



UDC 766.05:[655.26:003.349](477)"20":159.922.4(=161.2)

DOI: 10.63009/cac/2.2025.06

**Dmytro Zelenov\***

Master, Self-employed Screenwriter

State University of Information and Communication Technologies

03110, 7 Solomianska Str., Kyiv, Ukraine

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9584-7069>

## Cultural context in screenwriters' adaptation of plots: Localisation, cultural code and international collaborations

**Abstract.** The aim of the study was to identify the mechanisms of intercultural adaptation of screenplay texts and analyse the transformations of dramaturgical elements, when transferring the narrative between cultural contexts. The methods used by authors to work with cultural "rupture" were examined, in particular, the Korean adaptation of the American series "The Good Wife" was analysed, which demonstrated a radical change in the motivation of the main character: her return to profession was not driven by self-fulfilment, but by the restoration of family honour, which led to a rethinking of the entire dramaturgical structure. The Japanese film "Departures", dedicated to the work of preparing bodies for burial, lost its effectiveness in the Western context due to a change in the cultural assessment of the profession: the relevant code could not be translated. An analysis of adaptations of the Scandinavian detective series "Forbrydelsen" for a British audience (the series "The Killing") showed that "acceleration" was achieved not through editing techniques, but by modifying the mechanisms of tension: long pauses were replaced by shorter ones, compensated for by intonation, glances and musical accompaniment. The Pakistani-Indian series "Zindagi Gulzar Hai" revealed different perceptions of conflict even in neighbouring cultures: behaviour that was acceptable in the culture of one country will seem unnatural in another. The semantics of colours also became culturally conditioned: the colour red in the Chinese film "Raise the Red Lantern" was associated with celebration, while Western viewers interpreted it as a signal of alarm. The adaptation of the Colombian telenovela "Yo soy Betty, la Fea" for the American market as the series "Ugly Betty" demonstrated the need to reduce the emotional intensity of the narrative to ensure cultural acceptability in an English-speaking environment. The symbols had no universal equivalents and required a search for adequate analogues or preservation at the risk of misunderstanding. A change in the motivation of one character necessitated a review of the entire structural organisation of the text, as the cultural code functioned as an integrated system. The author's practice did not allow for the mechanical removal of "incomprehensible" elements and the insertion of "comprehensible" ones without a chain of consequences. The practical significance of the study lies in identifying the components of the narrative that are related to culture and are subject to transformation, as opposed to those that remain unchanged, since the result of this is a mechanistic copy without emotional impact

**Keywords:** dramaturgical structure; narrative tempo-rhythm; intercultural translation; emotional equivalence; character motivation; visual semantics; transnational cinema

### INTRODUCTION

Contemporary screenwriter operated in a globalised media space, where narratives created within a single national culture can quickly be presented to an international

audience. This situation, despite expanding opportunities for the reception of authors' texts, raised the issue of intercultural interpretation. Elements that were organic and

### Suggested Citation:

Zelenov, D. (2025). Cultural context in screenwriters' adaptation of plots: Localisation, cultural code and international collaborations. *Culture and Contemporaneity*, 27(2), 6-15. doi: 10.63009/cac/2.2025.06.

\*Corresponding author



Copyright © The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

semantically transparent in one cultural environment may be unreadable or misinterpreted in another. In particular, a long pause, which in Asian cinematic traditions marked an intense emotional state, was often perceived in the Western, particularly American, context as a disruption of rhythm or dramatic dynamics. Conversely, scenes of open and emotionally charged conflict, which were familiar to Western audiences, may be interpreted in Eastern cultures as overly straightforward or aesthetically unacceptable. Thus, in the context of the global circulation of audiovisual texts, the technical possibility of addressing a global audience precedes the formation of effective strategies for communicating with it, which necessitated a conscious search for adequate forms of narrative adaptation.

Between 2020 and 2025, a number of studies, appeared in which the authors attempted to understand this problem. A. Chen & H. Gu (2025) worked on the issue of intellectual property adaptation in films and showed that technology can recognise patterns but cannot sense context. Artificial intelligence sees words, but does not grasp what lies between the lines – the rhythm of speech, the atmosphere of the city, the weight of silence – which was often, what determined whether a story works. Adaptation was still a human endeavour, where not only technique was important, but also sensitivity to other cultures. M.S.S. Al-Maliki (2025) suggested looking at adaptation as a dialogue between the values of different cultures. The author noted that, when a screenwriter works with a foreign cultural context, not only does the text change, but the author himself changes, as does his understanding of what makes a story understandable. Adaptation was no longer a technical operation, but a true intercultural translation: it was necessary to understand how another culture “reads” the situation, and not just pick similar words. A. Mukherjee & S. Ghosh (2025) drew attention to digital platforms that changed the logic of storytelling. The researchers noted that Netflix, Amazon and similar services created hybrid forms that attempted to combine elements of different cultures. The authors also pointed out that algorithms can perform many different actions, but they cannot replace live contact with culture. Accordingly, without this contact, adaptation has turned into a mechanical substitution of elements. W. Tang & Y. Wang (2025), in their study of ReelShort, a new short series format, pointed out that the success of adaptation does not depend on how many “local” details were inserted into the text, but on whether common emotional points were found. A story may be culturally specific, but if it conveys something universally human, it works. The paradox was that the most “culturally specific” phenomenon may turn out to be the most understandable if it is backed by genuine experience.

Author T. Sokolova (2021) studied cultural codes in media texts and noted that a code was not a set of symbols that can simply be replaced, but rather a way of thinking that manifested itself in the composition of a frame, in a character’s motivation, and in how a hero made decisions. The researcher showed that adaptation required the

screenwriter to become a true explorer of a foreign culture, rather than simply performing a technical task. D. Demianchuk (2023), in a study on the translation of English-language films into Ukrainian, emphasised that even within the European space, where cultures seem close, difficulties arise in adaptation – what was obvious to the translator may be completely foreign to the viewer. Moreover, this applied not only to words – visual language, tempo, and conflict structure also need to be adapted. R. Lutsenko (2023) proposed a theory of multimodal clusters – a way to understand how different expressive systems (words, images, sound, editing) work together. This information was important for screenwriters because it showed that it was not just the dialogue that needed to be adapted, but the whole complex of means that shape the viewer’s cultural experience. J. Yuan *et al.* (2024) introduced the concept of a “cultural palette” – the idea that cultural differences cannot be reduced to a simple “East-West” opposition. The authors noted that there were many nuances of cultural interpretation, so when a screenwriter understands this, they can create multi-layered stories: different viewers will find their own levels of meaning in them without feeling that something was “excluding” them. C. Böhm (2025) analysed screenwriting and pointed to it as a process that goes beyond individual authorship. The scholar noted that, when working with intercultural adaptation, one encounters the fact that a story ceases to be “one’s own” – it became the result of a collision of different ways of thinking and different storytelling traditions. It was not just an author’s text, but a dialogue between cultures, where each contributed its own understanding of how the story should sound. The aim of the article was to show how a screenwriter can adapt a plot to a different cultural context so that the story does not lose its meaning. The objectives of the study were: 1) to analyse the term “cultural code” in dramaturgy and how it manifested itself in details – in rhythm, motivation, pauses; 2) to determine how the author’s identity can be preserved in a multilingual environment, which encouraged simplification and unification of the text for “ease” of perception, but at the same time led to a loss of its semantic and emotional richness.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research material consisted of examples of films, where adaptation involved not only the translation of dialogue, but also the logic of the story. Projects were analysed, in which cultural differences influenced the dramaturgy – how characters made decisions, how conflict developed, and what exactly became the climax. The first case study covered the Korean adaptation of the American series “The Good Wife” (2009), in which the transformation was limited not to a change in spatial and temporal localisation, but to a reinterpretation of conflicts in accordance with the Korean value system. Such sociocultural categories as family honour and public reputation functioned differently in the Korean context than in the American original, which led to a modification of the

characters' motivations and the logic of their actions (Kim & Jin, 2016). The second case focused on the analysis of the reception and attempts to localise the Japanese film "Departures" (2008), dedicated to the professional activity of preparing the bodies of the deceased for burial. In this case, significant differences in cultural perceptions of death and farewell rituals between Japanese and Western traditions complicated the adaptation process, as the emotional and semantic basis of the narrative changed, when it was transferred (Napier, 2007).

Scandinavian detective stories and their British versions were also considered. The series "Forbrydelsen" (2007) and its British adaptation "The Killing" (2011) revealed that adaptation changes were not limited to linguistic or spatial parameters. The key objects of analysis were transformations in narrative tempo, the functioning of pauses, and mechanisms for building tension. The observations made revealed differences between the Scandinavian dramaturgical tradition, in which prolonged silence performed a meaning-creating function, and the British model, which was oriented towards a more intense dynamic of action development (Waade, 2017). The Pakistani-Indian television series co-production "Zindagi Gulzar Hai" (2012) was also studied, which represented the specifics of intercultural interaction within geographically adjacent but value-heterogeneous cultures. The analysis focused on script strategies for balancing the preservation of dramatic conflict with the need to avoid cultural sensitivity and potential symbolic offence to different audiences (Kraidy, 2012). Analysis of the adaptation of the Latin American telenovela "Yo soy Betty, la Fea" (1999) for American television as the series "Ugly Betty" (2006) allowed to explore the transformation of the emotional structure of the narrative, when moving between Latin American and North American cultural contexts. In addition, the features of the cultural adaptation of films such as "The Hunt for Red October" (1990, dir. John McTiernan), "Raise the Red Lantern" (1991, dir. Zhang Yimou), "Boys Over Flowers" (1995, dir. Yasuyuki Kusuda) (Japan), "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham" (2001, dir. Karan Johar), "The Office" (2001, dir. Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant) (UK), "The Last Samurai" (2003, dir. Edward Zwick), "Lost in Translation" (2003, dir. Sofia Coppola), "The Office" (2005, dir. Greg Daniels) (USA), "Boys Over Flowers" (2009, dir. Jeon Ji-sung) (South Korea), "Goblin" (2016, dir. Lee Eun-bok), "La Casa de las Flores" (2018, dir. Manolo Caro), "Meteor Garden" (2018, dir. Lin He-long), "Crash Landing on You" (2019, dir. Lee Jung-hyo).

Thus, the methodology was based on comparative analysis: the original versions were compared with the adapted ones to trace, what had been changed, and what had been left unchanged, and to determine the reasons for these actions. This made it possible to understand, which elements of the story were culturally specific. Content analysis was used to examine dialogues, mise-en-scène, and frame compositions to track, where and how cultural codes manifested themselves. The audience's reaction

was also analysed – what resonated with different viewers, what evoked an emotional response, and what remained incomprehensible or indifferent. The research materials were examined through three approaches: cultural (how cultural codes influence dramaturgy), psychological (why a character's decision, logical in one culture, seems illogical in another), and communicative (how a story becomes a bridge between cultures rather than simply a product for consumption). It was important to take into account the experience of digital discourse, which, as noted by A. Prykhodko & N. Lazebna (2022), created new forms of communication between cultures, where traditional boundaries became more permeable, but at the same time new challenges arose for preserving cultural specificity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of intercultural adaptations has shown that the first thing a screenwriter faces was the need to rethink the very logic of the conflict. What was perceived as a natural motivation for a character in one culture may seem illogical or even absurd in another. The cultural code works as an invisible coordinate system that determined what was considered right, what was shameful, what was heroic, and what was weakness. The Korean adaptation of the series "The Good Wife" (2016) demonstrated this particularly clearly. In the American original, the heroine returned to work after a scandal involving her politician husband, and her motivation was personal independence and a desire to prove her worth to herself and the world. The conflict revolved around the question of whether a woman can maintain her dignity after her husband's public betrayal. In the Korean version, this conflict was reinterpreted: it was not so much personal dignity that was at stake here as the concept of "chemyeon" – the public image that was lost not only by the woman but by the whole family.

Research into the adaptation of Korean media products for foreign-language audiences has confirmed that it was the change in the characters' motivations that was the key tool of cultural localisation, rather than a side effect of translation (Bukhanenko, 2024). The heroine returns to work not for herself, but to restore her family's honour. The change in the motivation of an individual character in the process of intercultural adaptation led to a transformation of the dramatic structure of the work. This was reflected in the way dialogues were constructed, the placement of climactic moments, and the temporal organisation of scenes. In particular, the Korean narrative tradition emphasised the gradual unfolding of a character's internal conflict, which results in a slower pace of events and greater attention to the internal motivation behind decision-making. The results presented in Table 1 showed that intercultural adaptation involved not only changing individual plot elements, but also modifying basic narrative principles. This approach was consistent with the principles of intersemiotic translation, where adaptation was seen as the transfer of not individual signs, but entire semantic structures between cultural systems (Bartolini, 2024).

**Table 1.** Key cultural shifts in the process of intercultural adaptations  
(comparison of the American original and Korean adaptation of the series “The Good Wife”)

Aspect	Original context	Adapted context
Character motivation	Personal freedom, individualism	Family honour, duty, collective “face”
Narrative tempo-rhythm	Fast-paced scenes, minimal pauses	Slow pauses, inner reflection
Visual language	Focus on the individual (close-up)	Focus on the social environment (medium shot)
Symbolism	Red = alarm, tension	Red = celebration, tradition

**Source:** developed by the author

The fragmentary nature of adaptation, in which individual elements were changed without taking into account their function in the overall narrative, often led to a loss of semantic tension, which emphasised the need for a systematic approach to the translation of audiovisual texts (Savchenko, 2020). The most noticeable transformations concerned the motivation of the characters, as different cultures defined dignity, duty and freedom in different ways. The tempo-rhythm also changed significantly: where Western viewers expect dynamics, Eastern viewers expect silence and internal maturation of decisions. Visual language and symbolism further confirmed that adaptation was not a technical reproduction, but a profound re-configuration of cultural codes. In the American version, there was a scene, where Alicia Florrick entered the courtroom after the scandal and then communicated with the press – the camera kept her face in close-up, showing her determination, firm lips, and direct gaze (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Scene, where Alicia Florrick talks to the press after the scandal

**Source:** The Good wife (2009)

This was the code of individualism: a person stood alone against the world. In the Korean version, the heroine entered, the camera showed her in medium shot, and other people were visible in the frame – colleagues watching, a judge observing (Kim & Jin, 2016). This was the code of collectivism: a person existed in a system of relationships, and their dignity depended on how others see them. The frame was filled with glances, and it was they that created tension, not just the heroine’s facial expression. A similar rethinking of motivations took place in adaptations of other films. The Japanese film “Departures” (2008) told the story of a cellist, who lost his job and became a *norkan*, a person, who prepared the bodies of the deceased for burial

ceremonies. In Japanese culture, this was a profession surrounded by deep respect and ritual significance: death was not the end, but a transition, and those, who assist in this transition perform a sacred function (Napier, 2007). When the film was adapted for the Western market, a problem arose: in most Western cultures, contact with the body of the deceased was associated more with medicine or the funeral business than with spiritual practice. The protagonist’s profession lost its nobility, becoming something technical or even unpleasant.

The adaptation required not only explaining Japanese rituals to the viewer, but also finding a Western equivalent of this respect for death – and such an equivalent, one that would work on an emotional rather than intellectual level, does not actually exist. Here, the adaptation reached its limit: some cultural codes have no direct equivalents, and then a choice must be made – either to leave the original context, risking incomprehensibility, or to change it so radically that the story ceases to be itself. K. Podsiwak (2023) noted that even with terminological accuracy, the cultural framework of perception remained decisive for the interpretation of meaning. In this context, the study by L. Bui (2024), who analysed contextual changes in the adaptation of the Vietnamese film “Dat Rung Phuong Nam” (2023), was illustrative. The author showed that, when the cultural context was too specific, adapters were faced with a choice: either preserve authenticity and lose part of the audience, or simplify the context and lose the depth of the original. This dilemma was acute in scenes involving rituals, religious practices, and specific forms of social interaction. In “Departures”, there was a scene, where the main character dressed the deceased for the first time in front of relatives (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** Farewell ritual in the scene of dressing the deceased

**Source:** Departures (2008)

The camera captures it like a dance: slow, precise movements, every gesture has meaning, faces are focused, almost meditative. Relatives sit around, watching with respect and gratitude. The lighting was soft, almost sacred. For Japanese viewers, this scene was understandable on an intuitive level: ritual, beauty, dignity. For Western viewers unfamiliar with this tradition, the same scene may cause discomfort: why are people watching this? Why so slowly? Why such focus on the body? An adaptation could speed up the pace and add explanatory dialogue, but then the meditative quality that was the “heart” of the film would be lost. One of the least obvious but most important discoveries of this study was that the tempo of the narrative was not a technical parameter of editing, but a cultural code. Different cultures experience time differently, and this directly affected how the story unfolds.

Scandinavian detective series, such as the Danish “Forbrydelsen” (2007), were built on pauses. There may be several seconds of silence between lines, with the camera lingering on the face of a character, who was simply looking, silent, thinking. For Scandinavian viewers, this was natural: silence here was not emptiness, but space for reflection, for the character (and the viewer along with them) to process, what they have heard. The conflict brewed slowly, the climax can stretch over several episodes, and the denouement came not as an explosion but as a quiet realisation. When the British adapted this format (*The Killing*, 2011), the pace had to be changed. The British school of drama, despite its sophistication, called for more active action: denser dialogue, shorter pauses, clearer climaxes (Waade, 2017). This does not mean that the British are “worse” or “more superficial” – their cultural tradition of storytelling is different. Silence also existed there, but it worked differently: it had to be justified dramaturgically, it could not be an end in itself. The adaptation was not about “speeding up” the original, but about finding an equivalent of tension: what was achieved through silence in the Scandinavian version was achieved in the British version by other means – editing, music, acting. C. Saad (2023) examined this problem through the prism of the dichotomy “domestication vs. alienation”: should adaptation bring the original closer to the target culture (domestication), or, on the contrary, preserve its otherness (alienation)? In the case of tempo, the choice was difficult: too fast a tempo kills the atmosphere of the original, too slow a tempo loses the viewer. In *Forbrydelsen*, there was a scene of interrogating suspects, where the detective asked questions and the suspects remained silent. The camera focused on their faces for five, six, seven seconds, and the viewer saw, how they think, how their expressions change, how they decide to answer or remain silent. This pause was part of the tension (Fig. 3).

Another example of cultural adaptation was Latin American telenovelas and their adaptations for the American market. Telenovelas were built on emotional excess: feelings were expressed aloud, conflicts were played out in heightened tones, and every emotion must be clear and

visible. For Latin American viewers, this was not “overacted” drama, but a natural form of expression. When these stories were adapted for the US (“*Ugly Betty*”, based on the Colombian “*Yo soy Betty, la Fea*”), the emotional temperature has to be lowered: the American mainstream does not accept such open emotionality, it is perceived as inauthentic. The characters became more restrained, the dialogue more ironic, and the drama was diluted with humour. The story remained similar in terms of plot, but its emotional texture changes.



**Figure 3.** Interrogation scene using pause as a means of creating tension

**Source:** *Forbrydelsen* (2007)

Each culture has its own idea of what constituted conflict. In the Western tradition, conflict was often based on the opposition between the individual and the system, personal freedom and social pressure. In Eastern cultures, conflict was more often about duty: between what a person wants, and what they must do for their family, group, or tradition. The Pakistani-Indian co-production “*Zindagi Gulzar Hai*” (2012) showed how this difference manifested itself even between two neighbouring cultures. The story was about a girl from a poor family, who falls in love with a rich boy – a universal plot, but the way the conflict unfolds turned out to be specific (Kraidy, 2012). In Indian cultural logic, the main character could openly fight for her love and challenge social norms – this was in line with the Bollywood tradition, where personal love often overcame social barriers. In Pakistani cultural logic, such behaviour would seem implausible: there, the role of the family is stronger, and the sense of social hierarchy is more acute. The heroine cannot simply “go against everyone” – she must find a way to reconcile her personal desires with her family obligations. The screenwriters balanced between these two logics, trying to create a story that would be understandable to both audiences, and this forced them to seek compromise dramaturgical solutions: the heroine is strong but not rebellious; she achieves her goals, but does so through respect for tradition, not through its rejection. S. Long (2023), in his study of film language communication strategies in intercultural localisation, emphasised that conflict was not a universal category, but a culturally specific form of organising dramatic material. What was considered a conflict in one culture (for example, a

dispute between a father and son about career choices) may be perceived in another as a natural process of growing up that does not require dramatisation. In a key scene of the series, the heroine sat in the living room with the women of her family, who were discussing her future (Fig. 4). She hardly participated in the conversation: her position was conveyed not by words, but by her gaze and restrained facial expressions. The camera first captured her in a medium close-up, emphasising her inner concentration and silent tension, and then moved to a wider shot that encompassed the entire room. Her mother sat next to her, while other relatives were positioned on either side, forming a closed space around the heroine.



**Figure 4.** Scene of collective discussion of the heroine's future within the family circle

**Source:** Zindagi Gulzar Hai (2012)

This compositional solution created a visual metaphor for her position: formally, she was at the centre of the scene, but in fact she was surrounded by the collective voice of the family. She had the right to her own opinion, but this right was exercised not through open conflict, but through the search for agreement and balance. For Western viewers, such a scene may be interpreted as a restriction of individual freedom, whereas in the South Asian cultural context, it was perceived as a natural form of decision-making, where personal choice was inextricably linked to family responsibility. A similar cultural specificity of conflict can be traced in Korean melodramas, in particular in the series "Goblin" (2016) and "Crash Landing on You" (2019). In these works, the theme of love complicated by social inequality was played out not as a struggle with the environment, but as a moral choice. While in Western tradition, open resistance and insistence on one's own rights were considered heroic, in Korean narratives, conflict was often resolved through sacrifice and self-denial. Such behaviour was not interpreted as weakness, but appeared as another form of dignity, where the ability to give up personal desire for the sake of another acquired the status of a moral feat. Symbols were not directly translatable – what had deep meaning in one culture may be an empty sign in another or even mean the opposite. Adaptation requires not simply replacing one symbol with another, but finding an equivalent emotional weight that the symbol carries. In Chinese cinema, the colour red often symbolised happiness, good

luck and festivity (for example, in the film "Raise the Red Lantern", 1991). Wedding attire was traditionally red, red lanterns signify celebration, and a red envelope was a gift of money for good luck (Fig. 5).



**Figure 5.** A shot of a corridor with red lanterns as an element of spatial symbolism

**Source:** Raise the Red Lantern (1991)

In Western cinema, red often signified danger and aggression, as illustrated by the title of the film "The Hunt for Red October" (1990), where "red" was associated with military threat and confrontation. Adaptation (if it occurs) may consist of changing the colour scheme or adding visual elements that "explain" the meaning of colour through context. In the film "Raise the Red Lantern" (1991), the scene, where the camera slowly glided down a corridor lit by red lanterns showed an image of tradition and beauty, but at the same time of confinement, because the heroine in this bright space was a prisoner. Red here had an ambivalent meaning: it was both attractive and a trap. For Western viewers, this ambivalence was often lost – red was read primarily as anxiety, and the positive connotation simply was not work if the viewer was not familiar with the cultural code.

Another example was the Japanese symbolism of sakura (cherry blossoms). In Japanese culture, sakura symbolised the transience of life, beauty that lasts only a moment – a very deep philosophical concept associated with the Buddhist idea of impermanence (*mono-no-aware*). When Japanese films were adapted or dubbed for Western audiences, sakura often lost this layer of meaning: for Western viewers, it was simply beautiful flowers, a spring landscape, a romantic backdrop. This was particularly the case in the Western reception of the films "The Last Samurai" (2003), where scenes of cherry blossoms were perceived primarily as an aesthetic backdrop, and "Lost in Translation" (2003), in which the symbolism of cherry blossoms was reduced to an exotic marker of Japanese culture. The emotional weight of the symbol was not conveyed because the cultural context was missing. In such cases, adaptation can take two paths: either leave the original symbol and hope that the viewer will intuitively grasp its meaning through the context (music, acting, scene tempo), or replace it with a Western equivalent. However, this poses a problem: Western culture does not have an exact equivalent for *mono-no-aware* – the closest thing was autumn leaves falling, but they do not carry the same

philosophical weight. Thus, adapters often simply give up on trying to translate the symbol and leave it as a marker of “exoticism,” which impoverished the original meaning.

Humour was one of the most difficult things to adapt, as it was deeply rooted in cultural context. What was funny in one culture may be incomprehensible, offensive or simply flat in another. British humour, for example, was often based on irony, self-irony, and playing with expectations – a character says one thing, but their intonation or context suggests the opposite. For British viewers, this was natural – they know how to “read between the lines” and pick up on subtext. When British comedies were adapted for American audiences (for example, the series “The Office” (2005)), the irony had to be made more explicit: American viewers expect the humour to be emphasised – intonationally, visually, editorially. The British version of “The Office” was built on discomfort, on pauses, on the characters doing something strange, while the camera simply observed without comment. The American version of the same series added the reactions of other characters, musical accents, editing cues – everything that helped the viewer understand: “this is supposed to be funny”. Japanese humour was often based on absurdity, exaggeration, and the clash between the serious and the funny. In anime, for example, a character may look realistic and dramatic in one frame and then turn into a caricatured “chibi” version of themselves for comic effect in the next. For Japanese viewers, this was a natural part of visual language, but for Western viewers, it was often an incomprehensible technique that looked like a technical error or oddity.

Ideas about how men and women should behave differ radically in different cultures, and this directly affected how characters work in adaptations. Notable examples included the adaptation of the Japanese series “Boys over Flowers” (1995) (Japanese: “Hana Yori Dango”) for American audiences, where the main character was made much more assertive, and the Korean version of the same series, “Boys over Flowers” (2009), which retained the softer behaviour model of the female character. Similar transformations took place in the adaptation of the Chinese series “Meteor Garden” (2018) for the Asian market. In many Asian cultures, femininity was associated with softness, indirect communication, and the ability to compromise. A heroine, who openly conflicted, shouted, and aggressively defended her position may be perceived not as strong, but as negative. In Western cultures (especially American), such behaviour was often seen as a sign of strength of character and independence. When Western TV series were adapted for the Asian market, female characters often have to be “softened”: they remained intelligent and determined, but the means of achieving their goals change – instead of direct conflict, they used strategy, diplomacy, and indirect action. Conversely, when Asian series were adapted for the Western market, female characters were often made more active, louder, more prone to open confrontation – Western viewers may perceive a quiet, gentle heroine as spineless or

uninteresting, even if in the original cultural context her behaviour was interpreted as wise and strong.

The concept of family and its role in a person's life was one of the most profound cultural differences. Notable examples included the adaptation of the Indian film “Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham” (2001) for Western audiences, where family obligations were interpreted as archaic restrictions, and the Mexican series “La Casa de las Flores” (2018), adapted for the global platform Netflix, in which the traditional Latin American family structure was reinterpreted through the prism of individualistic values. Western, especially American, culture was dominated by the idea of individualism: growing up means separating from one's parents and creating one's own life. The conflict between personal desires and parental expectations was often resolved in favour of personal desires – this was considered healthy, normal, even heroic. In many Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern cultures, the family remained the centre of life for much longer, and sometimes forever. Decisions were made collectively rather than individually, and the opinion of parents continues to carry weight even in adulthood. The conflict between personal desires and family expectations had no easy solution here: “going against the family” means not only conflict, but also the risk of losing one's place in the social structure and one's identity. When stories with such a cultural basis were adapted for the Western market, the dramatic structure often changes: family ties were softened, characters became more autonomous, and the conflict was simplified to an “old vs. new” confrontation, where the new (personal freedom) usually wins. This was not necessarily a bad thing, but it changes the very nature of the story: what was a tragedy of choosing between two equally valuable values became a story of liberation from outdated norms.

The results of this study echo a number of contemporary works that have examined cultural adaptation from different angles. A. Poliakova (2020) studied the linguistic architecture of fragmentary translation and showed that text is not just a sum of words, but a complex structure where each element is connected to the others. Her theoretical approaches and practical challenges are directly applicable to screenplay adaptation: when one element is changed (for example, a character's motivation), the entire architecture of the text has to be reviewed; otherwise, the structure falls apart. T. Malyk *et al.* (2021) studied the translation of scientific and technical texts and showed that even in such a universal field as science, cultural differences manifest themselves. The way information was presented, the structure of the argument, even the use of passive or active constructions – all of this was culturally specific. This was true for scientific texts, but for literary texts, where emotions and cultural codes played a key role, this problem becomes even more relevant. Y. Gambier (2023) explored the future of audiovisual translation in the context of multimodality and asked the question: how to work with texts, where meaning was created by

the interaction of different modalities? Researcher's work emphasised that modern storytelling was not just words, but a complex interaction of verbal, visual and audio elements, and that adaptation must take all these levels into account. It was impossible to adapt only the script, while leaving the visual language unchanged – they work together, and changing one requires adjusting the other. Taken together, these studies underscored the main conclusion: cultural adaptation of scripts was not a technical operation, but a creative process that required a deep understanding of both cultures (source and target), sensitivity to nuances, a willingness to experiment, and an awareness that perfect adaptation was impossible – one always had to sacrifice something in order to preserve something else that was more important.

### CONCLUSIONS

The study of intercultural adaptation of scripts showed that this process cannot be reduced to technical translation of dialogues or superficial localisation of individual plot elements. Adaptation always involved interaction with deep cultural codes that determined not only the content of the story, but also the ways, in which it unfolds, its tempo, frame composition, and the nature of the conflict. It was determined that cultural codes functioned systematically. It manifested themselves not in isolated details, but in the connections between character motivation, dramatic logic, and visual language. For example, the change in the heroine's motivation in the Korean adaptation of "The Good Wife" from individual to family-oriented caused a transformation of the entire structure of the narrative – from the pace of the scenes to the nature of the conflicts. In the film "Raise the Red Lantern", the cultural code of hierarchy and ritual determined not only the behaviour of the characters, but also the static composition of the frame and the repetitiveness of the actions, which made it impossible to transfer it directly to another cultural context without a radical restructuring of meanings.

The narrative tempo-rhythm proved to be one of the least obvious but at the same time most culturally sensitive elements. A comparison of the Danish series "Forbrydelsen" and its British adaptation "The Killing" showed that pauses, silence and the pace of action reflected cultural ways of experiencing time and tension. Where one culture perceived silence as a space for reflection, another required more active dramatic action. The series "Yo soy Betty, la Fea" demonstrated a long, cyclical drama focused on the gradual formation of empathy and social satire, while its American adaptation, "Ugly Betty", accelerated the narrative, intensified episodic conflicts, and shifted the focus from collective structures to the individual self-realisation of the heroine. The conflict structure directly depended on cultural perceptions of the relationship between the individual and the collective. An analysis of the series "Zindagi Gulzar Hai" showed that even in similar cultural environments, these perceptions can differ – what appeared to be a harmonious compromise to one audience may be interpreted as a restriction of personal freedom by another. The study confirmed that symbols do not have universal equivalents. The example of the Japanese film "Departures" showed that cultural codes cannot be fully "translated" and can either be preserved as markers of otherness or replaced with an inevitable loss of emotional depth. Prospects for further research related to the analysis of digital platforms as an environment for accelerated intercultural circulation of narratives, as well as the study of the role of the audience as an active co-creator of adapted cultural meanings.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None.

### FUNDING

None.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Al-Maliki, M.S.S. (2025). Cultural bridges in film: Evolving perspectives of transnational cinema. *Frontiers in Communication*, 10, article number 1614642. doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2025.1614642.
- [2] Bartolini, C. (2024). Translating artworks. Interlingual, intralingual, and intersemiotic translation in museums. *Babel*, 70(5), 637-657. doi: 10.1075/babel.00393.bar.
- [3] Böhm, C. (2025). Screenwriting beyond my human self: Diversity as more-than(-human) matter in story development. *Media Practice and Education*, 26(3), 367-382. doi: 10.1080/25741136.2025.2456158.
- [4] Boys over flowers. (1995). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0889194/>.
- [5] Boys over flowers. (2009). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1370334/>.
- [6] Bui, L. (2024). Controversies over contextual changes: An in-depth analysis of Dat Rung Phuong Nam (2023) film adaptation. *Proceedings of the 9<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Media and Mass Communication*, 8(1), 51-65. doi: 10.17501/24246778.2024.8103.
- [7] Bukhanenko, A. (2024). *Peculiarities of translating and adapting Korean media products for Ukrainian audiences*. (Coursework, Kyiv National Linguistic University, Kyiv, Ukraine).
- [8] Chen, A., & Gu, H. (2025). IP adaptation strategies in film: A case study of Ne Zha 2 (2025). *Arts*, 14(4), article number 85. doi: 10.3390/arts14040085.
- [9] Crash landing on you. (2019). *UAFlix*. Retrieved from <https://uaflix.net/serials/avarijina-posadka-kohannja/>.

- [10] Demianchuk, D. (2023). [Strategies and tactics of Ukrainian translation of English-language films](#). *The Philological Universes*, 6–8.
- [11] Departures. (2008). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1069238/>.
- [12] Forbrydelsen. (2007). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0826760/>.
- [13] Gambier, Y. (2023). Audiovisual translation and multimodality: What future? *Media and Intercultural Communication: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 1(1), 1–16. doi: 10.22034/mic.2023.167451.
- [14] Goblin. (2016). *Kinorating*. Retrieved from <https://kinorating.com.ua/title/2582>.
- [15] Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham. (2001). *Klio.dp.ua*. Retrieved from <https://klio.dp.ua/Home/View/241>.
- [16] Kim, T.Y., & Jin, D.Y. (2016). [Cultural policy in the Korean wave: An analysis of cultural diplomacy embedded in presidential speeches](#). *International Journal of Communication*, 10, 5514–5534.
- [17] Kraidy, M.M. (2012). *Reality television and Arab politics: Contention in public life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi: 10.1017/CBO9780511814259.
- [18] La Casa de las Flores. (2018). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8387348/>.
- [19] Long, S. (2023). Communication strategies of film language in cross-cultural context. *Art and Performance Letters*, 4(13), 94–102. doi: 10.23977/artpl.2023.041315.
- [20] Lost in Translation. (2003). *UAFlix*. Retrieved from <https://uaflix.net/films/trudnoschi-perekladu/>.
- [21] Lutsenko, R. (2023). The theory of multimodal clusters (on the material of modern British political texts of different video genres). *Lviv Philological Journal*, 13, 107–115. doi: 10.32447/2663-340X-2023-13.16.
- [22] Malyk, T., Hrytsyk, H., & Malyk, L. (2021). Translation of scientific and technical texts as one of important elements of professionally-oriented foreign language teaching. *Innovative Pedagogy*, 40, 164–167. doi: 10.32843/2663-6085/2021/40.35.
- [23] Meteor Garden. (2018). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8690890/>.
- [24] Mukherjee, A., & Ghosh, S. (2025). Toward socially aware vision-language models: Evaluating cultural competence through multimodal story generation. *arXiv*. doi: 10.48550/arXiv.2508.16762.
- [25] Napier, S. (2007). *From impressionism to anime: Japan as fantasy and fan cult in the mind of the West*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [26] Podsievak, K. (2023). Peculiarities of translating medical discourse texts into Ukrainian (case study of English pharmaceutical companies press releases). *Bulletin of Science and Education*, 8, 268–278. doi: 10.52058/2786-6165-2023-8(14)-268-278.
- [27] Poliakova, A. (2020). [Linguistic architecture of fragmentary translation: Theoretical approaches and practical challenges](#). *Perekladoznavstvo*, 1, 40–52.
- [28] Prykhodko, A., & Lazebna, N. (2022). Digital discourse in the realm of related phenomena. *Cognition, Communication, Discourse*, 25, 52–64. doi: 10.26565/2218-2926-2022-25-04.
- [29] Raise the Red Lantern. (1991). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0101640/>.
- [30] Saad, C. (2023). Between domestication and foreignization: A study of how an Italian film remake got lost in translation in the Arab world. *Languages*, 8(4), article number 273. doi: 10.3390/languages8040273.
- [31] Savchenko, O. (2020). [Innovative technologies in the context of fragmentary translation](#). *Suchasna Filolohiia*, 4, 94–107.
- [32] Sokolova, T. (2021). [Adaptation of cultural codes in fragmentary translation of media texts: Challenges and prospects](#). *Perekladoznavstvo*, 3, 72–86.
- [33] Tang, W., & Wang, Y. (2025). ReelShort as a new template of international short-drama business: Platformisation, glocalisation, and de-westernised practices. *Global Media and China*. doi: 10.1177/20594364251366414.
- [34] The Good Wife. (2009). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1442462/>.
- [35] The Good Wife. (2016). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5786676/>.
- [36] The Hunt for Red October. (1990). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0099810/>.
- [37] The Killing. (2011). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1637727/>.
- [38] The Last Samurai. (2003). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0325710/>.
- [39] The Office. (2001). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0290978/>.
- [40] The Office. (2005). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0386676/>.
- [41] Ugly Betty. (2006). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0805669/>.
- [42] Waade, A.M. (2017). Melancholy in Nordic noir: Characters, landscapes, light and music. *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies*, 12(4), 380–394. doi: 10.1177/1749602017729629.
- [43] Yo soy Betty, la Fea. (1999). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0233127/>.
- [44] Yuan, J., Di, Z., Zhao, S., Cui, Z., Wang, H., Yang, G., & Naseem, U. (2024). Cultural palette: Pluralising culture alignment via multi-agent palette. *arXiv*. doi: 10.48550/arXiv.2412.11167.
- [45] Zindagi Gulzar Hai. (2012). *IMDb*. Retrieved from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2828240/>.

## Дмитро Зеленов

Магістр, самозайнятий сценарист

Державний університет інформаційно-комунікаційних технологій

03110, вул. Солом'янська, 7, м. Київ, Україна

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9584-7069>

## Культурний контекст у адаптації сюжетів сценаристами: локалізація, культурний код та міжнародні колаборації

**Анотація.** Мета дослідження полягала у виявленні механізмів міжкультурної адаптації сценарних текстів та аналізі трансформацій драматургічних елементів при переміщенні наративу між культурними контекстами. Було досліджено методи, за допомогою яких автори працюють із культурним «зламом», зокрема було проаналізовано корейську адаптацію американського серіалу «The Good Wife», що продемонструвало радикальну зміну мотивації головної героїні: її повернення до професії зумовлене не самореалізацією, а відновленням родинної честі, що призвело до переосмислення всієї драматургічної структури. Японський фільм «Departures», присвячений роботі з підготовки тіл до поховання, у західному контексті втратив ефективність через зміну культурної оцінки професії: відповідний код не піддався перекладу. Аналіз адаптацій скандинавського детективу «Forbrydelsen» для британської аудиторії (серіал «The Killing») засвідчив, що «прискорення» досягається не монтажними засобами, а модифікацією механізмів напруги: тривалі паузи замінюються коротшою, компенсованою інтонацією, поглядами та музичним супроводом. Пакистансько-індійський серіал «Zindagi Gulzar Hai» виявив різні уявлення про конфлікт навіть у суміжних культурах: поведінка, прийнята в культурі однієї країни, в іншій виглядатиме неприродною. Семантика кольорів також стала культурно зумовленою: червоний колір у китайському фільмі «Raise the red lantern» асоціюється зі святом, тоді як західний глядач інтерпретує його як сигнал тривоги. Адаптація колумбійської теленовели «Yo soy Betty, la Fea» для американського ринку як серіалу «Ugly Betty» продемонструвала необхідність зниження емоційної інтенсивності наративу для забезпечення культурної прийнятності в англomовному середовищі. Символи не мали універсальних відповідників і потребували пошуку адекватних аналогів або збереження з ризиком нерозуміння. Зміна мотивації одного персонажа зумовлювала необхідність перегляду всієї структурної організації тексту, оскільки культурний код функціонував як цілісна система. Авторська практика не допускала механічного вилучення «незрозумілих» елементів і вставлення «зрозумілих» без ланцюга наслідків. Практичне значення дослідження полягає у визначенні компонентів наративу, які пов'язані з культурою та піддаються трансформації, на відміну від тих, що зберігаються незмінними, оскільки результатом цього стає механічна копія без емоційного впливу

**Ключові слова:** драматургічна структура; темпоритм оповіді; міжкультурний переклад; емоційна еквівалентність; мотивація персонажів; візуальна семантика; транснаціональне кіно

---