking, listed alongside her units of alcohol and calories, therefore functioned as more than a personal flaw; it was a marker of her generational identity and a signal of her place within 1990s urban single culture.

Smoking and Gender Expectations in Japan

Yet this cultural coding did not translate seamlessly into Japan. By the early 2000s, smoking rates among Japanese women were comparatively low, and smoking was increasingly stigmatized as unfeminine or even socially inappropriate.

While Japanese men continued to smoke in high numbers, women smokers were often judged harshly, especially in younger cohorts. As a result, Bridget's smoking habit may have seemed less glamorous and more troubling in Japanese reception. A gesture that British readers could recognize as rebellious charm risked being understood as unfeminine or careless. The translator and subtitler thus had to navigate a delicate line: how to preserve the historical authenticity of Bridget's character while adapting her portrayal to an audience whose cultural lens would filter smoking very differently.

Concluding Reflections on the Era

Taken together, these examples of body image and smoking reveal the importance of situating *Bridget Jones's Diary* within its cultural moment. The novel and film were products of a transitional era: Western societies were renegotiating beauty norms, experimenting with postfeminist portrayals of flawed heroines, and still permitting lifestyle habits that would later become heavily stigmatized. For Japanese audiences, however, these same elements could appear either exaggerated or misaligned with domestic norms. The act of translation therefore became a form of cultural mediation, balancing fidelity to the British context with sensitivity to Japanese reception. Recognizing this cultural backdrop not only deepens our understanding of Bridget as a character but also underscores why translation is never a purely linguistic act, it is always entangled with the era, the ideologies, and the social practices in which texts circulate.

2. Literature Review

Foreignization and Domestication in Translation

The concepts of foreignization and domestication in translation studies trace back to Friedrich Schleiermacher's seminal 1813 lecture, where he proposed two essential translation methods: moving the reader toward the author (foreignization)

or moving the author toward the reader (domestication). Schleiermacher's dichotomy has been discussed for over two centuries because it highlights the translator's central choice: whether to preserve the foreign spirit of the text or adapt it for ease of understanding in the target culture. These ideas were later developed extensively by Venuti in The *Translator's Invisibility*, which became foundational in modern translation theory (Venuti, 1995). Venuti's work not only revived Schleiermacher's distinction but also emphasized its ethical and political implications, pointing out that translation choices inevitably shape how cultures encounter and understand one another.

Definitions and Theoretical Foundations

Venuti (1995) defines domestication as an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, aiming for a transparent and fluent translation that minimizes the text's foreignness. In contrast, foreignization is an ethnodeviant pressure that disrupts target-language norms to emphasize the linguistic and cultural differences of the source text, thereby "sending the reader abroad." While domestication enhances readability and acceptability, foreignization foregrounds the foreignness of the text and the translator's agency, thereby resisting cultural dominance and the homogenizing tendencies of dominant cultures, particularly in Anglophone contexts. These two strategies thus represent more than stylistic preferences; they embody opposing philosophies of how translation should function in a globalized world. In practical terms, they determine whether readers experience a work as comfortably familiar or as deliberately foreign, a distinction that becomes particularly significant when analyzing the Japanese versions of *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

Foreignization as Resistance

Venuti's (1995) foreignization is not merely a stylistic choice but a political and ethical stance. He argues that domestication often masks the translator's presence and perpetuates cultural hegemony. Conversely, foreignization functions as a

form of *resistant translation*, a deliberate intervention to challenge the invisibility of translation and expose cultural differences. This aligns with what Myskja (2013) calls Venuti's aim to resist "*ethnocentrism, racism, cultural narcissism, and imperialism*". Critics of Venuti, such as Tymoczko (2000) and Baker (2010), question the feasibility and effectiveness of foreignization. Tymoczko argues that the binary opposition between foreignization and domestication is overly simplistic and culturally relativistic. What counts as "foreign" or "domestic" varies by context and cannot be universally defined. Furthermore, any translation strategy, including foreignization, can potentially serve hegemonic or colonial purposes depending on how it is framed and received.

Cultural Turn and the Translator's Role

The Cultural Turn in translation studies reframed translation not merely as a linguistic act but as a negotiation of power, ideology, and cultural identity. This perspective shifted the focus away from questions of linguistic equivalence alone and toward the broader social and political functions of translation. Venuti's position aligns closely with this shift, as he emphasizes translation as a site of ideological contestation rather than a transparent medium of communication. He advocates for the translator's visibility and ethical responsibility in shaping cultural exchange, encouraging strategies that disturb fluency and challenge dominant norms. In this way, translation becomes a cultural practice that reveals and resists hierarchies of power, positioning translators as active participants in constructing how texts, and the identities within them, circulate across cultures.

Practical Applications and Critiques

Yang (2010) emphasizes that foreignization deliberately breaks conventions to preserve the source culture's distinctiveness, often through retention of original terms, culturally marked expressions, or non-standard syntax. However, she also notes that both strategies have limitations: domestication can erase cultural

specificity, while foreignization may alienate or confuse readers unfamiliar with the source culture. Other scholars stress the need for a context-sensitive approach. For instance, Zhu (2002) and Xu (2002) argue that both strategies can complement each other in practice. A flexible, mixed approach, using foreignization to preserve cultural uniqueness and domestication to enhance accessibility, may serve literary translation best in an era of globalized readerships.

Non-Homophonous Furigana and Its Role in Translation

In recent years, the use of non-homophonous furigana; where the kana reading assigned to kanji differs from its standard pronunciation; has become a powerful literary and semiotic tool in Japanese media, especially manga and light novels. Traditionally, furigana simply clarify difficult kanji, but non-standard usage deliberately disrupts this convention to create layered meanings, evoke a sense of foreignness, or construct unique character identities. In these cases, the kanji conveys one meaning while the furigana suggest another, producing a double reading that adds depth and nuance. This practice has important implications for translation studies. It allows writers and translators to encode irony, hybridity, or cultural playfulness into the text, making it both accessible and foreign at the same time. When applied to translated works, non-homophonous furigana can act as a foreignizing strategy, preserving the cultural strangeness of the original while still guiding Japanese readers through its meaning. In this sense, furigana function not only as a phonetic aid but also as a creative device that bridges linguistic systems and expands interpretive possibilities.

Definition and Typology

Redmond (2019) describes non-homophonous furigana as a form of "ateji" where the semantic content of the kanji is preserved, but the pronunciation is substituted, often with a loanword or a culturally charged foreign term. This divergence allows for dual-channel communication: kanji offer conceptual meaning, while the

furigana encode additional phonetic or cultural signals. Redmond classifies these into translative, denotive, contrastive, and translative/contrastive categories (Lewis, 2010, as cited in Redmond, 2019), emphasizing how such combinations can create hybrid expressions that simultaneously convey local and global meanings. For example, in the manga *Bleach* (Kubo, 2001), the kanji 聖噬 (holy bite) is assigned the German furigana ハイゼン (Heizen, "heating"), creating a dissonance that evokes foreignness and aligns the character with European symbolism. These choices are deliberate, allowing the author to stereotype characters as "non-Japanese" and communicate personality traits or group affiliations without explicit exposition.

Furigana as a Tool for Foreignization in Translation

The use of foreign-language furigana in literature can be seen as a form of foreignization, a concept central to Venuti's (1995) translation theory. Rather than localizing a foreign term into culturally familiar Japanese, non-homophonous furigana retain or simulate the foreign origin, making the text feel explicitly non-domestic. This is particularly useful in translated foreign texts, where preserving the foreign touch is a key translational goal. By adding additional furigana, the translator uses furigana as a foreignizing strategy, visually encoding English phonetics alongside Japanese semantics. This dual coding allows for translanguaging within the Japanese script system, facilitating cross-cultural expression without sacrificing accessibility. Sato (2018) emphasizes that this strategy "allows for translanguaging through furigana within translation without risking intelligibility," especially when readers lack knowledge of the foreign language being simulated.

Social and Ideological Functions

Beyond linguistics, non-homophonous furigana carry ideological weight. As Redmond argues, the use of foreign furigana can "inject stereotypes" into the text, such as framing Spanish as passionate or German as rigid and cold. These language ideologies affect how readers perceive characters and plotlines. In a translation

context, similar techniques could be used to retain source-text flavor, encode satire or irony, or mark characters as 'foreign' in the translated environment. This intersects with Haarmann's (1989) idea of "stereotype injection," where the mere presence of foreign words, even misunderstood ones, conveys social and emotional connotations. Thus, using English-style furigana in Japanese translations of Western literature becomes not just a linguistic choice but a cultural and ideological signal. In this way, furigana become tools for shaping readers' cultural imagination, guiding not only how characters are understood but also how entire cultures are positioned in relation to one another.

Implications for Translated Literature

In the context of literary translation, non-homophonous furigana offer a rare opportunity to preserve foreignness while guiding the reader. For instance, in the Japanese translation of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, names like "Guru" or "Stocking filler" are rendered using katakana or furigana, avoiding domestication and highlighting the British social context. This technique could be especially powerful in translated manga or novels where character voice, humor, or class distinctions rely heavily on sociolect or regional language. By combining ideographs (kanji) with foreign phonetics (furigana), translators can enact Venuti's foreignization not only at the lexical level but also visually and phonetically. This strategy disrupts the seamless reading experience expected in domesticated translations and instead invites the reader to engage with the cultural strangeness of the original.

Japanese Women's Language

The concept of "Japanese women's language", joseigo or onna kotoba, refers not merely to empirically observed speech patterns among women but to a cultural and ideological construct embedded in Japanese society. It encompasses features such as polite expressions, high pitch, specific sentence-final particles like wa or kashira, and a gentle, deferential tone (Inoue, 2006; Okamoto, 2004). According to

Miyako Inoue (2006), Japanese women's language is not a timeless tradition but a modern invention developed during Japan's late 19th-century modernization. It emerged through state-building, standard language policies, school education, and the rise of print capitalism, serving to project an image of ideal womanhood aligned with national identity and capitalist modernity. Inoue (2008) further emphasizes that women's language functions as a reflexive symbol of tradition, shaping and reinforcing discourses about gender roles, modernity, and Japaneseness. Despite claims of ancient roots, it is a product of ideological narration rather than historical continuity, obscuring actual diversity in women's speech

Women's language in Japanese is strongly associated with specific sentence-final particles (wa, no, yo, ze) and pronouns, which index femininity or masculinity. Ochs (1992) argues that these forms index affective stances (e.g., softness, hesitancy) which in turn indirectly index gender, illustrating how social identities are constructed through semiotic layering rather than direct expression. Shigeko Okamoto (1995) and Okamoto & Sato (1992) provide empirical evidence that contemporary Japanese women, especially younger generations, do not use traditional women's language as frequently as stereotyped. Their research found extensive variation in women's speech styles, suggesting that the idealized model of joseigo is more prescriptive than descriptive. Recent research urges a move beyond the rigid binary of men's and women's language. Scholars like Okamoto (2004) and Inoue (2006) advocate for a framework that emphasizes diversity, agency, and historical contingency in language use. This includes attending to class, region, age, and media influence, rather than assuming a universal female speech style.

Japanese women's language is best understood not as a neutral linguistic phenomenon, but as a sociohistorical construct that serves ideological and political functions. It was born from modern nation-building, sustained through institutions like media and education, and continues to be reshaped through translation. Furukawa's case study of Bridget Jones's Diary exemplifies how translation can actively participate in reproducing idealized femininity, revealing the broader

cultural mechanisms that shape perceptions of gender and language.

Intertextual Homage to *Pride and Prejudice* in the *Bridget Jones* Films

The *Bridget Jones's Diary* film series makes deliberate and multilayered intertextual references to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (Pride and Prejudice, 2003). These homages appear in the narrative structure, character development, casting choices, and intertextual scenes, and they significantly shape the viewer's interpretation. Such references also present unique challenges in translation, especially when cultural familiarity with the source text differs across audiences, as is the case with English- and Japanese-speaking viewers.

Naming and Casting as Direct Homage

The most overt tribute to Austen lies in the naming of the male lead, Mark Darcy, an unmistakable reference to Fitzwilliam Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice*. This homage is deepened through the casting of Colin Firth, who famously portrayed Mr. Darcy in the highly acclaimed 1995 BBC adaptation of Austen's novel. His presence functions as an intertextual callback, triggering recognition among viewers familiar with Austen adaptations and reinforcing the romantic ideal he embodies. This meta-layer is particularly effective in English-speaking contexts, where the 1995 adaptation holds cultural significance. However, in Japanese translations and viewings, this layered meaning may be reduced if viewers lack familiarity with the BBC version or with Colin Firth's earlier role.

Supporting Cast and Intertextual Continuity

In addition to Firth, the casting of other actors who appeared in the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation creates a network of associations. For instance, Lucy Robinson (Mrs. Hurst in the Austen adaptation) appears in *Bridget Jones's Diary* as the wife of Bridget's boss, and Crispin Bonham-Carter (Mr. Bingley) makes a brief appearance. These casting decisions reinforce the sense that the film is not

only inspired by Austen's novel but exists in conversation with its prior adaptations. Such subtleties may go unnoticed in international versions unless accompanied by translator notes or external commentary, as intertextual recognition often depends on paratextual awareness.

Narrative Parallels and Structural Adaptation

The overarching structure of *Bridget Jones's Diary* mimics *Pride and Prejudice* in many ways. Bridget's initial misjudgment of Mark Darcy mirrors Elizabeth Bennet's early perceptions of Mr. Darcy. Meanwhile, Daniel Cleaver, portrayed by Hugh Grant, occupies the role of the charming but morally dubious Wickham. The narrative arc is thus an updated retelling of Austen's central moral journey: from prejudice to understanding, and from superficial attraction to deeper compatibility. This structural homage is accessible in any language, but the degree to which audiences can appreciate it depends on their knowledge of the original novel or its adaptations. Japanese translations may need to subtly guide viewers to grasp these parallels through paratextual cues or culturally adapted dialogue.

Intertextual Scenes and Iconic References

One of the most explicit intertextual moments occurs when Bridget watches the 1995 BBC *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation on VHS, particularly the scene where Firth's Darcy walks out of a lake in a wet shirt, an image that has become emblematic of romantic longing in British pop culture. This moment functions both as a character detail and a self-referential joke, deepening the audience's connection with Bridget while acknowledging the intertextual web in which the film is situated. In Japanese translations, such iconic scenes pose challenges. If the viewer is unfamiliar with the referenced material, the humor and intertextuality are likely to be diminished. Translators may choose to either localize the moment or leave it *as is, depending on the expected audience*.

Postmodern Playfulness and Self-Awareness

Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason continues this intertextual layering, most notably in a DVD extra in which Bridget interviews Colin Firth, blurring the line between character and actor. This scene playfully collapses distinctions between fiction and reality, inviting viewers to recognize the ongoing dialogic relationship between Austen's text, the BBC adaptation, and the Bridget Jones universe. Such postmodern techniques rely heavily on cultural literacy. In Japanese translations, this level of meta-commentary may be preserved through subtitles, but much of its resonance depends on the audience's background knowledge.

Screenwriting Connections and Thematic Fidelity

Andrew Davies, who adapted the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice*, also co-wrote the screenplays for the first two *Bridget Jones* films. His involvement ensures tonal consistency and preserves Austenian themes such as miscommunication, class tension, and emotional growth. The moral arc of Bridget, gaining confidence, learning to judge character more wisely, and valuing sincerity over charm, resonates strongly with Elizabeth Bennet's journey. From a translation perspective, Davies' influence helps bridge the 19th-century literary tone and 21st-century romantic comedy. However, this tonal layering may be difficult to replicate in Japanese versions, especially given differences in genre conventions and humor reception.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative textual analysis to examine how foreignization and domestication strategies are used in the Japanese translation of *Bridget Jones's Diary*. The analysis draws on both the translated novel and the Japanese subtitles of the film adaptation. Passages were selected based on their prominence in expressing cultural identity, emotional tone, humor, or linguistic specificity. These included instances of gikun, katakana usage, culturally marked idioms, as well as areas where

profanity or slang was modified or omitted. Each passage was assessed and categorized according to whether it reflected a foreignizing or domesticating strategy, and then interpreted using theoretical frameworks from translation studies, with a particular focus on Venuti's model and Japanese sociolinguistic norms.

4. Results

Introduction to Chapter

This chapter presents the findings of the analysis, focusing on how the Japanese translation of Bridget Jones's Diary navigates the tension between preserving the British cultural identity of the source text and adapting it for a Japanese audience. The results are organized into two overarching translation strategies, foreignization and domestication, which reflect the translator's efforts to balance cultural specificity with local accessibility.

Foreignization is evident in the use of gikun (kanji-katakana mismatch), katakana-English expressions, and the retention of British cultural references, including systems of measurement, food terminology, and stylistic voice. These strategies aim to preserve the source text's tone, humor, and cultural grounding, encouraging Japanese readers to engage with the foreignness of the original rather than smoothing it over. Such choices align with Venuti's (1995) concept of foreignization as a means of resisting ethnocentric translation norms.

In contrast, domestication becomes apparent in techniques such as the softening of profanity and vulgarity, the neutralization of British slang, cultural rewriting, and particularly the feminization of character speech, most notably that of Bridget's mother. Her dialogue is rendered in highly stylized Japanese women's language（女性語 / joseigo）, characterized by sentence-final particles, melodramatic interjections, and the use of the pronoun atashi, all of which signal performative femininity. Drawing on the frameworks of Furukawa (2009, 2010, 2016), Okamoto (1995), and Inoue (2006), this section argues that such gendered translation choices are not

merely linguistic adaptations but reflections of domestic ideologies around gender and speech norms in Japanese media. According to Furukawa, Japanese women's language is not a feature of female speech, but a historically constructed and ideologically loaded set of norms designed to maintain social control over women. Furukawa critiques the essentialist view of language and gender and advocates for more nuanced, diverse understandings of how women actually speak.

Finally, the chapter discusses instances of mistranslation and over-clarification, which highlight the challenges of cross-cultural transfer. These moments, though seemingly minor, reveal the translator's interpretive role and the ideological implications of linguistic choices. Collectively, the findings underscore that translation is not a neutral or transparent act; it is a complex process of negotiation shaped by power, cultural expectation, and sociolinguistic positioning.

Foreignization: Preserving Britishness and Cultural Specificity

Gikun（義訓）: Kanji-Katakana Mismatch as Cultural Tool

These gikun examples reflect a sophisticated foreignization strategy that preserves both the cultural and linguistic character of the source. They visually and semantically reinforce Bridget's Britishness, providing a layered reading experience that respects the original voice while making it intelligible to a Japanese audience. Gikun enables dual encoding, readers encounter the foreignness phonetically (katakana) while also grasping its contextual meaning (kanji). This strategy functions not only as a translation aid but as a creative bridge between cultural systems. It preserves character tone, enhances stylistic fidelity, and signals to the reader that what they are engaging with is intentionally foreign. This is especially effective in humorous or culturally specific texts like *Bridget Jones*, where much of the effect depends on the reader sensing both what is said and how it is said. In some cases, it makes it tremendously more clear, however, in some cases it gives the impression that it would not have been necessary, just one version would have been enough.

Table 1

Gikun (book)	Kanji	English (original)
ヴァイル	悪党	Vile
ミセス・アイアン・ニッカーズ	男日照りの超堅物おばさん	Mrs. Iron Knickers
スローニー・ウーニー	上流階級気取り	Sloaney Woney
ストッキングフィラー	靴下に入れる小さなクリスマスプレゼント	Stocking Filler
グル	導師	Guru
クイックフィット	簡単装着	Kwik-fit
シングルトン	独りで立派に生きていけるからよ	Singleton
アンティセリュライトダイエット	抗脂肪沈着食餌療法	Anticellute diet
メン・アー・フロム・マーズ、ウィメン・アー・フロム・ヴィーナス	男は火星、女は金星人	Men are from mars, women are from venus
オルタネイティブ	もう一つの	alternative
ドッグカラー	犬の首輪	Dog collar
ルビーウェディング	結婚 40 周年パーティー	Ruby wedding
ザ・レクターズ・ワイフ	教区長の妻	The Rector’s wife
バイブ	波動	vibes
バブルバス	入浴剤	Bubble bath
スワスティカ	鉤十字	swastika

Retention of British Systems and Lexicon

This strategy reflects an intentional resistance to domestication. Rather than replacing culturally specific references with Japanese equivalents, the translator retains British metrics and typical food terms (Aixela, 1996; Davies, 2003; Pedersen, 2011). These references act as cultural marks, reinforcing the British setting and inviting readers to accept these foreign details as part of the fictional world. This also aligns with a pedagogical role of literature in translation, exposing readers to different worldviews. Instead of simplifying or smoothing over foreign elements,

the translator trusts that this deepens the quality of the translation and further, that Japanese readers can either infer meaning or look it up, thereby maintaining narrative integrity and cultural specificity.

Table 2

Japanese translation (book)	English (original)	More natural Japanese
アルコール摂取量を 14 単位以内に抑える	Only 14 units of alcohol	週一だけにする、休肝日入れる
マーマレード	marmalade	ジャム

Katakana-English for Cultural Flavor

Here, the translator preserves the stylistic identity of the source by using katakana renderings of English expressions even when natural Japanese alternatives exist. It resembles Gottlieb (1994)'s imitation or transcription. In a way, the translator imitated the original by conveying Britishness via phonetics. This stylistic foreignness is not just lexical but affective, it signals class, fashionability, or humor. For example, " ダーリン " conveys a culturally British tone. The result is a translation that feels foreign-influenced in a way that resonates with modern, globalized Japanese readers. It adds texture and tone that a more neutral rendering would flatten. This strategy also reflects an evolving Japanese linguistic landscape in recent Japanese, where katakana English increasingly represents trendiness.

Table 3

Japanese Translation (book)	English (original)	More natural translation
ファッショナブルなタッチを添えるために	Fashionable touch	オシャレなアクセントを
ダーリン	Darling	ブリジットちゃん
トラベラーズチェック	Travellers check	旅行小切手

Domestication: Softening, Clarification, and Cultural Rewriting

Softening of Profanity and Vulgarity

Profanity in English, especially from female characters, signals defiance, frustration, and personality. In the Japanese translation, these expressions are consistently softened, sometimes to the point of losing their confrontational edge. A harsh "Well, fuck me" turned into a soft and elegant " すごい、驚きね ". This reflects broader norms in Japanese media where female characters are rarely allowed to be overtly vulgar, especially in mainstream or romantic genres. While these shifts ensure appropriateness for local readers, they dilute Bridget's and her friend 's emotional expressiveness and undercut her bold, comedic honesty. The risk here is that the character becomes less distinctive, less real, and ultimately less compelling to Japanese readers unfamiliar with her original edge. This technique may fall under the category of Gottlieb (1994)'s paraphrasing, Dias-Cintas & Remael's reduction, or Lomheim's (1999) omission.

Table 4

Japanese Translation	English (original)
情緒的うすらばか	Emotional fuckwittage
すごい、驚きね	Well, fuck me
知るか！	I could give a fuck

Loss of British Slang and Humor

British slang is rich in irony, social commentary, and rhythm. In translation, many of these expressions are rendered into standard Japanese without stylistic equivalence. For instance, "Lurrrrve" is not just love, it's self-aware, performative exaggeration. Rendering it as 愛してる eliminates that layer. Similarly, "shagged" has a tone of cheeky vulgarity that is missing from the plainer ボスと寝て. These losses are not just lexical; they strip Bridget of her distinct narrative voice. What remains is a more subdued character, and the tone of the story shifts from witty

social critique to something more restrained. While the translator put emphasis on retaining the foreign touch, it was not possible for her at all times. This aligns with Generalization or Substitution (Lomheim, 1999; Pedersen, 2011), replacing culturally specific or humorous expressions with broader or plainer equivalents.

Table 5

Japanese Translation	English (original)	Meaning
売れ残り (movie spoken) 独身女 (movie subtitles)	Spinster (movie)	An unmarried woman who is older than what is perceived as the prime age range during which women usually marry (negative connotation)
愛してるんだもん (book)	Lurrrrve	Love
みすぼらしい (book)	Tatty	Of poor quality
素晴らしい仕事 (book)	Superdooper	Extremely good
ボスと寝て (book, movie subtitles) 上司と寝ちゃったんで (movie spoken)	Shagged my boss (book, movie)	Slept with my boss
そのクリーヴァーって今もイケてるわけ？ (movie spoken) あの色男のクリーヴァー (movie subtitles)	Cleaver chap	intelligent man
もちろんゲイ (movie spoken language) ホモセクシャル (movie subtitles)	a total poof	Gay man (informal, offensive)

Cultural Rewriting and Clarification

These adaptations aim to protect the viewer from culture shock or offense, but they also blunt the original's satirical bite. In the movie, the phrase "dressing as prostitutes and priests" is provocative in English, laden with humor and critique. Rewriting it as simply 仮装パーティー removes the shock and much of the humor. These choices reflect the translator's role not just as a linguistic intermediary, but

as a cultural gatekeeper, balancing source-text fidelity with audience expectations. While understandable, this practice can flatten the social commentary and challenge posed by the original narrative. This technique of omission, substitution or generalization in translation leads to a loss of important nuances and humour (Pedersen, 2011). And it also may lead to misunderstandings, as a Japanese speaker would imagine 仮装パーティー as something rather a costume party for children.

Table 6

Japanese translation	**English (original)**
仮装パーティー (movie subtitles) 娼婦と司祭のパーティー (movie spoken)	Dressing up as prostitutes and priests
た だ の 浮 気 (movie subtitle, omitted in movie spoken)	Only a temporary glitch

Women's language

Joseigo, or Japanese women's language, refers to a set of linguistic features traditionally associated with how women are expected to speak in Japanese society. However, as sociolinguists like Inoue (2006) and Okamoto (1995) argue, joseigo is not necessarily how real women speak, it is an ideological construct reinforced through media, textbooks, and fiction to represent an "idealized feminine image.".

Hiroko Furukawa (2009) offers a compelling application of these theories by analyzing the Japanese translation and subtitling of Bridget Jones's Diary. Bridget, originally a modern, outspoken British woman, is linguistically transformed in the Japanese versions to sound significantly more feminine, soft-spoken, and refined than her English counterpart.

Furukawa applies Okamoto & Sato's (1992) framework of sentence-final particle analysis to demonstrate that the Japanese translation (BJD1) overuses strongly feminine forms that are rarely used by real Japanese women, particularly in informal conversation. Even the film's subtitled version, though slightly more moderate,

still feminizes the mother in particular far beyond what is natural in contemporary speech.

This over-feminization is not a neutral act of translation, it is a domestication strategy that aligns the character with traditional Japanese gender expectations, reinforcing normative ideas of how women "should" speak. Furukawa argues that such translations not only alter the character's perceived personality but also serve to reproduce gender ideology within the target culture.

Constructing the Mother through Japanese Women's Language

In the Japanese translation of *Bridget Jones's* Diary, the mother's speech is rendered in a markedly stylized form of Japanese women's language (*joseigo*), which serves to construct her character as a socially dominant, image-conscious, and performatively feminine figure. This linguistic representation draws on long-established indexical associations between certain sentence-final particles, pronoun choices, and interpersonal positioning, which in Japanese discourse have been culturally coded as "feminine" (Okamoto, 1995; Ide, 1992).

Across the translated dialogue, the mother repeatedly uses sentence-final particles such as「〜わ」,「〜のよ」, and「〜かしら」, forms that are stereotypically linked with polished, upper-class feminine speech. For instance, in emotionally charged moments, she exclaims lines such as「すてきなのよ」and「マークを紹介するわ」, expressing both personal affect and social sophistication. Her use of「〜のよ」in utterances like「ちゃんと作ってるのよ」and「金持ちなのよ」frames her position as justified and emotionally grounded, while simultaneously softening imposition.

These feminine markers are often added in the Japanese where the English version is more neutral or plain. For example, the English line "You and Mark played in the paddling pool." becomes「一緒に水遊びしたじゃないの」, with「〜じゃないの」adding a maternal, gently chiding tone. The single word "Japanese." is rendered as「日本人なのよ」, imbuing the statement with emotion and subtle

self-justification. “You know, like air hostesses have.”

The question particle「〜かしら」appears in remarks such as「プレゼントするというのはどうかしら」and「赤地にネイビーブルーのがいいかしら、それともネイビーブルーの地に赤がいい？」, conveying tentative suggestion and feminine decorum while maintaining her socially superior role as a guiding mother figure (Okamoto, 1995; Ide, 1992). The original is a simple question, “Do you want it in navy on red or red on navy?”

In addition to grammatical markers, the mother’s speech incorporates affective lexical features such as katakana renderings of English loanwords, for example,「ダーリン」and names like「ブリジット」, which stylize her as flamboyant, socially performative, and culturally cosmopolitan. Emotional interjections such as「いやあねえ」and lamentations like「かわいそう」reflect the melodramatic, humorous tone commonly associated with middle-aged female characters in Japanese fiction, especially those cast in maternal roles.

Her directives include softened imperatives and emotionally persuasive commands such as「聞きなさいよ」,「考えてくれたらいいのに」,「ほんとにお願いよ」, and「買ってくれない？」. These requests index politeness and vulnerability on the surface but carry an underlying assertiveness, in line with older women’s directive speech in Japanese domestic fiction (Ide & McGloin, 1991).

Further maternal features appear in discourse markers such as「ほら」and moral-emotional adverbs like「ちゃんと」. For example, “You know, like air hostesses have.” becomes「ほら、ゼンアテンダントが持ってるの」, with the interjection「ほら」used to guide attention in a nurturing or persuasive tone. The mother uses「ほら」repeatedly, for example,「ほら、ゼンアテンダントが持ってるの」,「ほら、今だけよ」, and「ほら、考えてくれたらいいのに」—to direct attention, prompt action, or nudge agreement in a way that is nurturing yet persuasive. These uses index the maternal authority typical of Japanese mothers in media: guiding but not overtly commanding. Linguists such as Okamoto (1995) and Ide (1992) note that interjections like「ほら」often function as discourse markers for attention control,

especially in caretaker speech by women in domestic contexts.

Likewise, the repeated use of「ちゃんと」, as in「ちゃんとお金出し合って」,「ちゃんと考えてくれたらいいのに」,「ちゃんと自分で稼いでるんだから」, and「ちゃんと作ってるのよ」—carries a strong moral undertone. It conveys how the mother fulfills her responsibilities and implies others (often the husband) should do the same. As Ide & McGloin (1991) and Inoue (2006) observe,「ちゃんと」is a key marker of polite discipline and domestic authority, often used in mother-child or wife-husband interactions to justify one's behavior or gently scold.

The cumulative effect of these linguistic choices is the construction of a caricatured maternal femininity: intrusive yet affectionate, commanding yet emotionally expressive. This reflects what Inoue (2006) describes as "indexical inversion", a phenomenon in which women's language in media does not reflect real-life usage but instead performs an imagined femininity to signal specific character types. In this case, the mother's speech evokes the culturally recognizable figure of the "nagging, elegant mother," often found in television dramas and comedic fiction.

By adopting this register, the Japanese translation amplifies the comedic contrast between Bridget and her mother. While Bridget's language is marked by casual vulnerability and internal hesitancy, her mother's is assertive, externally directed, and unmistakably theatrical. This translation strategy ensures that the mother's social dominance and performative gender role are not only preserved but exaggerated for cultural legibility within the Japanese linguistic landscape.

Her stylized utterances also include lines such as「言うこと聞いてちょうだい」, a command masked as a polite request, typical of older female authority figures in Japanese fiction; and the repeated use of the first-person pronoun「あたし」, a softer, more performatively feminine alternative to「わたし」. Unlike the more neutral or formal forms,「あたし」is commonly associated with casual intimacy and gendered self-presentation. Its repeated use further positions the mother as a theatrically feminine figure, one who blends maternal authority with flamboyant self-display.

This technique may align with Lomheim's (1999) categories of addition and substitution, as the Japanese translation adds sociolinguistic markers (gender, class, emotion) that are implied or absent in the original English. In doing so, the tone, humor, and character identity shift, emphasizing a more explicitly gendered and performative persona. The bold, posh British mother who is openly cheating on her husband, is transformed into a hyperfeminized, image-conscious maternal figure familiar to Japanese audiences.

One possible reason for the highly feminized translation style lies in the historical and generational context of the translator herself. Kamei Yoshiko, born in 1941 and having come of age during and after World War II, was shaped by markedly different norms regarding gendered behavior. These generational influences may have unconsciously shaped her translational choices, particularly regarding how women are expected to speak and behave in Japanese society. Consequently, the mother's exaggerated *joseigo* may appear outdated or even parodic to modern readers, but it remains a vivid tool for mapping gendered character roles in translation.

Table 7

Type	**Examples**
Sentence endings （の , のよ , わ , かしら）	一緒に水遊びしたじゃないの 日本人なのよ 金持ちなのよ すてきなのよ 言ってたわ マークを紹介するわ プレゼントするというのはどうかしら 赤地にネイビーブルーのがいいかしら、それとも ネイビーブルーの地に赤がいい？ ああ、言ったかしら
Emotional adjectives	すてき　かわいそう　いやあねえ
Requests (soft & indirect, and more direct ones)	買ってくれない？ 考えてくれたらいいのに 聞きなさいよ 言うことを聞いてちょうだい ほんとにお願いよ いらっしゃいよ

Addressing daughter	ダーリン
Maternal & nurturing expressions（ほら , ちゃんと）	ほら、ゼンアテンダントが持ってるの (p.10) ほら、今だけよ (p.15) ほら、考えてくれたらいいのに (p.19) ちゃんとお金出し合って (p.11) ちゃんと考えてくれたらいいのに (p.11) ちゃんと自分で稼いでるんだから (p.12) ちゃんと作ってるのよ (p.17)
Self-reference	あたし

Mistranslation

"Fiber" is translated as 豆類 . This error, translating "fiber" as "beans", reveals the challenge of domain-specific translation. It may seem minor, but within Bridget's context of dieting and calorie counting, it matters. Such errors can make the narrative feel inconsistent. They also subtly undermine the reader's trust in the text. This example reminds us that translation requires not just language skills but topic knowledge. Inaccuracies like this can unravel the careful work of preserving character integrity elsewhere in the translation. Furthermore, this mistranslation appears on the very first page.

Keeping and erasing sensitive texts

The book translator decided to keep the translation correct of potentially culturally sensitive phrases. For example, she could have changed the ethnicity of the ex-wide into something else in consideration of the Japanese readers of the book. According to some readers, they have questioned this act of the translator. However, it is evident that the translator wanted to keep the authenticity and original message of the original author.

Translation strategy here is direct translation (Pedersen, 2011; Vinay& Darbelnet, 1958). In contrast, in the movie subtitles, the end of the sentence has been completely erased and replaced with "…", which is omission (Pedersen, 2011)

Table 8

Japanese(book)	Original(book)	Japanese (movie, spoken)	Japanese (movie, subtitles)
元の奥さんとの生活はさんざんだったらしいわ。日本人なのよ、元の奥さんって。すごく残酷な民族だから	His wife was Japanese. Very cruel race.	奥さんは日本人だったの。残酷な民族。	奥さんは日本人。。。

6. Conclusion

The Japanese translation of Bridget Jones's Diary exemplifies a hybrid approach to translation, one that both preserves and reshapes. Through techniques such as gikun, katakana-English, and the retention of British cultural references, the translation maintains a distinct sense of foreignness and source-text identity. These strategies align with Venuti's model of foreignization, offering Japanese readers access to the novel's cultural specificity and stylistic uniqueness.

However, this foreignness is selectively applied. Elements such as profanity, slang, and satirical language are systematically domesticated, softened or omitted to conform to local norms. Most notably, the translation employs highly stylized forms of joseigo to feminize Bridget's mother, altering her personality and reinforcing traditional Japanese gender expectations. As Furukawa (2009) and Inoue (2006) argue, these adaptations are not simply about readability or audience comfort; they actively reproduce ideological assumptions about how women should speak and behave.

This study affirms that translation is never a neutral act. It is a cultural and ideological negotiation that shapes not only how stories are told, but how identities are constructed. In the case of Bridget Jones, translation becomes a lens through which we can observe the intersection of gender, language, and power.

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