

Translating into Hollywood

A Case Study

of the Oscar-Winning Film



Elena Chang

Session #108, ATA 61 - Virtual Conference

3:30~4:30pm EDT, October 24, 2020

Record-breaking Feats by *Parasite*

- **Palme d'Or winner at 2019 Cannes Film Festival**
(a first for Korean film)
- **92nd Academy Awards for Best Picture, **Best Director**, **Best Original Screenplay**, and **Best International Feature Film****
(again, a first for Korean film in all four categories)



Record-breaking Feats by *Parasite*



- Total awards and nominations: **197 Wins** / 330 Nominations
- Worldwide box office: **\$257.5 million** (as of August 2020)

HOW WAS THIS POSSIBLE?

- **Not by design:** Director Bong Joon Ho said, “I thought it was a very Korean film.”
- **Universal theme:** Poor vs. Rich - with a twist
- **Consummate storytelling** by all participants in filmmaking: screenplay, production quality, acting, and directing
- ...and lastly but not in the least importantly:
Superb English subtitles



Basic Differences

← 5,969 miles →



Altaic*

**Confucian
Shamanistic
Materialistic**

**Hierarchical
Authoritarian
Group-oriented**

*Language
family*

*Cultural
background*

*Social
Structure*

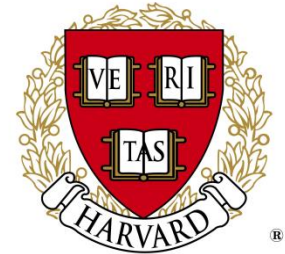
Indo-European

**Judeo-Christian
Materialistic**

**Horizontal
Egalitarian
Individualistic**

Words Swapped

- **Oxford University** vs. 서울대(Seoul National University)



- **Oxford** vs. Harvard

- **WhatsApp** vs. 카톡(KakaoTalk, 카카오톡)



“In order for humor to work, people need to understand it immediately.”

Darcy Paquet, the English sub translator

Words (had to be) created...



- **Ram-don** vs.
짜파구리 (Chapaguri)
- **Semi-basement** vs.
반지하 (半地下)
- **Landscape stone** vs.
수석 (水石 or 壽石, suseok)



...and readily understood thanks to reoccurring
visuals throughout the film

In-Depth Understanding *of* Colloquialism

- 1) '애들이 사는 집'
- 2) '인디안 매니아' 대 '아메리칸 인디언'
- 3) '채권자들이 몰려오면'
- 4) '정으로 사는 거지'

- 1) **Playpen** (vs. House of children)
- 2) **Indian** fanatic vs. **American Indian**
- 3) ...if creditors **break in** (vs. swarm in)
- 4) ...**love** will comfort me

Room for Improvement? Always!

Categories of Issues Found

- Localization (3)
- Mistranslation (7~8)
- Omission (3)
- Terminology (3)
- Word choice – a matter of nuance (2)
- Nitpicking... (3)

Localization

Korean dialogue	English subtitle
지금은 뭐 저희집 아래층, 위층, 거실, 서재, 이 수석들이 꼭 차 있는 상탭니다.	Now the annex, the study, every room in the house is filled with these things.
결국 다송이가 케이크 여신 제시카를 구출! 와~ 박수! 뭐, 이런 거예요.	Finally he'll save Jessica the cake princess, and they'll all cheer.
박 대표 살해 혐의를 받고 있는 김씨는 평소 온화한 성품으로 알려졌는데요.	The driver Kim and the slain Mr. Park are said to have been on good terms.

Mistranslation (or is it?)

Korean dialogue	English subtitle
박 다혜. 고2	Park Da-hye. High school sophomore .
이게 다 다송이 마음 속의 블랙박스 인 겁니다.	This is all a black box into Da-song's mind .
어, 저기, 빨리 갔다 오지 ?!	Well, just go ahead .
와, 여기 진짜 상징적 이다. 아버지, 우리가 기사 식당에서 밥을 먹고 있네요, 하필이면.	Wow, this is so metaphorical . Look Dad, we're eating in a driver's cafeteria right now!
매실청 좀 드실래요? (예 ?) 꿀까지 풀어가지고 긴장 확 풀리게!	Want some plum extract? (<i>What?</i>) It's mixed with honey. To ease your tension.

Mistranslation (cont'd)

Korean dialogue	English subtitle
재가 작년부터 완전히 인디안 오타쿠가 되어가지고.	From last year he's been an Indian fanatic.
(사실 이 직업이 단순하다면 단순합니다.) 하지만... 한 집안의 가장. 한 회사의 총수? 또는 그냥 뭐, 고독한 한 남자와 매일 아침 이 길을 떠난다... 이건 일종의 동행이 아닐까? 이런 마음으로 하루하루 해 왔습니다.	(Well, to be honest, this is a simple vocation.) But... the head of a household. The leader of a company? Or else just a lonely man setting off on the road each morning... It's companionship of a sort, so that's how I've approached each day.

Omission

Korean dialogue	English subtitle
근데 특히 이 돌은 가정에 많은 재물운과 합격운 을 몰고 온……	But this stone here is said to bring material wealth to families...
다혜 영어 , 케빈 선생님이라고 부르기로.	Da-hye's tutor, we'll call him Kevin.
씨발, 나 그럼 지금 사돈택 설것이 하고 있는 거야? 응, 그런 거지. 사돈 어른 빨스 빨고 며느리 양말 빨고.	Fuck, then I'm washing dishes at my daughter-in-law's? Sure, washing your daughter- in-law's socks!

Terminology

Korean dialogue	English subtitle
이 씩을 것들아.	You neanderthals (sic)
압니다, 황당 하신 거.	I know you must be startled .
우리 다송이는 완전 예술가 체질인데. 이 그림 한번 보세요.	Da-song is an artist by nature. Look at this painting .
다송이가 좀 전에 그린 건데요.	Da-song just painted this.
보통 그림 우측 하단 이 쪽 부분을 '스키조프리아 존'이라고 해서,	The lower-right region of a painting is called the 'schizophrenia zone'.
독특한 형태로 그려 놔 쥬, 다송이가?	Da-song painted this unusual shape, right?
오, 나는 저 다송이 그림 을 밥 먹을 때마다 매일 봤는데!	I've stared at that painting at every meal!

Word Choice (incl. nitpicking)

Korean dialogue	English subtitle
아이 씨, 죽을래?	Shut up.
어, 예쁘지. 미모라고 할 수 있지.	Sure, she's pretty. She's a beautiful woman.
뭐, 서류 이런 건 필요없구요.	I don't care about documents.
네, 완전 스카우트 체질이거든요, 제가. 우리 다송이는 완전 예술가 체질인데.	Sure, I'm a Scout by nature. Da-song is an artist by nature.
진짜 상징적이다. 진짜 썬데요. 그쵸? 썬죠?	It's so metaphorical. It's really strong. Strong, right?

Keys to Superb Subtitling

- ❑ Native-level immersion/understanding of source language and culture
- ❑ **On-going and in-depth communication between filmmaker and translator** – seldom possible for subtitle translators.

**Bong and Paquet's collaboration is quite unique; Paquet has subtitled 6 out of 7 films Bong has directed.*

- ❑ Up-to-date mastery of target language

Thank you! Enjoy Ram-don!!



Any Questions?

Contact: info@hollywoodinterpreter.com